

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 24 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.

RESIDENTIAL PARKS AMENDMENT (REGISTER) BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 11 August 2011.

Ms CHERIE BURTON (Kogarah) [10.00 a.m.]: I also welcome to the Parliament students from Aberdeen Public School. The objects of the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011 are as follows:

- (a) to provide for the establishment of a register of residential parks, which is to contain certain information about residential parks, and
- (b) to require park owners or park managers to provide information about residential parks for entry in the register.

The Opposition does not oppose this bill which will establish and maintain a register of all residential parks in New South Wales. Much was done by the former Government to ensure that the rights of caravan park residents were not ignored. I have spoken to a few residential groups who welcome this bill and who are positive about the establishment of a register. They believe it will give them more certainty as permanent residents of caravan parks. However, we need to establish, first, that the residents are not tourists; residential parks and caravans are home to many people in our community. A report prepared by the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues established three categories of people who live in caravan parks. The first category, usually retirees, is people who live there by choice because it is a way of life for them. The second category is itinerant workers who are working in an area for a short time.

The third category is people who are waiting for social housing, who are in desperate financial need and who have to stay in residential park accommodation. When I was about three years old my family and I lived in a caravan park while we were waiting for our social housing accommodation. For those reasons residential parks are important for members of our community. I agree with the remarks made earlier by the Minister: these parks create their own communities and networks. Some people make a lifestyle decision to live in caravan parks for affordability reasons and others like the freedom that living in caravan parks offers them. The 2006 census established that 11,037 households were living in caravan accommodation in New South Wales and that one-quarter of those residents rented their caravans. All residents of caravan parks want greater security about the future of their homes.

One point that was made evident to me when talking to resident groups who represent permanent caravan park residents was that they wanted greater security about the future of their homes—security that they do not have. The Surfrider Caravan Park, which is located in the electorate of Shellharbour, is under threat of being turned into a tourist park. Many of the permanent residents are quite nervous about the possible outcome—an issue on which the member for Shellharbour will elaborate in her contribution to debate. The 2009 report of the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues found that the primary issue that was facing long-term residents of residential parks—an issue also affecting residents at Surfrider Caravan Park—was the redevelopment of those parks. These people have few housing options. The number of caravan parks in New South Wales is decreasing at a rapid rate but rents are increasing and often are in excess of \$200 a week, which means that many families have to rely on assisted incomes.

The Residential Parks Act 1998 outlines the rights and responsibilities of park owners and residents: the rights of residents to quiet enjoyment, the park owner's responsibility for cleanliness and repairs and the duty of residents not to cause or permit a nuisance. Some of these rights, which are covered in the standard form residential tenancy agreement, are set out in the Residential Parks Regulation 2006. Special provisions apply to the termination of residential site agreements which means that a park owner can terminate a residential site agreement only in certain circumstances, for example, to change the use of the site. The park owner is required to pay the resident relocation compensation in an amount fixed by the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. It is important for this legislation to ensure that residents have the same rights as other tenants in houses and units.

It is important for all members to support the establishment of a register of residential parks. As I said earlier, our objective is to ensure that we maintain a balance between owners and residents. We must also ensure that residents are looked after, that their rights are maintained and that they have some sort of accommodation certainty. Many residents have said to me that they support those legislative provisions. However, as the Minister said in his agreement in principle speech, this is only the start. It is the intention of this Government to meet with these groups, to visit the different caravan parks and to talk about these sorts of issues with a view to implementing further legislative changes.

We will keep a close eye on the sorts of legislative changes that might be implemented as we do not want residents' rights to be removed. I refer also to the \$200 fine for non-compliance. We will also assess that issue and determine whether it is enough of a financial deterrent for caravan owners to take seriously. Long-term residents support the non-compliance fine as they believe it will make owners accountable to New South Wales Fair Trading and reinforce the legislative frameworks that apply to caravan parks. Opposition members want to continue to protect residents as much as possible and as such support this bill.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [10.09 a.m.]: I strongly support the measures contained in the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011. As members have already heard, the bill is the first step towards achieving the Government's commitment to improve the governance of residential parks in New South Wales and ensure the right balance is struck between park residents and operators. I have no doubt that these words must sound like sweet music to the ears of the many thousands of park residents and operators who have been desperate to hear good news for some time.

For too long the residential parks sector has been ignored. There have been far too many unanswered calls for reform of what is currently a cumbersome and confusing system of regulation. I applaud the Government for taking such positive steps to rebuild the residential parks sector and I commend the Minister for Fair Trading for introducing this important bill to the House. The bill marks the first step towards achieving the Government's broader commitment to review the laws governing residential parks in this State. As was explained in the agreement in principle speech for this bill, the Government will undertake a comprehensive review of the Residential Parks Act that will examine several key issues, including an appropriate form of licensing for the sector, mandatory education of park managers and ways to improve the process for resolving rent increase disputes.

These reforms will impact on the day-to-day operations of park owners and managers and on the lives of the many thousands of residents living in parks across the State. For this reason, it is important that every park resident, owner and manager has an opportunity to have their say on the issues that affect their lives and livelihoods. This will be made possible by the establishment of a register of residential parks as proposed by this bill. The register, once up and running, will ensure that meaningful consultation is undertaken with a broad cross-section of park residents, owners and managers. It will ensure government resources are used effectively to identify, through discussions with key stakeholders, the very real and important issues to be addressed during the review. We are already aware of some of the issues affecting park residents, due to the commendable efforts of Coalition members of Parliament who, in the lead-up to the State election, met with residents and listened to their concerns.

It is disturbing to hear of allegations of harassment and intimidation by some park operators or of the difficulty residents sometimes face gathering evidence to challenge what they consider to be excessive rent increases in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. I stress that I am not suggesting all park owners deliberately try to intimidate residents or are purposely unhelpful when residents seek to challenge a rent increase. I accept—as I am sure many members accept—that for some time the legislation has been so unnecessarily complex that many park owners and managers do not fully understand their responsibilities towards residents. I accept also that many residents feel so uncertain about their rights and obligations that they do not have the confidence to speak up. The review of the legislation will bring back much-needed certainty in the law in these key areas. Most importantly, it will be informed by targeted consultation made possible by the establishment of the register of residential parks.

Many other immediate benefits will flow from the passage of this important bill. Residential parks provide an affordable housing choice for tens of thousands of permanent residents in parks right across the State. Unfortunately, it is not clear how many parks operate in New South Wales or how many residents live in residential parks. As members have already heard, around 950 approved caravan parks operate across New South Wales. Of course, not all of these have permanent residents. It is thought that around 500 or 600 parks are residential parks with full-time permanent residents. There is no consensus on the number of residents either, with estimates ranging from around 25,000 to 50,000 or 60,000.

For the first time this bill will allow government and industry to know exactly how many residential parks are out there, where they are, who operates them and how many residents live in them. In achieving this outcome the bill will not introduce an onerous or unreasonable burden on park owners that will threaten their viability. As I am sure members would agree, the measures contained in the bill are not cumbersome, costly or confusing. I am pleased that New South Wales Fair Trading will provide the registration forms and information about what details need to be included, meaning the process will be simple and straightforward. I am also pleased that the registration process will be free. This bill is about providing important information to improve the governance of residential parks in this State; it is not about revenue raising.

The bill also provides for a list of residential parks to be made available to the public. I can think of many benefits for having a freely available and readily accessible list of residential parks. Members of the public could quickly look up names and locations of parks in their region or search other areas if they were thinking of relocating. Potential residents could then create a short list and contact those parks that interested them. The information would be free and would be at the public's fingertips in an instant. I imagine that an up-to-date list of residential parks would also help Fair Trading with its education initiatives. Fair Trading provides a range of valuable services and information to consumers and traders across the State. The parks register will enable Fair Trading to target its education activities for residential parks directly to park residents and operators. This will ensure that the people who need the information receive it.

On 11 November 2009 I addressed the House on a motion for priority to debate important issues plaguing the residential parks industry and hindering its growth and success. It is pleasing to see that stakeholder consultation has led to policy development and now to legislation. I commend the Government for making the wise and proper decision to move forward with this particularly significant registration measure in the short term and I look forward to further changes to residential parks legislation that will come before the House. I urge all members to support this important initiative. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [10.15 a.m.]: I contribute to debate on the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011. The Opposition does not oppose the bill, which establishes a residential parks register that requires managers and owners to provide certain information about a park. Residents also will be invited to provide information. In the past, several meetings, attended by a large number of representatives of the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority and residential park residents, were held in the New South Wales Parliament Theatre to enable residents to raise concerns. Although the register will allow for the gathering of information it will not eliminate the harassment involved with rent increases, as outlined by the member for Albury. Indeed, the former Labor Government undertook steps to ensure that residents' rights were not ignored.

A number of residential parks are in my electorate of Wollongong, including Windang, Oaklands and Jettys By The Lake, to name a few. I make frequent visits to those residential parks to discuss difficulties experienced by permanent residents, casual visitors and tourists. There are differing views on how residential parks should operate and often there is conflict because of the different requirements of those who choose to spend their lives permanently in residential parks, as outlined by the shadow Minister. People have numerous reasons for living in a residential park and they require greater security about the future of their homes.

In my electorate a number of issues have been raised over the past few years about an area that was under the control of the local authority. The custom and practice was that it was used by residents of the residential park, which led to a conflict between the local authority and the owners of the park. Ultimately it was resolved through the provision of a lease, thanks to the assistance of the local authority. There are a whole host of issues that do not affect those of us who do not live in a residential park environment. There are the normal everyday issues that arise with councils and neighbours but these are highlighted and in some cases exacerbated in a residential park. Sometimes these communities feel they are not being heard.

I agree with the member for Kogarah that these communities are indeed unique. The residents form very strong bonds and close connections. At the recent meeting I attended in Windang of residents from a number of residential parks it was clear they felt they had much in common and that they needed to be heard more. As is the case in most situations, the issues that arise affect a host of residents and the issues change as time goes on. I see the establishment of the register as a first step towards providing some background information and solid facts that will allow changes to take place and resolve some of the ongoing issues faced by permanent residents. I know my colleague the member for Shellharbour intends to clarify the issues for the House—

Mr Chris Hartcher: History will look at this moment. The world awaits.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Terrigal is distracting me.

The SPEAKER: Order! I advise the member for Wollongong to ignore interjections. The member for Terrigal will cease interjecting.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Shellharbour will clarify issues that have recently affected residential park dwellers in her electorate. In its 2009 report the Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues found that the primary issue facing long-term residents of residential parks was the parks' redevelopment. As I said earlier, that was always an issue of concern at different times for residents in various parks. I see the establishment of a register as a first step towards providing certainty for people in residential parks.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [10.23 a.m.]: In speaking to the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011, I pay tribute to two people: first, the Minister for Fair Trading, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, who has sponsored this legislation and has engaged widely in consultation to ensure the best result for the industry and the residents. Secondly, I acknowledge the great work done over a long time by the member for Albury, Mr Greg Aplin, who visited residential home parks across the State, consulted widely with interested people and brought a deep sense of compassion and social justice to this very important social issue.

The Central Coast has, as do other coastal areas, a large number of residential parks. Overwhelmingly the residents are very good people—honest, hardworking Australians—who have as one of their major ambitions in life simply to own their own home. In many cases they have moved to the coastal areas, whether the South Coast, Central Coast or North Coast, having sold their property, often in Sydney, paid out their mortgage and bought for the first time a home they own and in which they take enormous pride. I pay tribute to them. That is why any legislation which improves their security and gives them a greater sense of involvement, as this legislation does, is to be welcomed.

In March 2003, in the final weeks before the State election, the residential park residents in my electorate, which was then the electorate of Gosford, received personalised letters from the then Premier, Bob Carr, assuring them that if they voted for the Labor Party they would be protected. The pledge was made to residents and eight years have passed but the protection being delivered is coming from this Government. In 2005 there was some cursory tinkering around the edges in the Residential Parks Amendment (Statutory Review) Bill 2005. The legislation achieved very little and certainly less than had been promised to residents by the then Premier. At the time I said in this House:

I believe it is a step forward in protecting the rights of some 30,000 people across New South Wales who live in residential parks.

It was a step forward but it was not followed by any further action. The empty promises to park residents continued and were repeated over the following four years. Now, after the election of a Coalition Government, residential park residents are finally seeing the introduction of more appropriate measures to protect them and acknowledge their entitlement. Residents have lodged petitions over the years, made submissions and met with Ministers, but achieved nothing. I would like to acknowledge a number of people in my electorate who have been magnificent to work with and who have laboured long and hard to achieve a fair result for park residents. I refer to Jill Edmonds from Karalta Court at Erina, who has been an absolute gem. She has worked selflessly for the good of others and the residential parks community.

Irene Bates, June Farrell, Merline McLean, Barbara Evans, Caroline Thomas, Warwick Blackman, Irene Broadhead, Robyn Bullock and Lorna Ford have also worked selflessly to ensure that residents of home parks got, in Australian parlance, a fair go. Every Australian believes the national ethos of this country—the member for The Entrance who is to speak next will undoubtedly agree with me—is the principle of a fair go for all. The point of this legislation is to achieve an appropriate balance so that those who invest in the land, the landowners, have the right to a fair return on their investment and those who buy the houses and invest in owning a home have the security of tenure and the right to quiet enjoyment that home ownership gives in a democratic society. That is what the Coalition parties are all about: the fundamental recognition that through property rights we can exercise our democratic rights. That is what this legislation seeks to advance.

We now have a Minister for Fair Trading who has followed up the great work of the member for Albury and acted on that initiative. This bill represents the first crucial steps of the O'Farrell Government's new commitment to residential park residents. It establishes and maintains a new statewide register of residential

parks. The newly proposed part 142A of the Act will require park owners or park managers to register their parks and provide certain information about their parks for entry in the register. Under proposed part 142B, park owners or managers will be required to notify Fair Trading if they open a new park or if any of the details previously provided for the register change.

This is an excellent development for residential park residents and represents a move away from the almost decade-long period of underregulation of residential parks. One issue that is especially significant is electricity in parks, which comes under my portfolio of Energy. I am pleased to inform the House that we are conscious of this issue and are looking at more initiatives to assist permanent residents of residential parks. From 1 July 2011, the Government introduced the new low income household rebate of \$200 per year. The Government has also increased the medical energy rebate to \$200 a year from 1 July in line with the new low income household rebate.

This rebate is available for eligible customers who have been medically diagnosed with an inability to self-regulate their body temperature and it is designed to assist with meeting the costs of energy supply. Long-term residents of residential parks and villages are eligible for these rebate increases. Residents who already receive the rebates will automatically receive the higher amount and will also receive the GST adjustment so that they are not disadvantaged compared with customers who receive the rebate directly through their electricity supplier. Improving transparency of information for all registered residential parks will further support the strong energy customer protection framework already in place for these customers.

The Central Coast has a proud history of residential park accommodation. I recall that for many years the Central Coast was the largest single holiday destination in Australia, until the Gold Coast took over in the late 1960s. The Central Coast was a holiday destination built upon caravan parks, as they were then called, that provided great holidays for low-income Australian families. This country has always been a land of opportunity for people of all incomes. Very few countries in the world in the development since World War II have focused on widely distributing not only financial wealth but also the wealth of lifestyle opportunities through holidays for families. That is one of the great benefits that a well-functioning democracy such as Australia provides.

I do not claim any unique distinction for the coast but the Central Coast was at the very hub of that lifestyle and opportunity choice for hundreds of thousands of people. People would pour in from western Sydney especially and take their holidays on the coast after a 2 to 2½ hour drive. They would prawn, fish, boat or sail at Tuggerah Lake or visit the great beaches and the beautiful national parks established under a Liberal-Nationals Government. They would travel by electrified railway that was established under a Liberal-Nationals Government or the F3, established under a Liberal-Nationals Government. They took advantage of all those benefits. When this legislation was announced it got a good response from the *Central Coast Express Advocate*, the principal newspaper on the coast. Dr Gary Martin of the Affiliated Residential Park Residents Association wrote to the *Central Coast Express Advocate* stating:

The Liberal Nationals have done something that Labor failed to do for many, many years. They heard the plea from residents, and they are listening closely. This is the first step in the road to a better legislative framework for park residents.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Shellharbour will come to order. The member for Toongabbie will come to order.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Mr David Arthur wrote:

Yes I agree ... 100 per cent this is just the start of long awaited changes for residents but so much more is to be done to protect NSW residents.

It is great that people can sit in their homes knowing that their security of tenure has improved, their lifestyle choice is respected and they have opportunities because this Government is prepared to consult with them through the member for Albury and the Minister for Fair Trading, the member for Lane Cove, who will work for them to get a fair go.

Mr Chris Spence: A Minister on the Central Coast? Now that is a first.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Yes. When the member for Toongabbie constructed his Cabinet his Minister for the Central Coast lived at Orange but for two months we had the great benefit of the member for Toongabbie being Minister for the Central Coast—but his visits to the Central Coast were few and far between. Although the member for Wollongong and the member for Shellharbour offered great opportunities for parliamentary, shall I say, repost, I shall avoid that self-indulgence.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The Minister will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I am returning to the leave of the bill. The thousands of residents in home parks are great Australians and are entitled to the support of this Parliament. They ask only to be allowed to live out their lives in peace—overwhelmingly they are retired people. They are entitled to have respect for their co-ownership, because while the park owner owns the land and has the right to recoup a reasonable return on his or her investment, they have the right to the protection of the security of tenure of their own homes and quiet enjoyment. This Coalition Liberal-Nationals Government will ever be there for them, to listen to them, to consult with them and to make sure that they get that fundamental right of every Australian: a fair go.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [10.36 p.m.]: I support the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011. The Government has a hide to claim that it is finally doing something for residential park dwellers in residential villages when it knows that the former Labor Government did so much work in that area. The Government should make no mistake that residential park owners and dwellers are well aware of that. New part 142A refers to whether the residential park has a residents committee and, if so, the name and the site number of at least one member of the resident's committee and whether the residential park has a liaison committee and, if so, the name and site number of at least one member of the liaison committee. I hope that that is not a sign of things to come, when these people may be targeted.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government members will come to order.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I refer to the Surfrider Caravan Park in the Shellharbour electorate, which I am sure Mr Acting-Speaker is well aware of. On the day after the election the Illawarra, particularly Shellharbour, was the victim of a one in 100 year flood. The residents of Surfrider Caravan Park are very resilient and humble. Most of them are owners of caravans and very few are holiday makers. Sadly, not much assistance was given to them in the first instance. Now that they are aware of this legislation they are frightened that they will lose their homes, especially given what has happened to public sector workers. They are very distrustful of this Government.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Wyong will come to order.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Last Sunday I met with residents of the Surfrider Caravan Park who were concerned about the homes in which they have lived for many years. I note that the e-brief contains a number of types of permanent residents. Some are caravan park residents who have made a deliberate lifestyle decision to live in a caravan park. It refers to why those decisions are made. The second category of caravan park residents comprises mostly seasonal workers. Caravan parks are still commonly used by seasonal workers in the Illawarra. The third category of residents includes people who live in caravan parks as a last resort. These are people who cannot afford to buy homes or cannot get access to public housing. Most of these residents are young people or women with children who are escaping domestic violence.

The residents of the Surfrider Caravan Park have been told that the council will not be widening the creek to prevent further flash flooding of the caravan park. So I call on the Government to ensure the bridge is widened—a call I expect to be supported by Government members, given the concerns they have been expressing in support of the bill. I will be happy to relay that fact to the residents. The council met with more than 100 residents of the Surfrider Caravan Park on 10 August this year to address safety concerns and outline strategies. The caravan park has been operating for many years, and some changes to regulations have been made in that period, particularly regarding sites prone to flooding. Most caravan parks and their residents would be subject to the changes.

The Surfrider Caravan Park sits between Tongarra Creek and Shellharbour Beach, and was inundated with floodwaters during the major storm event in March this year. The information obtained from that flood, together with information provided by a recent flood study of the Elliott Lake catchment area, will, the council says, enable it to complete a thorough risk assessment of this site and formulate a plan for the best way forward. Sydney Water owns a property just down the road from this caravan park. During the flash flooding sewage effluent flooded the caravan park. So residents not only were living in already awful and disgusting circumstances but also had to put up with sewage effluent.

The council was asked to put lime all round the caravan park, but that did not occur. Now, as a result of that flooding, council has notified some permanent residents of the Surfrider Caravan Park that their homes may now be subject to rezoning, meaning they will not be able to sell their homes for other than holiday

accommodation and residents will no longer be able to live at the caravan park permanently. I call on the Government to alleviate the concerns of those residents. I invite the Minister to come down to meet the residents.

Mr Chris Spence: What did you do about it months ago?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for The Entrance will cease interjecting. The member for Shellharbour will be heard in silence.

Ms ANNA WATSON: It is acknowledged that the caravan park is located in a high-risk flood area.

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

Ms ANNA WATSON: Obviously, something needs to be done, and done very quickly if council will not take responsibility for this matter. The State Government now has this bill before the House and has outlined its concerns for caravan park residents. I was pleased to hear members speak about their concerns and plans for the future. I am sure caravan park residents will be happy to hear that. Studies showed that the park between the creek and the beach will always be affected by flash flooding. While I support the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011 as a step in the right direction, I repeat my concerns about subsections (6) (e) and (6) (f) of section 142A. These new provisions leave the Opposition wondering about the Government's further agenda, given what it has done regarding public sector workers.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government members will cease interjecting.

Ms ANNA WATSON: As I said before, the people of New South Wales no longer trust this Government. It no longer has any credibility. People in regional New South Wales now understand what the Government is about. I understand that the bill proposes to establish and maintain a register of all residential parks in New South Wales, and that that will result in the provision of accurate information, enabling the Government and the Opposition to know how many permanent residents are living in caravan parks, how many residents are holiday makers, and how many are seasonal workers, so that we will know where to go from there. While I support the bill, further work needs to be done, certainly in my electorate. I will be having further meetings and reporting back.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [10.44 a.m.]: I strongly support the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011. I commend the Minister for Fair Trading for his hard work in the Fair Trading portfolio and for acting so swiftly to introduce this very important bill. The bill marks the first step in achieving the Government's commitment to reform the residential parks sector. Residential parks represent a lifestyle choice for many households in New South Wales, particularly in rural and regional areas such as the Central Coast. They provide a much-needed source of affordable housing. Unfortunately, as members have already heard, the law that currently regulates residential parks in New South Wales is complex and cumbersome.

It is vitally important that the residential parks law should strike a fair and equitable balance between the needs of residents and park operators. The law must support and strengthen the sector so that it can continue to grow. Before the March election the Liberal-Nationals Coalition gave an undertaking to carry out a comprehensive review of the Residential Parks Act, and I commend the new Government for doing so. But in order to undertake a meaningful review the Government must first know where the residential parks are, who owns and operates them and how many people live there. This bill will provide exactly that information by establishing a register of residential parks. I am pleased to see that this will be done via a simple and straightforward process. The bill will not impose any additional costs by way of registration charges or fees; all that will be required is for residential park operators to supply certain details of their park to the Commissioner for Fair Trading, using an easy, one-page registration form.

The establishment of a residential parks register will bring a number of obvious advantages. Having an up-to-date list of who is running the parks, where they are located and how many people live in them will assist the Government in conducting a balanced and comprehensive review of the legislation. The register will enable broad consultation across the sector by identifying a range of representatives that will be invited to participate in the review process. The knowledge and experience of park operators and residents will be vital to the development of reforms to the sector. The establishment of the register will be good for the industry and, in turn, good for the community, long after the review process is complete.

The Government provides many valuable services to residential parks. Having a register will help to better target programs and will support engagement with residents and park owners on issues that affect their rights and obligations. The register will supply an accurate source of information, so Fair Trading will be able to improve its range of educational initiatives for operators and residents. Providing information on the rights and responsibilities of park owners and residents helps maintain fairness and equity and assists the parties to resolve issues before they become a serious problem.

As the Minister has indicated, the register will also bring benefits to the industry, by supporting park operators to keep up to date on the legislation and to have broad input into the review. Promoting awareness and education to the industry is aimed at achieving higher standards from those operating residential parks. The register also brings value to residents. The register will assist the Government in empowering residents by providing information to them directly. Residents will also benefit from the flow-on effects of having better informed operators.

This bill is a win-win proposal. Registration of park operators will both protect residents and assist operators by maintaining and improving the integrity of the industry. Fair Trading will be able to use the information to conduct targeted educational campaigns using a variety of information resources, events and community activities. Fair Trading regularly runs free information seminars, workshops and publishes printed resources such as fact sheets, publications, manuals and guides. The bill will enable collection of accurate information to support these important educational initiatives. In conclusion, the bill will not introduce an onerous or unreasonable burden on park operators. It is not about unnecessary red tape or expense for operators. It will introduce some basic and straightforward requirements that will pave the way for a solid information base upon which the Government can commence the review of the Residential Parks Act. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.49 a.m.]: I support the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011 and commend Minister Roberts, who is one of the very likeable characters in this place, on this reform. The necessity of keeping my remarks relevant to the bill prevents me from telling a number of stories in relation to the Minister, but I am pleased to support his initiative and the initiative of his department. The objects of the bill, which have been commented upon, are to provide for the establishment of a register of residential parks, which is to contain certain information about residential parks, and to require park owners or park managers to provide information about residential parks for entry in the register. The amendment seems to me to be common sense. It will provide the information that I am surprised has not previously been provided.

Establishing this register for all residential parks in New South Wales will be fundamental in allowing us to better identify who is living where and why, and for how long, and will be crucial in allowing us to make more effective policy for the people who need it. At the moment those people are relatively ignored in the policy process and, given that there are 950 residential parks across New South Wales, we know surprisingly little about them. With the more accurate data that this bill will deliver will come more accurate and better policy. Seventy-one per cent of marginal caravan park dwellers live in regional centres, country towns or remote locations. That is a statistic that is undoubtedly driven by the strength of our resources sector. In support of our resources sector it is important that we recognise the subset of itinerant workers, or fly-in-fly-out workers, who utilise the parks as their home away from home.

Better recognition of them means we can better make policy for them and avoid the imposition of unreasonable rents and poor conditions. In a housing market that is increasingly unaffordable, residential parks can offer better-priced accommodation for citizens who may otherwise be priced out of the property market—and we read and hear a lot about that these days—or who are unable to gain access to the market in other ways, such as renting. Any move by the Government to encourage affordable housing with appropriate regulation and assurance of conditions for those in our society who are unable to live elsewhere should be welcomed, and I wholeheartedly support the bill. The financial circumstances of people should not prevent their having the same protection as others with regard to creating and maintaining a home. The information provided under the bill will certainly enable that process.

In the briefing note provided to crossbench members the point was made that, in this process, the Government and the department would assist with future compliance, reform implementation and educational endeavours, which I welcome. I could not find any comments from various representative associations on their websites, but I hope that that commitment by the Government is present for operators, who will no doubt

support this in good faith but will require assistance and support, and will also require a proper review of the process within a reasonable time to ensure that what is occurring in practice accords with the intent of the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [10.53 a.m.]: I pay tribute to the present Minister for Fair Trading, who has done an excellent job in a very short time. He travelled to the Tweed electorate and was well received by many in the Department of Fair Trading and many who had business there. I also pay tribute to the member for Albury, who, as the shadow Minister for Fair Trading, spent an enormous amount of time on the preparation of this policy and legislation. Late last year I had the privilege and honour to host the shadow Minister for Fair Trading in my electorate. We went to the annual general meeting of the Affiliated Residential Parks Association at South Tweed, which was attended by 300 or 400 people. Leslie Wakeling, the president, and Gary Martin also attended. We had the chance to put forward the Coalition's policy on residential parks, and this was a key plank in that policy and is very relevant to the electorate of Tweed.

Far more people are living in caravan and residential parks in the Tweed than live in that type of accommodation in any of the other 92 electorates. It is a high-growth industry in our region, with approximately 15 residential parks and plans for even more. On the down side, there were some disasters with caravan parks a number of years ago. Many from the previous Government will remember the infamous Banora Point caravan park, which required three or four ministerial interventions and many court cases. Many senior residents lost their life savings: what happened was an absolute disgrace. Shame on the operators and shame on the previous Government, which was aware of the situation for a number of years and failed to act.

As members are aware, introduction of this bill was a commitment before the election. It is just another indication that we are delivering. I applaud the previous shadow Minister and the current Minister, who has consulted widely on the proposed register. The park operators in the Tweed believe that this is a positive step: what the Government is doing in the short term will support them into the future. I agree with the member for Terrigal: many of the people in the parks are seniors who have worked hard all their lives for the great State of New South Wales and they look forward to comfortable retirement. As we have heard, the coastal strip of New South Wales, particularly the Tweed, is a magnet for them.

The bill lays the groundwork for examination and assessment of regulation of the residential parks industry. In turn, this process will help to identify any legislative changes that may be warranted and may be beneficial to park residents and operators. I reinforce that, because the rights of residents and tenants should be protected and fostered just as much as the rights of operators. Having consulted with a large number of operators, I believe they are in support of the legislation. It is a long overdue step. Ian Beadel is the operator of the North Star caravan park, which is one of the iconic caravan or residential parks on the Gold Coast and in the Tweed region. He is a very honourable man and has created a community spirit between operators, owners and residents. I know that the residents stand right behind him and he is a great role model for other operators in my area and the rest of New South Wales.

The measures in the bill are quite straightforward, for which I praise the Minister—they are easy to understand and to implement. Residential park operators will be required to lodge certain details of their park with the Commissioner for Fair Trading. This will enable a register of all residential parks in New South Wales to be compiled. Fair Trading will provide park owners with the necessary registration form and information on what details must be provided. The registration process will be free. The bill also provides for the names, addresses and contact details of registered parks to be available to the public. It is a growth industry, particularly in coastal areas. This bill will enable people to make informed decisions about their choice of residential lifestyle. Members on both sides have said they were amazed this proposal was not put in place many years ago. Once again, since March 2011 it is evident that this is the common sense side that consults with local people and constituents.

Mr Ryan Park: You're kidding.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: The member for Keira should look at some of the results from the March 2011 election. That day the people said, "We want some common sense. We want a Government that's fair dinkum, that can move forward and assist." The people are rapt. People in my area said this bill is a great step forward. For many years they believed their voices fell on deaf ears. I have been in this place for only a relatively short time, but for the first four years it became apparent to me that many complaints fell on deaf ears and nothing was done, leading to a great deal of frustration. History will show that the result of the election on 26 March 2011 reflected that frustration.

This bill does not introduce any onerous or unreasonable burdens on residential park operators or increase their operational costs—hallelujah. Finally, some common sense has prevailed. The bill is not about needless red tape or bureaucratic processes, which the previous Government introduced over the past 16 years. The registration requirement is simple and straightforward, and it will help to ensure that all residential park operators and residents are given the opportunity to be involved in the upcoming review process. Once again, common sense is being applied. What a great step forward. I praise the Minister for introducing a common sense approach. I commend the bill to the House. Once again, I am 100 per cent for the Tweed.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [11.01 a.m.]: It was pleasing to hear so many hallelujahs and so much praise from the member for Tweed. The Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011 has two main provisions: to provide for the establishment of a register of residential parks that contains certain information about residential parks, and to require park owners or managers to provide information about residential parks for entry in the register. Although the bill is quite narrow in its scope, it creates a sensible and, indeed, essential record of the provision of this form of accommodation in New South Wales.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: It should have been there for years.

Mr GREG PIPER: I will come to that. Residential parks have become increasingly important for many residents across New South Wales, yet at the same time there has been a gradual but significant loss of parks and sites available for long-term accommodation. Some of the reasons include the gentrification of these parks, demand on available land resulting in increased values, and use of the land for other purposes. However, this bill will assist to inform the Government about the needs of residential park residents and, of course, the size of demand in the sector. I was amazed to find from the information in this bill and from discussions with the Minister that the number of residential parks providing long-term accommodation was not known by the Government. I am sure the public would have expected this kind of information to be known; perhaps that reflects the overall lack of oversight of this important sector and the associated social issues that sometimes arise in these settings.

The Lake Macquarie electorate has nine residential parks, of which at least seven have a significant number of permanent residents. I know many residents of these parks and I know that this residential choice is not just an option of last resort. For many people residential parks are a targeted choice that provides a good quality of life, particularly for more senior members of our community who enjoy a sense of camaraderie and friendship within these settings. Of course, from time to time problems occur between tenants and park owner-operators. We must ensure that the rights of both parties are protected and that these parks remain viable for the long term. However, the operators of these facilities are providing a basic human need—housing—for many people on low incomes. As a result, park owners must be mindful of the impact of increasing costs on these people. It means also that the State must remain vigilant and act appropriately in protecting the rights of residential park residents.

This legislation will provide a mechanism to allow for a greater oversight and understanding of the issues surrounding residential parks into the future and is complementary to other legislation and regulation. It is a sensible step that addresses a surprising omission in our understanding of the needs of residential park tenants across New South Wales. One of the greatest issues facing our State is affordable housing, therefore it is appropriate that we have had wide-ranging debate on what appears to be at face value quite a narrow-scoped bill. This particular sector provides various solutions for that issue. Many types of people choose to live in residential parks: some are in crisis, facing the darkest days of their lives, and many do not have an obvious solution at this particular point in time. Of course, others choose this as an interim or itinerant lifestyle, while some make it their first choice befitting of their circumstances and the lifestyle it affords them.

Obviously, from the unknown statistics of the number of people living in residential parks across New South Wales, there has been a lack of understanding of the needs of the sector. Perhaps well-intended legislation and regulation over the years actually added to the burden and conflict of residential park tenants in defending what they believe are their basic rights and needs as well as the impact on their families. This is sensible legislation. While it appears narrow in its scope, it complements other legislative needs and indicates that this particular Government takes this social issue seriously. I support the bill.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [11.06 a.m.]: I support strongly the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011. I congratulate the Minister for Fair Trading on introducing this bill and kickstarting the Government's commitment to improve the governance of the residential parks sector. I acknowledge also the work of the member for Albury prior to the election when, as shadow Minister for Fair

Trading, he visited my electorate to speak directly with park residents and owners. Importantly, he listened to their concerns and, clearly, we are now taking action to secure their lifestyle and this affordable housing option. For too long confusion and misunderstanding led to unnecessary conflict between park residents and operators. The Liberal-Nationals Government is taking steps to improve the laws that govern residential parks and work towards striking the right balance. Having accurate information is a fundamental foundation to achieve this.

It is difficult to make the right policy decisions without all the relevant facts and figures. This bill sets the wheels in motion to get the right information by establishing a register of residential parks in New South Wales. The information that will be captured by the register includes the name, address and contact details of the park as well as the names and contact details of the park owner, park manager and the resident representative. Fair Trading NSW will use the information provided to establish a public register on its website. This register will contain all of these details to provide a much clearer picture of the make-up of residential parks. Presently, only a small amount of information is available about residential parks on the internet and in industry publications. However, much of this is mixed up with tourist or holiday parks, and even retirement villages. Often there is no way of knowing which parks are residential parks without contacting each one. This bill is good news for our community.

The Port Macquarie electorate has a large number of residential parks, including Dahlsford Village, Newport Village and Retreat Village, to name a few. I have visited many residential parks in recent years. Just a few weeks ago I attended a walkathon at Dahlsford Village to raise funds for a cardiac catheterisation laboratory at our local Port Macquarie Base Hospital. It is a beautiful park and it has a vibrant community. Recently I met with Grant Burley, a Port Macquarie park owner, who provided me with valuable input on a way forward to ensure a balanced approach and to address the concerns of park owners and residents. Port Macquarie has 21 residential parks, with 14 others across the electorate, including three in Laurieton, three in North Haven, one in Lake Cathie, three in Bonny Hills, two in Dunbogan and two in Harrington.

I must admit that I have absolutely no idea exactly how many people live in these parks and villages because there is no register of residents. Industry websites only have details of the parks and members of that association. Currently no full picture of all the residential parks in New South Wales is available. Public access to details of all residential parks will assist prospective residents in compiling a short list of the parks they may be interested in. Once a public register is up and running people considering living in a residential park will be able to make an informed choice. They will more easily be able to select a few parks in the area in which they are interested and to contact those parks for further information. People will be able to compare the features of each one to find out what suits them best.

I am very pleased to see that the bill proposes to capture information relating to any relevant training, qualifications or experience each park owner and manager has. The register will capture information as to how many years each park manager and owner has been involved in the industry and whether that person has had any formal training on the legislative obligations. That useful information will become vital when the Government is considering options for licensing and mandatory education. I am also pleased to see that the bill takes into account privacy concerns. No personal information about residents will be on the public register. Likewise, the public register will not contain any commercially sensitive information relating to park owners.

The names, addresses and contact details of the registered parks will be publicly available. The Government is well aware that many residential parks are run by small family businesses. Some are doing it tough in the current economic climate. I am sure they will be glad to hear that no fee will be associated with the registration process. Another way the register will help small operators is to work as an advertising tool, making it easier for potential residents to find them. It will assist operators who do not have the resources to actively market their park. This bill is an essential element in the Government's commitment to improving the governance of residential parks and I commend it to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.12 a.m.]: I speak on behalf of The Greens on the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011. The aim of this bill is to strike a balance between park residents and operators so that residents can feel secure within this important sector. One of the important issues in the bill that is welcomed by The Greens is how this Government will seek to manage park residents, especially in light of the fact that residents living in caravan parks and manufactured home villages have raised very significant issues. One of the issues that has been most important—and I understand the Government is seeking to address this—is rent rises. This bill will address the register only, but rent rises are equally as important. The Greens are active and involved with the Affiliated Residential Parks Residents Association. During the election campaign

The Greens undertook a range of election commitments to the Affiliated Residential Parks Residents Association. On 6 February 2011 Lesley Wakeling, President of the Affiliated Residential Parks Residents Association, issued a press release in the following terms:

State President of ARPRA, Lesley Wakeling, said: "A year ago there were 898 applications to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal in regards to rent increases, but last year it almost doubled to 1,741. Rents are spiralling out of control with most park operator's average return on investment being around 20 per cent. Residential parks are becoming cash-cows and the buzzwords "lifestyle village" and "over 50s", is costing residents dearly.

That goes to the heart of the importance of this type of housing in the housing mix, and our challenge as members of Parliament and as a community to provide affordable housing. My electorate of Balmain does not have too many caravan parks, but it does have housing pressures. The Minister might like to have a caravan park in the area. It would be great to have a caravan spot in those areas. I welcome the Government's attention to caravan parks, but the issue that we must address is affordable housing. I also welcome the Government's attention to a register. A former member of The Greens in the other place, Ms Sylvia Hale, introduced a bill to ensure that developers who build multi-unit developments also provide a certain amount of affordable housing. What does that mean? It means they must provide to non-government organisations, a council, or other organisations affordable housing to ensure that our key workers can be housed.

Many of us who have children who are in the workforce—nurses, teachers, firefighters or police officers—will find housing a great challenge for them because unless they are earning \$80,000 to \$90,000 per year they will not be able to afford to live in the inner city, which means they may not be able to afford to live close to their workplace. Living in Sydney is becoming increasingly unaffordable. Residential parks are a factor in that. People are feeling the pressure and are moving into residential parks and facilities, which in many cases provide wonderful environments, because of the lack of affordable housing. The important issues addressed by this bill only go to the extent of the register, which will give the Government an understanding of the number of people living in these facilities. I encourage the Government to take the next step, to follow the policy of the Liberal-Nationals that was welcomed by the Affiliated Residential Parks Residents Association and recognise the significant problems in the sector.

The bill inserts into the Residential Act 1998 a new part 3A—not the old part 3A that the former Government introduced taking away planning controls from local communities—dealing with the establishment and maintenance of a register. Under new section 142A park owners or park managers are required to provide certain information about their park for entry in the register. Under new section 142B, either the park owner or manager will need to notify the Department of Fair Trading if they open a new residential park or if there is a significant change to the information they have registered previously. As I said, The Greens support this bill, which provides a vital regulation for this important sector. Residential parks are an appropriate and viable form of housing. We must support the owners, operators and residents of residential parks to ensure the viability of this industry.

This is particularly important because of the rising march of the development industry that is eyeing off caravan parks and other facilities to secure land for large scale development, which will reduce the stock of affordable accommodation in our communities. Residential parks are an important provider of tourist and long-term residential accommodation in New South Wales. The Greens support the creation of a mechanism that will better protect the many thousands of people living in this style of accommodation. I note in the press release I read earlier that the Vice President of the Affiliated Residential Parks Residents Association, Gary Martin, said that legislative change was urgently needed to better protect the 90,000 residents living in this style of accommodation. Many of these residents are doing it tough and Parliament needs to be doing whatever it can to support them.

As we heard in the Minister's speech, it is estimated that around 950 approved caravan parks and manufactured home estates operate in New South Wales. This bill aims to be an important first step in 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. That is one of the major challenges. Rents have increased enormously and the onus of proof does need to be reversed. People who live in these forms of accommodation do not have the same protection as those who have normal tenancy agreements. They do not have the same protections as those living in public or social housing, so it is important we seek to defend these lower income earners—which they generally are—to ensure that this sector remains strong and vibrant. It is imperative that affordable housing is made more accessible, particularly for highly disadvantaged people within our communities.

The Greens believe that housing is a basic human right. Every person is entitled to have access to affordable, appropriate, safe and secure housing. More than 267,000 low-income households in New South Wales live in housing stress and pay more than 30 per cent of their income on housing costs. The escalating costs of renting or buying a home when coupled with the decreasing availability of social housing results in growing numbers of people experiencing housing-related poverty, inappropriate housing, or homelessness. I will conclude by referring to what used to be called public housing or social housing. The number of people on the waiting list for public housing is now more than 70,000. Many of these people constitute the most distressed and vulnerable in our community. It is a great challenge for this Government to work with the Commonwealth Government to seek funding to invest not only in the maintenance of these facilities but also in the provision of new facilities.

The Parliament must address the availability of affordable housing and change the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act to ensure that when developers build large-scale developments they make available a significant proportion of the new housing stock for affordable housing. Affordable housing is housing that is rented below market rate to provide accommodation for key workers in our communities. Many key workers who work in the Sydney central business district live in Camden, Bella Vista or further west, north or south. That does not result in an appropriate transport model for the State, and can only lead to further congestion on our roads and public transport network. People need to live near their place of employment. To do so, they need affordable housing.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Balmain.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: Balmain is a great community. People who live in Rozelle, Haberfield and Glebe want diverse communities. It should not be only the elite in our society who can afford to live in certain areas of the State. We need diverse housing so that working-class people who have manual or blue-collar jobs are able to live close to their place of employment. We need diverse housing and industrial stock in all of our communities.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Caravan parks.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: And we need caravan parks. Diverse housing stock will provide for a diverse community. This bill is important as a first step. I commend the Minister for developing the register. I encourage him to take the next step, that is, to increase the protections for people living in residential parks and similar forms of accommodation, particularly against high rent increases. Residential parks have been an important source of affordable housing for low-income and elderly people. The older generation recognises that their children will find it difficult to obtain accommodation that they took for granted. Many low-income and working-class people are being forced out of areas because of the needs of developers. Developments are also undermining the capacity of residential parks to take on the affordable housing component that they have provided for our community. I welcome the measures in this bill. I encourage the Government to take further steps to ensure affordable housing in our community to provide not only for the vulnerable but also key workers who need good quality, affordable accommodation.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [11.21 a.m.]: I lend my support to the Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011. My colleague the Hon. Anthony Roberts, the Minister for Fair Trading, has done an excellent job in bringing this bill before the House. He is a very good Minister. This initiative will be warmly welcomed by residential park residents and operators alike. It is phase one of the Liberal-Nationals Government commitment to improving the governance of residential parks. A previous speaker referred to Gary Martin from the Affiliated Residential Park Residents Association of New South Wales. Mr Martin, who lives in my electorate, is a vocal advocate for residential park residents, even though he does not live in a residential park himself. He often appears on behalf of residential park residents before the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. It is one of the fastest-growing areas of advocacy in this State because of the increased number of complaints against residential parks.

I consider that I am very lucky to be the member for Myall Lakes. It is one of the best places in the world to live. Myall Lakes provides all the features of Destination NSW in one place. To the east we have the best beaches in New South Wales and Australia. To the south we have places like Seal Rocks. Going up the coast we have Pacific Palms and further up Foster-Tuncurry and Mitchells Island. We have the hinterland of Taree with the mighty Manning River flowing through it, and we have mountains and national parks. It is a wonderful place to live. Many people choose the lifestyle of residing in a residential park in Myall Lakes

because they are able to live in a community and enjoy park facilities while being close to all the natural attributes of the area. It is no surprise that many people who visit Myall Lakes for a short holiday end up staying.

A number of parks are located in my electorate. Until the introduction of this bill, there was no way of knowing the number of parks and park residents in the area. This legislation is the first step in planning for the future. Residential parks are located at Forster, Tuncurry, Manning Point, Pacific Palms, Hallidays Point, Seal Rocks and Taree and along the highway at Nabiac and Bulahdelah. Myall Shores Nature Resort is a clothing optional park, which I have not visited. To the south of Myall Lakes is the electorate of Port Stephens. The member for Port Stephens, Craig Baumann, is a great local member. He and I could argue about which area is the better—of course, I would win that argument—and which electorate has the most parks.

Given the popularity of affordable residential park living across New South Wales, it is easy to see the good sense in the Government's policy commitments on residential parks. The Liberal-Nationals Government is intent on creating a system that delivers certainty and clarity to park residents and owners, and that has a positive impact on the viability of the industry. There is a clear and demonstrated need for greater attention to be given to the laws and regulations covering this type of permanent accommodation and for examination and assessment of the regulatory framework. This bill provides the important preliminary step that must be taken before the reform can begin, that is, establishing an accurate register of residential parks. The details that will have to be provided by park owners and managers under section 142A of the bill are referred to as "registrable information". The majority of details required under "registrable information" are readily available to park owners and could be provided in a matter of minutes at no cost.

The immediate purpose of the register is to facilitate direct consultation with park owners, managers and residents. Consultation will be an essential part of the Government's review process. It also will clear away the current uncertainty surrounding parks that have tourist accommodation but may or may not have permanent residents. The register will ensure that the Government's consultation process is targeted at residential parks that come under the legislation. Another key purpose of the register is that, for the first time ever, prospective residential park residents will have a comprehensive guide to the location of all residential parks in the State. This will make it easier for prospective residents to locate and compare the parks that operate in their preferred localities. Looking at it from a different angle, the register also will work in favour of park owners and may help them reach a wider audience of prospective residents than would more standard forms of advertising.

The member for Kogarah, the member for Wollongong and the member for Shellharbour, in their contributions to the debate, highlighted the needs of park residents and said that the previous Government was working towards addressing the issues. They had 16 years to put into practice what we are doing now. I say, shame on them. The Greens member for Balmain also contributed to the debate. The Greens will never achieve anything because they will never be in government. A vote for The Greens is a waste of a vote. We need not take notice of the comments of the member for Balmain. This bill is a welcomed measure. I commend the bill to the House.

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

VETERINARY PRACTICE AMENDMENT (INTERSTATE VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS) BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Katrina Hodgkinson.

Agreement in Principle

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [11.30 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Veterinary Practice Amendment (Interstate Veterinary Practitioners) Bill 2011 will amend the Veterinary Practice Act 2003 to implement the national recognition of veterinary registration [NRVR] model in New South Wales. This will simplify requirements for the registration of interstate vets in New South Wales and it has the potential to attract more of the estimated 6,000 vets who currently are not registered here by offering a reduction

in costs and red tape. Each Australian State and Territory has its own legislation covering veterinary practice, which is administered by a veterinary board in each jurisdiction. In New South Wales it is the Veterinary Practitioners Board.

All the boards require equivalent veterinary qualifications and practical experience for registration of vets. This provides for a single, uniform national standard. However, at present, if vets wish to work in more than one State they must obtain separate registration in each jurisdiction in which they intend to practise. That creates an unnecessary administrative burden for governments and additional costs for an increasingly mobile workforce. It can also cause delays in responding to animal disease emergencies because, at present, interstate vets must be registered in New South Wales before they can undertake work, including emergency response work. In 2007 the Primary Industries Ministerial Council endorsed a model for the national recognition of veterinary registration—known as the NRV model—to overcome these problems.

Implementation of the national recognition of veterinary registration model requires each jurisdiction to amend its veterinary registration legislation. Whilst all Australian States and Territories have committed to making these amendments, Victoria is the only State to have introduced the national recognition of veterinary registration model so far. On passage of this bill through the Parliament, New South Wales will be the second State to do so and it is anticipated that the other States and Territories will follow shortly. It should be pointed out that vets who are resident and registered in New South Wales will not have deemed registration in States other than Victoria until the other States and Territories pass similar legislation. Once the other States and Territories have passed their legislation, our vets will have the advantage of deemed registration in those jurisdictions as well.

Under the national recognition of veterinary registration model, vets will still have to be registered by the veterinary board in the State or Territory in which they live. However, they will be deemed to be registered in all other Australian jurisdictions, allowing them to practise in all States and Territories without the need for separate registration in each of the other States. This is an elegant system that streamlines the registration of vets. The bill will be of direct benefit to some 246 interstate vets, including specialist vets, who currently practise and pay registration fees here in New South Wales. Interstate vets will be spared the additional expense of \$235 per year in State registration fees. Adoption of the national recognition of veterinary registration model will be of particular benefit to those vets who practise in regional areas and who regularly undertake work near our State borders. They will soon be free to travel across borders to treat sick or injured animals and to lecture and provide training to other vets or students without incurring additional registration fees.

Currently there are 2,615 vets who reside and practise in New South Wales. They will also benefit from the adoption of the national recognition of veterinary registration model that will in future enable them to practise in other States without the need for separate registration. There are a number of additional benefits that relate to emergency disease response that flow directly from adopting a national registration system. The national recognition of veterinary registration model will allow vets to be mobilised quickly in the event of an outbreak of disease. This has the potential to save New South Wales millions of dollars. The equine influenza outbreak cost the New South Wales Government \$62 million. However, the cost to the equine industry was upwards of \$126 million. It has been estimated that an outbreak of foot and mouth disease could cost the Australian economy up to \$13 billion. In 2001 the United Kingdom experienced one of the most horrendous outbreaks of foot and mouth disease in living memory, resulting in the tragic euthanasing of some six million animals. The financial cost of this outbreak was estimated to be in excess of £3 billion to industry. The British Government paid out £2.5 billion in compensation to cover the costs of euthanasing and disposing of so many animals. The emotional cost to those at the frontline of this disaster was immeasurable. Consistent with the Government's approach to reducing regulation, implementing the national recognition of veterinary registration model in New South Wales will cut red tape for both vets and the Government.

Minor amendments are needed to the Veterinary Practice Act 2003 to introduce a national recognition of veterinary registration model in New South Wales. The bill provides that vets who are registered and reside in other States and Territories will be deemed to be registered in New South Wales. A vet with deemed registration will be able to practise in New South Wales. Similarly, a person with a specialist vet registration in another jurisdiction will have deemed specialist registration in New South Wales. As I have already stated, veterinary boards in all jurisdictions require equivalent veterinary qualifications and practical experience. This provides uniform national standards. The bill ensures that interstate vets practising in New South Wales will meet the same high standards as vets who are registered in New South Wales. I stress that the introduction of a national recognition of veterinary registration model will definitely not lead to any reduction in standards.

Vets whose interstate registration is subject to conditions or limitations will have the same conditions and limitations imposed on their deemed registration in New South Wales. However, the New South Wales Veterinary Practitioners Board will have the power to waive or vary a condition or limitation on a deemed registration at the request of the holder of the deemed registration. The board may also vary or impose a condition on a vet's deemed registration by giving notice to the vet in writing. But the board may exercise this power only when it is necessary to ensure that the authority conferred by the deemed registration is substantially the same as the authority conferred by the vet's registration in the other jurisdiction. A vet with deemed registration will be able to apply to the New South Wales Administrative Decisions Tribunal for a review of a decision by the board to waive, vary or impose a condition on their deemed registration.

The bill also provides for instances where a vet is suspended from practising or is deregistered in another Australian jurisdiction. In that situation, a person's deemed registration in New South Wales may be suspended or cancelled by the board. In many cases the New South Wales board will decide to suspend or cancel a deemed registration on exactly the same terms as the other jurisdiction. However, there may be reasons why the board would not want to replicate the decision made by another jurisdiction; for example, where the offence that has led to suspension or cancellation is specific to that particular State. It is therefore appropriate to allow the board to have a discretionary power in relation to suspension or cancellation of deemed registrations.

The bill also provides that the board can enter into an arrangement with the other States and Territories to establish a national register of vet practitioners. The national register has been funded and set up by the Australasian Veterinary Boards Council. Victoria is currently the only State to have access to the register. Following the passage of this bill, the national register will also include a list of all the vets registered in New South Wales. The registrar of the New South Wales board will have access to the register, which means that the registrar will be able to view the names of vets registered in other participating States and Territories.

The bill also amends the powers of the Administrative Decisions Tribunal to reflect the introduction of "deemed registration" into the Act. At present, if the tribunal cancels a vet's registration following disciplinary action, it can also order that the vet cannot apply to be re-registered for a specified length of time. The bill adds a similar provision in relation to the cancellation of an interstate vet's deemed registration. A further provision in the bill will require the New South Wales board to notify each interstate registration authority of any disciplinary action taken against a vet. This will ensure current information on all vets' registrations will be available to the veterinary board of each State and Territory.

The Australasian Veterinary Boards Council, the New South Wales Veterinary Practitioners Board, the Australian Veterinary Association and the veterinary industry have all had significant input into the national recognition of veterinary registration model. There is very strong support among the veterinary profession and the livestock industry for national recognition because it is simple to implement, it reduces the regulatory burden on industry, it minimises costs to vets and it facilitates employment mobility. At the same time, the national recognition of veterinary registration model ensures that practice standards are maintained across all jurisdictions. The amendments proposed in this bill will reduce administrative requirements and provide cost savings to industry and the community. Because they are consistent with the principles of mutual recognition, the amendments will reduce market barriers and increase mobility for vets, which will be of great assistance to buyer security. They are sensible and useful amendments. 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.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY

Seventh Day's Debate

Debate resumed from 23 August 2011.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [11.40 a.m.]: I will respond briefly to the Speech of Her Excellency the Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, on the opening of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales. It was a good day that I will remember for a long time. I am always inspired by Her Excellency's words of wisdom. She spoke of the great spirit of optimism that this occasion brings and she said it was an historic opportunity for change and renewal. I am especially conscious of the responsibility we have to fulfil the commitments we made to the people of New South Wales prior to the election on 26 March.

It is my honour once again to be representing the great citizens of the electorate of Burrinjuck—the best part of New South Wales. I will continue to work hard every day to honour the high level of trust and faith that my electorate has placed in me. I will continue proudly to honour my constituents' trust and I will never forget that the great citizens of Burrinjuck put me here. I will give them all my attention. In my inaugural speech in 1999 I mentioned that small business forms the backbone of all country towns. I spoke about the importance of small business to the Burrinjuck economy.

It is an honour now to serve my electorate from within government as the member for Burrinjuck and as the Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business. Her Excellency said that this Government intends to back the ambitions of regional areas to stimulate economic growth so that our regions can optimise their opportunities and maximise their potential to contribute to the State's economic prosperity. The people of New South Wales have increasingly expressed dissatisfaction with the approach of the former Labor Government to small business. There are 650,000 small businesses in New South Wales that need to be freed from red tape, as running a small business can be a tough job at the best of times.

We know for a fact that Labor never really understood the needs of small business. Members would remember a joke along these lines: How would one get a small business in New South Wales? Under Labor, the answer would have been, "You would start with a big business." Prior to the last election Labor's support for small business policies was the lowest in the nation. Her Excellency spoke also about the Government's 100 Day Action Plan. I am proud to have fulfilled my part in that intense plan, particularly in relation to our small business policies. Within this Government's first 100 days in office I announced the appointment of Ms Yasmin King, this State's first Small Business Commissioner. The commissioner will serve as an independent advocate for the State's 650,000 small businesses. She will stand up for the rights of small businesses and report to me directly on the impact of unfair market practices and government regulations on small business.

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner will provide a simple and low-cost dispute resolution system that will cut through the red tape in which small businesses have been tangled for far too long. This is something that small businesses have wanted for a long time. They did it in South Australia and they did it a little better in Victoria. In New South Wales we will have the best system yet. I am delighted that Yasmin King has hit the ground running. Last week she started working for small businesses in New South Wales. I have every confidence in her and in the future of the Office of the Small Business Commissioner.

I announced also that after 16 years of increasing tardiness from the former Labor Government all government agencies will now have 30 days within which to pay their bills to small businesses. Failure to do so will mean that those agencies will be hit with an automatic interest penalty of around 13 per cent. This policy, which will commence early next year, will apply to all goods and services supplied by small businesses with an annual turnover of \$2 million or less. This policy goes further than our election commitment which applied to invoices valued at \$1 million or less. These are just two of the small business policies that have been announced by this Government that will meet people's high expectations and deliver real change. This Government has other policy commitments that are already on the public record.

As the Minister for Primary Industries and the member for Burrinjuck I believe in the potential for more productive and competitive industries in our rural and regional communities. However, we must also ensure that we provide an innovative and thriving economic base for the revitalisation of New South Wales. I refer to our important multibillion dollar agricultural industries which are high on this Government's list of priorities. The Government is keen to work with representatives of primary industry organisations to develop policies and programs for our 40,000 farmers in this State that will enable them to meet the challenges they will face in 2011. After 16 years of Labor neglect they have a long road to travel. We must work together to achieve mutual goals, such as maximising long-term food security and fair property rights and ensuring that the regions get a fair share of government services and much-needed infrastructure investment.

This Government is committed to reversing the shortcomings of Labor, which is why it is actively exploring new ideas, new approaches and new ways of doing things. This Government is working for the whole of New South Wales. More than 20 years ago the Hon. Ian Armstrong, a former Coalition Government Minister, made the decision to relocate the New South Wales Department of Agriculture from Sydney to Orange—one of the most ambitious decentralisation undertakings in the history of this State. It is time to focus on service delivery from that key agency. Our highly trained staff are experts in their fields and they are well placed to maximise opportunities for our State's \$9 billion primary industries sector. I have called on them to join me in getting on with the job of revitalising the department and servicing the State's rural and regional communities.

The Liberal-Nationals Government is focused on supporting this State's \$9 billion primary industries sector. As an example of our approach, the Government is currently implementing a full review of the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities model. The review will examine the make-up, effectiveness and efficiency of the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities, the ongoing role of the organisations and the ratings system. This review will be undertaken in response to concerns expressed by farmers and other rural landholders since the implementation by the former Labor Government of the Livestock Health and Pest Authorities model. The review is in response also to the thousands of signatures that have been received on petitions in regional New South Wales that highlight the fact that something about the system is not quite right.

Several of the Labor-induced changes that were highly contentious were regularly reported to me by people within my electorate and beyond. Labor's changes included excluding properties of less than 10 hectares from paying rates, reinstating the pest insect levy and some authorities were increasing rates above the consumer price index. Following the strong publicity to which those petitions were subjected, the former Labor Government delayed its plans to introduce a ratings system based on an amount payable per hectare to replace the current notional carrying capacity system. The Livestock Health and Pest Authorities system—a unique system that has been adopted in New South Wales—plays a key biosecurity role and provides important front-line animal health and pest control services.

The review will involve effective and wide consultation to ensure that all relevant stakeholder issues and potential solutions are canvassed and considered. The review will be undertaken by an independent consultant, overseen by a government-industry steering committee and it will report to me by the end of November. It is important to get this service right. I am sure that the people in the gallery have realised that a clear priority of mine is to prevent exotic diseases from entering our State and to stop their spread if they do. We must put all available resources into the protection of our plant and animal industries. Those people from the upper Hunter who are present in the gallery today would be interested to know that this Government recently announced the establishment of a cross-border task force to combat the Hendra virus outbreak in northern New South Wales and Queensland.

The task force will include chief veterinarians, chief health officers and chief scientists from both States, as well as a CSIRO representative. This task force will enable the agencies involved in responding to the outbreak to pool their resources and drive the research that will enable us to minimise the impact of this devastating disease. All those who have horses on their properties at the moment would be concerned about the potential future consequences of this disease. The task force will work to ensure that there is a consistent and coordinated disease outbreak response. It will also investigate all aspects of the disease, including biosecurity protocols to avoid infection, education and available science and research and, most importantly, vaccine development.

We are also working to resolve issues on our waters. The Minister for the Environment, Robyn Parker, and I have announced the New South Wales Government's Independent Scientific Audit Panel for Marine Parks. Professor Robert Beeton is chairing the panel and the review is underway at the moment. It will play an important role in ensuring there is the right balance between the sustainable use of the marine environment and the conservation of marine biodiversity. The experts who make up this panel are well known for their achievements in fisheries, science, marine biodiversity conservation, and social and economic evaluation. The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals election commitment was to implement a marine parks policy that is based on science. The Independent Scientific Audit of Marine Parks in New South Wales is due to be completed by 31 December 2011.

I am proud to serve as the member for Burrinjuck and as Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business, but first and foremost, as I said at the outset, I will never forget the people who have put me into this role—the citizens of the electorate of Burrinjuck on whose behalf I will continue to work with determination, energy and vigour. In doing so I raise a continuing concern in my electorate—country road deaths. We have a fantastic new roads Minister in the Hon. Duncan Gay in the other place and we finally have a Government that is looking very seriously at regional roads. The Minister has been adjusting speed limits in accordance with what is rational and sensible for country roads.

We will also need to ensure that sufficient margins are available on the edges of country roads, particularly the inland regional highways such as the Burley Griffin Way and the Lachlan Valley Way. The Lachlan Valley Way is particularly notorious; it runs from Yass to Cowra and beyond to Gooloogong and Forbes. Narra-Allen is a notorious black spot where there are far too many white crosses on the sides of the road. I have lost personal friends in that section of road. I know it will be a big job to get regional roads

upgraded but we will continue to pursue that aim in the interests of saving country lives. One life lost on a country road is one life too many. There are so many things to be done after 16 years of Labor neglect. I appreciate very much the opportunity I have been given by the citizens of Burrinjuck to represent them again in this place and the honour that has been bestowed on me in being appointed a Minister.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [11.52 a.m.]: I speak in response to the Speech of Her Excellency the Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, which was delivered to this House on Tuesday 3 May at the opening of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales. I would like to thank Her Excellency the Governor for her kind and inspiring words. As Her Excellency so articulately put it:

This Parliament opens with a great spirit of optimism—a spirit that such an historic opportunity for change and renewal rightly brings.

This historic change has certainly been felt profoundly in Newcastle where many long-time Labor voters took a leap of faith and voted for a Liberal as their State representative in Parliament for the first time in 100 years. The people of Newcastle were fed up. They were fed up with the stagnation of the previous Government and its inability to get things done. Further, they had had enough of a Government that, in the few instances where it did get things done, did them badly. The Tourle Street Bridge development is a perfect example. In her Speech to this Parliament, Her Excellency spoke of the change a Liberal and Nationals Government has brought and will bring to the people of New South Wales, under the great leadership of Premier Barry O'Farrell and his fine Cabinet. Her Excellency spoke of rebuilding, revitalising and re-energising both the economy and the people of New South Wales. I would like to address what this change and renewed hope will mean for the people of Newcastle.

Firstly, under the Five Point Action Plan, the Liberal and Nationals Government is working hard to rebuild the New South Wales economy through lower taxes, cutting the cost of living and business growth; return quality services in areas such as health, transport, education and community safety; renovate infrastructure to make a difference both to our economy and people's lives; restore accountability to government by giving people a say on issues that affect them; protect our local environment; and return planning powers to the community. They are key points for this State. But as Her Excellency detailed, we are also focusing on the cost of living; rebuilding the State's economy and boosting regional New South Wales economies; implementing a new planning system; protecting our environment; valuing local government; improving services for citizens; community safety; improving the public sector; and instilling trust and high standards in government—something New South Wales has been lacking for the past 16 years.

The rising cost of living, particularly the cost of electricity, is causing stress to many people. Unfortunately, the people of Newcastle are not immune. The rising cost of living is another adverse legacy we have inherited from those opposite and their time in power. But as well as the struggle to pay the bills, there is a desperate need for more affordable housing in Newcastle and right across the State. One of the more consistent issues to come across my desk in Newcastle is that of people looking for housing. They have been on waiting lists for years and simply cannot afford to enter the private rental market. Market forces obviously dictate that demand is far outweighing supply, so we need to introduce more housing into the market to make it more affordable. This is something the O'Farrell Government also intends to address.

We will deliver a budget on 6 September that will show how serious we are about fixing the economy and the mess we inherited from Labor. We will be conservative and careful in this budget; there is no doubt about that. We will not throw good money after bad like the previous Government did. The people of the Hunter will be looking for their fair share. Her Excellency touched on the Hunter Infrastructure Investment Fund, which will "be established for investment in local Hunter priorities". This fund amounts to \$350 million. This is immensely important for the people of Newcastle and the Hunter. We generate 20 per cent of the State's economy and house 10 per cent of the population but have received less than 5 per cent of the Government's expenditure in the past. The O'Farrell Government recognises this and intends to fix it.

The electorate of Newcastle has been starved of infrastructure investment for many years. For the largest regional city in Australia it lacks what most would consider basic infrastructure and services. We as a Government will address this. We have introduced the Kickstart Regional New South Wales Fund, which will command a regional share of the Restart NSW Fund. The Restart NSW Bill essentially establishes the Restart NSW Fund to set aside funding for and secure the delivery of major infrastructure projects. The Jobs Action Plan targets the creation of 100,000 extra jobs across regional and metropolitan New South Wales, with 40 per cent earmarked for regions.

The Hunter is also home to a stunning natural environment that we must preserve. As I said in my inaugural speech, in Newcastle we have the idyllic and untouched Stockton Peninsula, although there have been some issues there in the past two weeks, the superb coastline along Merewether and Bar Beach, the stunning beauty of Port Stephens to our north, the peaceful Lake Macquarie to our south, and the picturesque Hunter Valley to our west. The O'Farrell Government is committed to preserving these environments, but we must also protect the industries which rely on them. That is what the moratorium on the creation of marine parks is about. Despite what the critics say, we want what is best for the environment and we will base our policies on environmental science and not political science as we saw with the previous Labor Government. In relation to local government, Her Excellency said:

The Government values the contribution of local Government to our democracy and understands the value of local people having the power to make decisions that affect their community.

We are amending planning laws to put the power back in the hands of the community and providing better support for local government. No more will we see the prolific cost shifting onto local government that makes jobs even tougher at the local level. As a State Government we will fix this issue. I also believe it is important to improve services to the citizens of New South Wales. I agree with the Governor's comments that the job of any government, first and foremost, is to serve its people. There are a significant number of people in the Newcastle electorate who rely on government services, be it housing, health, mental health, community services, disability services or transport. The Government's commitment to set up a one-stop shop will be very welcome and helpful to residents in my electorate.

As the Governor advised, the Simpler Services Plan will use technology to simplify the delivery of these sorts of community services to the customer, that is, the public. Citizens will be able to find out their nearest health service, the fastest public transport option, the state of local traffic, and the most accessible hospital, and be able to transact a range of government services conveniently through an integrated system. There will also be one-stop-shop walk-in centres.

The Government will also establish a mental health taskforce to start planning for the establishment of a mental health commission, which is a great step towards addressing the needs of people with mental health issues—a matter that was ignored by the previous Government for many years. Some of the most vulnerable individuals, and their dedicated carers, rely on disability services which too often fail to meet individual needs. Further, I welcome the Liberals and The Nationals Government commitment to continue the delivery of the Stronger Together 10-year disability service plan, and to work with the community, the experts and members of sector to extend choice and service quality to people.

Despite significant achievements, the Government believes there are challenges facing the education system. Too many young people are at risk of falling through the cracks, with currently one in five year 9 students at or below the minimum standards in reading, writing and arithmetic. The Government's Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan will boost resources by \$250 million, with 900 additional teachers to ensure children most at risk develop the foundations for success in literacy and numeracy at an early age.

We are going to make real inroads into improving community safety. We are making changes to legislation to tackle alcohol-related violence and crime, in part, by strengthening police powers. Unfortunately, the electorate of Newcastle is not immune to the problems associated with alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour. Newcastle has a fantastic and vibrant nightlife, and, like most big cities, that also brings problem areas. The 2010 Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research data indicate that last year the Newcastle local government area had more than double the State average of alcohol related assaults. The Summary Offences Amendment (Intoxicated and Disorderly Conduct) Bill is primarily about giving police more powers to deal with this antisocial behaviour. I note that the bill represents the second stage of the Government's commitment to give police more powers to deal with antisocial behaviour.

We are delivering on our promises. The first stage was the introduction of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment (Move On Directions) Bill 2011 in May of this year. That bill amended existing move-on powers for intoxicated persons, meaning police can now move on individuals as well groups. And now the Summary Offences Amendment (Intoxicated and Disorderly Conduct) Bill seeks to expand that tool by giving police more power to deal with intoxicated people who choose not to move on or who refuse to stop their antisocial conduct. Essentially, the amendment will allow police to not only issue move-on directions for disorderly behaviour but to detain an intoxicated person otherwise than for the purpose of taking action for an offence. Further, the bill seeks to amend the Criminal Procedure Regulation 2010 to provide for the issuing of penalty notices in connection with the offence.

We are re-energising the Neighbourhood Watch Program, by using technologies available in the twenty-first century. Neighbourhood Watch programs are already operating in Newcastle. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the good work of the Carrington and the Georgetown Neighbourhood Watch groups, both of which are in regular contact with my office and keeping me up to date with issues in those suburbs. I greatly appreciate it and I highly commend their work. In fact, Georgetown Neighbourhood Watch is the only group in Newcastle that has been operating continuously since the establishment of Neighbourhood Watch in Newcastle in 1987 by the Police Service, as it was called then.

The Government's role is to serve the people, and an integral part of that is delivering a sufficient and efficient public service sector. We are committed to this and to improving the number of frontline service staff—police, nurses and teachers. We will also establish the Public Sector Commission—an expert working group headed by incoming chair, Professor Peter Shergold, which will provide and publish a detailed annual report on the New South Wales public sector, its achievements, its effectiveness and its challenges—a first. Above all, we will bring good governance and accountability to the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales. Her Excellency also spoke of trust and high standards in this place. This is something the people of New South Wales are looking for and something I and my Coalition colleagues intend to restore to the Parliament of New South Wales.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [12.05 p.m.]: In speaking on the Address-in-Reply to Her Excellency's Address at the opening of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales I first commend Her Excellency on the outstanding manner in which she discharges her duties to this State, and place on record the pride that I feel in the long association that she and her husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie, have had with my electorate of Coogee. When in opposition the current Coalition Government gave the people of New South Wales its commitment to take prompt and effective action to lift this State from the putrid mire of 16 years of Labor maladministration.

We campaigned with the guarantee that, if elected, we would throw off the shackles and constraints that have ossified this great State and hampered the ambitions of its people for far too long. So it is with great satisfaction that I stand here today a member of this great Government, which offered the people of New South Wales a real alternative, an opportunity for real change, a member of a Government that has wasted not a minute to deliver on the commitments that we made. The Governor's Address outlines this Government's strong vision to get New South Wales back on track. Let us make no mistake, this Government will make New South Wales number one again. That may have been a campaign slogan, but it was my commitment to the people of Coogee. My electorate of Coogee has been quick to benefit from the energy of this new Government.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Tell us about it.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: I will indeed. Coogee is the smallest electorate in New South Wales.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Where is it?

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: Just to the east of this place. It is a great place, with the most beautiful beaches, the finest shopping, great restaurants, and the most beautiful people in New South Wales. Though the smallest electorate, it has some very big issues that need the urgent attention of the Government—after 16 years of ignorance of the issues that really matter to the people of this State. First and foremost, there is simply no excuse for the lacklustre state of our public transport network. Sure, it moves a lot of people every day, and it gets you there eventually, but the experience is by no means pleasant, efficient or even remotely enjoyable. And, during the 16 years that the Labor Party held government it got worse and worse, never better.

I remember being a child when the Government introduced brand new Mercedes buses. The sparkling new buses arrived, and the joke soon became that we had chauffeur-driven Mercedes. But those Mercs still rattle up to bus stops each day, and now the joke is that they are still in service. For 16 years our bus services have been badly coordinated, our public transport has been badly coordinated, and nowhere near as clean or efficient as it could be. Our buses are unreliable: they are often late, too early, or sometimes they do not turn up. When they do turn up you have a better chance of getting a seat in a mosh pit. Who would have thought it would be so hard to get on a bus in this day and age?

The conga line of buses that roll up Anzac Parade every morning and evening is most definitely the wrong solution for the transport needs of the electorate of Coogee. This is why we need light rail—light rail to the electorate of Coogee, right through the eastern suburbs. It would pass the homes of hundreds of thousands of

people, pass the entertaining precincts of the Sydney Cricket Ground, the Sydney Football Stadium, Fox Studios and the Hordern Pavilion, the shopping precinct of Kensington, the University of New South Wales and the Prince of Wales Hospital. It would provide a cleaner, greener, cheaper and faster public transport option for residents who have been crying out for it for so long.

Modern light rail systems operate in hundreds of cities worldwide. It is time Sydney genuinely got on board. As part of the proposed south-east Sydney transport taskforce during the election campaign I witnessed firsthand the dire state of our transport system. Throughout my time in Parliament I will remain a firm advocate of light rail and fight to bring it to the eastern suburbs. One part of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act is well known to Coogee locals. All members of this Chamber know exactly what I am talking about: the infamous part 3A legislation that raised the stench of planning corruption in this State. Part 3A raised the ire of Coogee locals regarding the application to redevelop the Coogee Bay Hotel and irked them so much that they provided the largest petition presented to this Parliament's last term, just before the election.

I am proud to say that since day one I opposed the overdevelopment of the Coogee Bay Hotel. This proposed development would have ruined the unique village atmosphere of Coogee and left an eyesore perched on one of Coogee's most prominent intersections for all to see. Had this development proceeded, it would have been an appropriate monument to the disastrous planning policy of those on the Opposition benches. Labor deliberately left the community out of consultation on this project, preferring to take it in secretly under part 3A less than three months before the election. I was disgusted to learn that Labor had gone to great lengths to keep this development secret from the Coogee community—a community that protested in thousands against the development. This breach of trust should never be repeated but, most importantly, should never be forgotten.

I note Her Excellency's sentiments about the high standards of our universities and researchers, and their potential to help build our State's economic capital and drive economic growth. The University of New South Wales, situated in the western part of my electorate, is recognised as one of Australia's best teaching and research universities. It excels in the fields of science and innovation, develops ideas and promotes lasting knowledge by creating an academic environment where scholars and students aspire to excel. This Government will tap into the resource provided by our leading universities by investing more in high-level research programs. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is committed to open and transparent governance.

As the member for Coogee I will be open, transparent and, most importantly, accountable. The community should expect nothing else, despite the efforts of the Labor Party to undermine the community's trust over 16 years. The O'Farrell Government repealed part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and returned planning powers to local communities, where they belong. Communities must be able to have a say in the planning process and there is no better way to do this than through local government representation. We have returned residential, retail, commercial developments, coastal subdivisions and marinas to local councils to ensure that only projects of genuine State significance are assessed by the Government.

After referring to the Coogee Bay Hotel I direct attention to antisocial behaviour and problems experienced by Coogee residents. Most of us will remember when people could go out for a drink with friends, stay up late listening to a pub band and return home without feeling the urge to snap the aerial or the windscreen wipers off somebody's car, kick over a wheelie bin, smash beer bottles on the ground or vomit into someone's letterbox. Drunken antisocial behaviour and low-level crime make life unnecessarily stressful and unpleasant not only for my Coogee constituents but for people across New South Wales. We must clamp down on offenders; but we must balance also residents' rights to safe streets without going over the top taking a nanny state approach that would kill off a good night out for everyone.

Therefore, I welcome the Government's moves to strengthen police powers by increasing police presence in the most troublesome hot spots and giving police powers to move on drunken individuals who may cause harm to themselves or others. Previously police could only move on groups of three or more people, making police potential punching bags for lone drunks who decided on any particular night that they would like to wreak havoc. With the new powers granted to police that lone individual causing a ruckus outside an apartment block or in a main street will be moved on so that residents can get the peace and quiet they deserve.

Police move-on powers are part of this Government's action to eradicate antisocial behaviour by those who act in a disorderly way. Those who flout the law and facilitate this kind of behaviour should not be tolerated. The most effective way to control the management of a licensed venue is with the power of removal of its alcohol licence. That is why the Government will introduce its three strikes and you're out policy for licensees who believe there is no problem serving patrons alcohol until they become a nuisance and fall over drunk. These are just a few issues that concern my residents, and the actions initiated by this Government are just a few of those needed.

Let us look at some of the bills that have received assent already from Her Excellency the Governor, emphasising how much needed to be done in this State and how much we are doing to get New South Wales back on its feet. We gave democracy back to the Illawarra by enabling elections to be held for Wollongong and Shellharbour councils. Indeed, we have reformed the capacity for imposing criminal liability on directors and executive officers for corporate misconduct to accord with the Council of Australian Governments agreement. We have ensured that the Labor Party's disgraceful early proroguing of Parliament will never be repeated. We have provided for responsibility and accountability in our health system by returning decision-making closer to patients by cutting red tape and creating local health districts with associated boards.

We have banned success fees for government lobbyists. We have extended the empty-nester transfer duty concession to people over 55. We have removed the Torrens title assurance levy, a tax by stealth on New South Wales homebuyers. We have improved the efficiency of our courts through various measures. We have enabled two or more local councils to enter into arrangements for the provision of library services. We have reformed occupational health and safety law. We have given police greater move-on powers. We have enforced the previous Government's policy on public sector wages to ensure fiscal responsibility. We have given court security officers a better opportunity to facilitate the smooth running of our courts. We have given courts the power to disqualify a graffiti vandal's drivers licence.

We have retained the maximum annual percentage rate for short-term credit contracts. We have continued the operation of the GM Crop Moratorium Act for a further decade. We have strengthened the protections available to journalists and their sources. We have helped small business create more jobs through a payroll tax rebate. We have given those who murder police officers mandatory life sentences. We have created Destination NSW, an amalgamated body to bring the best events back to Sydney. We have repealed the terrible part 3A planning laws. We have established Infrastructure NSW. We are giving powers back to local councils to control their own elections and electoral administration. We have established regional relocation grants for homebuyers. We have achieved most of this in the first 100 days of this parliamentary term. I thank Her Excellency the Governor for her Address to the Parliament. I commend the strong vision she espoused. I commit myself to realising that vision for a strong and prosperous New South Wales well into the future.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.20 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak on the Address-in-Reply to the Speech delivered by her Excellency the Governor Marie Bashir on the opening of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales. I thank the Governor for her comments and her recognition that this is a historic opportunity for long overdue change and renewal in New South Wales. The people of Heathcote made an overwhelming demand for this change on March 26 with a 21 per cent swing towards the Liberal Party. I have listened to my constituents. They deserve this renewal and I am determined to deliver it. They are proud, hard working people who are lucky enough to be surrounded by some of the most spectacular scenery in New South Wales. Heathcote covers 458 square kilometres, spanning from Sutherland in the north to Bulli in the south, taking in pristine beaches and coastal cliffs, vast tracts of untouched bushland and some of the State's most magnificent waterways.

One jewel in Heathcote's wealth of natural treasures is the Dharawal State Reserve, which I was proud to explore with Premier Barry O'Farrell when the Government committed to declare it a national park. This declaration will preserve the headwaters of the Georges River and priceless Aboriginal rock carvings. The entire area is a water catchment for the Woronora Dam and its natural swamplands filter our drinking water. The area needs careful management. I look forward to participating with the Premier in the commitment ceremony for the park. The Governor mentioned in her address this significant commitment of land as national park and the need to preserve such treasures for future generations. With this in mind my focus as the member for Heathcote is to protect the environment while encouraging economic growth. This is a task that will not be taken lightly as one of Heathcote's major sources of business, income and employment is coalmining.

With more than 120 years of history in the suburb of Helensburgh, this industry is well established as an integral part of our community, and a large number of residents depend on it for income. The devastation caused when these institutions falter can be seen in the recent announcement of BlueScope Steel's closure at Port Kembla. The direct loss of 800 jobs and countless flow-on losses is a tragedy, and I am proud that the New South Wales Government has responded in the strongest way possible to support the people of the Illawarra. However important the survival of the coal mining industry is, it must never come at the cost of our environment, and I am very proud that the Government has strengthened rules surrounding coal and coal seam gas extraction. The new regulations are the toughest ever applied and ban the use of toxic chemicals and evaporation ponds. Stronger environmental requirements have been imposed and applications for new licences will be subjected to an unprecedented level of public consultation and transparency.

In addition to Heathcote's natural resources, my electorate is also home to manmade wonders. The awe-inspiring Sea Cliff Bridge is a marvel of modern engineering and an example of thinking outside the box in the design of public assets. This iconic landmark winds along sheer cliffs above crashing waves and has become the background for countless international car company advertising campaigns—for obvious reasons. I strongly advise all members, and indeed the Governor, to experience the drive for themselves. The Grand Pacific Drive is one of the State's best kept secrets and one of my goals in office is to develop a vibrant tourism industry with this as its centrepiece. I imagine towns such as Helensburgh, with its rich history, as the beginning or end of the tourist trail, with the villages of Stanwell Park, Coledale, Scarborough and Austinmer offering bed and breakfast accommodation, cafes and restaurants, all employing local residents. Thirroul and Bulli would have more shops with curios and antiques, encouraging visitors to spend their time and money in our region.

I am proud that the Government has made a significant step toward helping my electorate realise this vision with the establishment of Tourism NSW. The new statutory tourism authority will breathe new life and vigour into an industry that has been underdeveloped and undersupported for years. With a dedicated tourism division and events division, the new body will aggressively promote New South Wales in the metropolitan areas and regions alike. A targeted effective expenditure of \$400 million over the next four years will drive this initiative and help New South Wales reach its potential as a global destination. I have no doubt that this will be an enormous help with promoting Heathcote and all the area has to offer.

The Governor mentioned the need to renew infrastructure, and there is infrastructure within Heathcote that requires urgent renewal. The renewal of that infrastructure and better options for travel to and from work need to be in place before great tracts of land are released for housing in the Illawarra. I have listened to the people of Heathcote and they have asked that the F6 highway extension be considered as soon as possible. This vital infrastructure would have an enormous positive impact on the day-to-day lives of residents of Heathcote and the Sutherland shire and all who use the southern entrance to Sydney. Dealing with the Princes Highway traffic bottleneck at Heathcote shopping centre is another major priority for my constituents. The frustration caused by this merciless traffic snarl to tens of thousands of commuters travelling to work and returning home was ignored by the previous Government. Whereas the Labor Government languished for so long, this Government will succeed with a comprehensive solution to clear this blockage and ensure smooth, safe traffic flow.

The Governor said that the safety and security of citizens is the primary responsibility of any Government and policing in Heathcote, as in many other electorates, needs more resources. The growing area of Helensburgh has a police station that is not sufficiently staffed to meet demand. A fully functioning police station in this area would benefit from quick access to the F6 freeway and would serve 18,000 constituents from Bundeena to Thirroul. People in and around Helensburgh deserve the same access to police and protection from crime as those living in the heart of Sydney's central business district. Over the period of the Fifty-fifth Parliament I will fight for improved staffing at Helensburgh police station.

I thank the Governor for recognising the great spirit of optimism with which this Parliament has opened. I am extremely proud of what we have already achieved in government. After just two weeks this Government had already restored democracy to the Illawarra by setting dates for the Wollongong and Shellharbour city council elections. Before the State election countless constituents told me the situation had been extremely distressing for them since Labor had sacked both councils three years previously. The ratepayers of Wollongong and Shellharbour had gone without an elected council for too long. I am very proud the Government has already made good on its word and set dates for elections. Another early positive change for the people of Heathcote was the Government's moves to give courts tough new powers to tackle the scourge of graffiti vandalism. The new legislation requires all offenders, including juveniles, to face court. It makes cleaning up graffiti a condition of community service, and empowers magistrates to disqualify an offender's drivers licence.

The amendments also establish a graffiti hotline working in tandem with the recently launched Project Eyewatch pilot program. This twenty-first century adaptation of Neighbourhood Watch engages the community in preventative policing through the Facebook social network. This will harness the wealth of local knowledge and put thousands more eyes and ears on the beat to assist police. I am thrilled that Sutherland is one of 10 local area commands participating in the pilot program and I hope this will help reduce the damage caused by graffiti. Graffiti blights the electorate and all of New South Wales, costing \$100 million each year—\$50 million through RailCorp alone. The rail network is vital for many of my constituents and they deserve a clean, efficient and viable service.

I am also proud that the Government has already managed to slash the price of long-term rail fares. This reduction will mean a saving of up to \$224 for many of my constituents and will radically reduce queues at railway stations. I was pleased to see that this price reduction had an immediate effect with a more than 100 per cent increase in long-term ticket sales across the State, and a 105 per cent increase at Sutherland railway station in my electorate. Online ticket sales in July also jumped by more than 30 per cent compared with those in 2010, showing that this policy is making a real difference and improving the efficiency of our rail network. Only by doing this will we convince more people to take public transport, leave their cars at home, when possible, and reduce congestion on our roads. More importantly, the cheaper rail fares will provide relief to families struggling to keep up with the increasing cost of living. This was another imperative raised by the Governor and one that I feel is key to representing our constituents.

Electricity prices have soared in recent years and we must continue to find ways to bring these costs under control. New rebates for families receiving family tax benefits and low-income households will provide crucial assistance, but we must do more. By abolishing the Roads and Traffic Authority and other agencies to establish Transport for NSW the Government has sent a clear message to the public that it will not accept the same old bureaucratic politics of "no". It has shown that this Government, unlike the last, will demand solutions from its agencies, rather than simply accept excuses. Transport for NSW will be free of the duplication and miscommunication that occurred between the former agencies and will provide clear, coordinated services across all modes.

I once again thank Her Excellency for her comments. She truly is an inspiring woman. I recently had the honour of joining her to open the Sylvanvale Foundation's new Mikarie Child Care Centre in Kirrawee. This wonderful centre provides 59 new child care places where children with disabilities receive specialist long day care alongside children without disabilities. My son has been working at this facility for the past month. He reports to me that it is a fantastic facility for all concerned. It is an exceptional example of what is desperately needed across New South Wales. I am proud that this Government is committed to delivering a new, more effective disability services sector.

More than 500 people recently gathered for the Living Life My Way summit at the Acer Arena to discuss client-directed support and individualised funding packages. Community consultation has continued in my electorate and across New South Wales. The vital insights gained through this consultation will help us revolutionise disability services, giving clients, carers and families a system that has been designed by them for them. Individuals will be able to choose the services they want, rather than being dictated to by bureaucrats. This is the most significant development in disability services in the history of New South Wales. Changes like these show that the Government is determined to seize this historic opportunity for long overdue change, as mentioned by Her Excellency. Through honest service, wise judgement and sound decision-making we must build New South Wales to match the mighty aspirations of our citizens.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.32 p.m.]: I am pleased to contribute to the debate on the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech, which was delivered to this House on 3 May 2011. We all gathered on that important day for the opening of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. When this Parliament opened on 3 May 2011 it began with a great sense of optimism, a great sense of change and a great sense of renewal to begin the process of righting the wrongs. On that day I was proud to be a member of this Chamber and delighted to be given the opportunity to represent the people of the Bathurst electorate. I will grab the opportunity with both hands and make sure that the people of Bathurst have a voice in this new Government. I will make sure that the Government gets the message that regional areas need the services and opportunities that are provided in other parts of the State. My colleagues have begun this new parliamentary term with energy and enthusiasm. They are looking at ways to fix the problems that have been left behind after 16 years of Labor in government.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Especially Myall Lakes and Parramatta.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Myall Lakes and Parramatta are represented by two good members. Labor has held Bathurst for 26 of the past 30 years. On 26 March 2011 Labor suffered its worst defeat in more than a century. The party had lost its way. It had become top-heavy, nepotistic and estranged from its traditional base. The world has changed dramatically, but Labor has not kept abreast of the changes. In years gone by electricians, plumbers, tilers, painters and other tradies worked for bosses, joined trade unions and voted for Labor, but no more. They are now self-employed contractors who see themselves as small business men and women and are no longer rusted onto Labor. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has a vision to rebuild, revitalise and re-energise our State. Its vision encompasses the whole of New South Wales.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Including regional New South Wales?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The Government's vision is to rebuild New South Wales for the people who live in regional areas as well as in the city. Our vision is to provide greater opportunities and improve the quality of life of our citizens, whom we represent. I will outline the Government's plan, which has already begun, to assist the people of Bathurst. The Government has a clear Five Point Plan to rebuild New South Wales' economy. One, we will rebuild the economy through lowering taxes and supporting small business. Second, we will reform quality services in areas such as health, transport and community safety. Third, we will renovate infrastructure to make a difference to both the economy and people's lives. Fourth, we will restore accountability to government. Fifth, we will protect our local environment and return planning powers back to communities.

I am proud to be part of a Government that is looking at ways to improve New South Wales—unlike the previous Government, which was concerned with looking after its mates and had no purpose or direction. I have met the Governor on a number of occasions. She has visited Bathurst, which she says is a beautiful place. She was in Bathurst last year for the opening of a bell tower. She has connections with the city of Bathurst and is a welcomed friend. She is well aware of many parts of this State and the need for change. Previous Labor governments did not know there were towns or cities west of the Great Dividing Range. My parliamentary colleagues in the House, the member for Parramatta, the member for Camden, the member for Myall Lakes and the Minister for Disability Services, all know about the Bathurst electorate.

Members have asked questions about the electorate and they want to learn about our needs, not only for the benefit of the Bathurst electorate but for the growth of the State. The Minister visited the Bathurst electorate for the opening of a new disability home in Raglan. This critical service has been provided for the people of the Bathurst electorate. Funding of \$100,000 has been granted to Bathurst Meals on Wheels. This fantastic organisation wants to refurbish the premises it uses for its operations. This funding is for a worthy cause that provides food supplies to those in need. I am pleased that the Government has introduced Infrastructure NSW. This body will identify and prioritise costs and deliver on the projects that are needed to open up this State.

For many years members spoke about the Bells Line of Road. Just before the election a member of the former Government said that it would look at the Bells Line of Road maybe in the year 2036. Already the Minister for Roads has been out to the electorate and has met with the Roads and Traffic Authority, councils and community groups, and he acknowledges the need for that type of infrastructure. People are already struggling to travel west in New South Wales because we do not have an adequate highway to deliver services or transport across the State. In the past couple of weeks accidents occurred on both highways simultaneously and caused both highways to shut down.

The economic productivity that is lost through such road closures has a massive impact on the people of New South Wales and on the State as a whole. We were promised new rail lines, but Labor delivered none in its 16 years in government. Labor also promised to look at a daily return service from Bathurst to Sydney. We have seen the plans of the former Government and there were no plans to undertake work outside of Penrith for the next 15 years. That is why I am pleased that the present Premier has visited the people of Bathurst and has made a commitment to look at the need for a daily service between Bathurst and Sydney.

Electricity has become a major concern and the cost of living has continued to grow, causing much stress to many people. People in the Bathurst electorate are struggling to pay their bills. But Labor forgot to listen to them, and it forgot to go and do the hard work and visit towns in the electorate. Elderly people cannot afford to turn on their ovens or use appliances to heat or cool their homes. In some cases people are using their ovens to heat their houses. We have been left with a huge mess to clean up and we know that there is a big job ahead of us. We know that the sell-off of the electricity industry was probably one of the dodgiest deals of this century. The people of the Bathurst electorate want a fairer share from this Government. They have been starved of regional infrastructure. Planning in this State has become a complete nightmare.

Decisions made by the former Government removed the opportunity for communities to have an adequate say on particular developments, and in some cases decisions on developments went completely against the needs or the wishes of the community. We have begun the process of developing a new planning system that will serve only the public's interests. We have also begun the process of abolishing part 3A. People need some certainty and planning must deliver that certainty. Planning must be transparent, it must be in the public interest and it must be dealt with in a timely manner. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is committed to rebuilding the economy by generating jobs and investment, and providing better public services to our growing and ageing population.

We want to rebuild the New South Wales economy. It is a big task, and it is an even bigger task when we have been left with a \$5.3 billion black hole—a black hole that made the previous Government act in a very irresponsible manner. We will not be a government like that. My fellow colleagues and I are here to deliver for the people of New South Wales. This Government will be financially responsible and we will not waste money on projects that have no significance at all. We are committed to ensuring that we can control the budget. If we can control the budget we can deliver services right across the State. Under Labor we saw expenditure outgrowing revenue. Promises were made but they were never delivered.

I am certain that the promises we have made in the Bathurst electorate will all be delivered. We have committed to a 24-hour fire station in this term of the Government. Bathurst's population and industry have grown and a 24-hour fire service is very much needed. I am pleased that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has visited the city of Bathurst and has seen the need for this kind of service to be delivered to our community. During the election campaign I visited the police and community youth club in Lithgow. The building was very dilapidated: its roof was falling in, the kitchen was in disrepair and the recent rainfall had caused further deterioration. The police and community youth club also wants a room to provide gym classes for the young people who use the facility. I am pleased that over this term of government \$450,000 will be provided for that building.

Another critical announcement relates to flashing lights. This week we announced that flashing lights would be installed at Kelso Public School, for which the community and the parents have been asking for many years. That will be in the first of the rollouts of the new Government. We are also looking at the provision of additional road funding because some councils are struggling to keep up with the demands for road improvements and the costs involved. As a member of this new Government I will continue to push for road funding. Regional New South Wales has many wonderful attributes and we want to share in the wealth of this State. The former Government did not know that cities existed outside of Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. I congratulate my fellow colleagues for understanding and acknowledging that there are regional cities and regional towns and that we deserve a piece of the pie when it comes to delivering infrastructure.

We are also backing regional areas by stimulating growth and jobs through social and economic infrastructure. We have done that through our Kickstart Regional New South Wales Fund and the Jobs Action Plan, in which 100,000 new jobs are planned for New South Wales, with 40,000 of them going to regional areas. Sometimes these incentives are all that are needed to provide further employment and opportunities for people in this State. The relocation fund has been readily accepted by councils across New South Wales and they are advertising the fund on their websites. People who live in metropolitan areas will have an incentive to sell their home in Sydney and move into a regional area. With local health districts we have seen a return to local communities where medical professionals have greater control over medical services. I am pleased that Julie Ann Maher has been appointed to the board to represent her community and to put forward her views on the need for those services. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is made up of individuals who come from diverse backgrounds to represent the constituents of their electorates. We saw the change on 26 March when people put their trust in this Government. They have asked us to be transparent and to succeed after Labor languished behind. Ours is a tireless working team that is committed to delivering the election commitments that were promised throughout the election campaign. I am very pleased to have had the opportunity to contribute to the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [12.48 p.m.]: It is a great honour to contribute to the Address-in-Reply debate on the Speech of Her Excellency the Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, AC, CVO, on the opening of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales. I thank Her Excellency for her very encouraging and heartfelt speech. In her opening remarks Her Excellency highlighted the optimistic spirit in which this Fifty-fifth Parliament opened—the spirit of historic opportunity for change and renewal. This spirit continues to gain momentum. I point out that Mr Toole made us sit through his address-in-reply and it would be pleasant if he did the same for me.

Her Excellency spoke of the people of New South Wales asking our Government to secure the future of our State. Our members will provide honest service, wise judgment and sound decision-making. However, Her Excellency also pointed out that more will be required of our Government to improve the performance of New South Wales. More will also be required to enhance the quality of life and opportunities for our citizens. This O'Farrell Government has not wasted any time in doing this. This Government will deliver real change. Her Excellency mentioned the Government's five-point action plan. This plan would: rebuild the New South Wales

economy through lower taxes, cutting the cost of living and increasing business growth; return quality services in areas such as health, transport, education, community and safety; renovate infrastructure to make a difference to both our economy and people's lives; restore accountability to Government by giving people a say on issues that affect them; and, protect our local environment and return planning powers to the community.

In response to the five-point action plan I am proud that on 26 March the people of New South Wales voted for change. This O'Farrell Government has delivered on many of its commitments, including: passing legislation to create 100,000 new jobs through our Jobs Action Plan; reducing train travel costs for commuters buying monthly, quarterly and yearly tickets; creating district health boards to give medical professionals and the community more say in the running of their local hospitals; repealing Labor's homebuyer's tax; introducing move-on laws and reintroducing the offence of drunk and disorderly to strengthen police powers; establishing Infrastructure NSW to identify and prioritise infrastructure projects; establishing a special commission of inquiry into Labor's bungled and dishonest power sale; introducing legislation to toughen laws relating to graffiti vandals; and, scrapping Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

I look forward to being part of a Government that, with positive and practical measures, will continue to deliver our commitments to the people of Camden and greater New South Wales, and make New South Wales number one again. Her Excellency spoke of protecting our environment. I am chair of the Environment and Regulation Committee and the member for Mulgoa is the deputy chair. The member for Lismore, the member for Marrickville, and the member for Balmain make up the rest of the committee. I look forward to the committee helping to address issues that will affect the quality of our children's futures in relation to the quality of the air they breathe, the food they eat, the water they drink and the natural environment in which they live.

Her Excellency spoke of the natural environment package. If approved by members, it will provide additional funding for national parks, bush regeneration, Landcare, green corridors, protection for threatened species, air quality initiatives and the remediation of contaminated sites. Her Excellency also stated that the Government values the contribution of local government as an intricate part of our democracy. I believe in local government. There is a very real role for all three levels of government in our communities. Of all the three, though, I believe local governments are closest to the community. Local governments need and should get support from the State Government and should not be portrayed as the poor cousin, which happened for far too long under the former Government. Local and State governments should work together to achieve a greater outcome for our community.

Local government is a major manager of infrastructure in New South Wales, providing many of the local amenities New South Wales families rely on every day. It is the infrastructure that makes housing estates more than just places to live, but rather communities that people want to live in and are proud to live in. On 31 May the Premier and Minister for Local Government announced that council-by-council audits had commenced and would identify infrastructure needed in every local government area of New South Wales. It is great to see that our Premier is determined to ensure State and local governments are working together to improve the lives of people across our State through the commencement of the council-by-council audits. This O'Farrell Government will change and renew New South Wales. Our Government is investing in infrastructure.

The Camden electorate is one of the fastest-growing electorates in New South Wales. It has a population of around 70, 000 people that is set to explode to more than 300,000 people over the next two to three decades. With this huge growth in population comes the need for infrastructure provision: the two go hand in hand. The people of the Camden electorate can rest assured that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government understands this need and will deliver for them, unlike what has happened in the past. Our Government is delivering on its commitments. Our Government is on track to making New South Wales Australia's number one place to live and do business again.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [12.56 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I reply to Her Excellency the Governor's Speech on the occasion of the opening of the Fifty-fifth Parliament of New South Wales. Her Excellency the Governor, Marie Bashir, is a true lady who has an amazing sense of compassion and love for this State. I have met Her Excellency and heard her speak at several charity functions. I believe she has empathy for people with disabilities, people who are suffering and the people of New South Wales as a whole. At the beginning of her Speech Her Excellency referred to the responsibility that the people of New South Wales have placed in the Liberal-Nationals Coalition to govern the State through honest service, wise judgment and sound decision-making—three tenets that the voters obviously thought were lacking under the previous Government.

It must be noted that the people of New South Wales have not only selected the Liberal-Nationals Coalition to govern, but have done so with a record majority and a mandate that cannot be denied. The faith and trust placed in the hands of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is not taken lightly, and the faith and trust will be dealt with in responsible government that reflects the mandate the citizens of New South Wales gave it. When New South Wales produces to its capabilities and provides services that are efficient and effective it has a flow-on effect. When New South Wales is prosperous, the nation is prosperous. This State now has a Premier with the drive and determination to deliver on his promises and to get the State up and running as it should be and as it is capable of. As with all responsible governance, there is a plan: rebuild the New South Wales economy and quality services in critical areas, renovate infrastructure, restore Government accountability, protect our local environment and return planning powers to the community.

The Government set goals for itself to demonstrate its commitment to achieve results. The Government has delivered on its first 100 day commitments and on the five-point action plan. Members are aware that legislation has been introduced reflecting our election commitments and responding to the 100 Day Action Plan including: the establishment of Infrastructure NSW, an independent body combining public and private sector expertise to remove the politics from infrastructure decision-making; the harmonisation of New South Wales occupational health and safety arrangements within the national framework; the introduction of new laws to tackle graffiti offenders with measures to bring graffiti offenders to account; and, the introduction of measures to re-establish trust, honesty and accountability in Government, including eliminating Government's use of taxpayers' money to fund political advertising further measures to regulate lobbyists and campaign finance reform.

How we spend taxpayers' money matters. It should not be spent on quasi election campaigns and funding political advertising. Instead, it should be spent on services, infrastructure and genuine community information campaigns. I believe voters are sick and tired of politicians wasting their money and are angry at the way in which it is being spent on election campaigns for the government of the day. They are sick and tired of their money being spent in electorates just to help the Government win elections. That is why the new Government has introduced Infrastructure NSW so that spending is not determined by the ballot box but by where it is needed and where it will bring the most benefit.

I spoke in the debate on our new graffiti legislation, which is part of the 100 Day Action Plan and which will make people more accountable for their actions. It will introduce penalties and is designed to provide disincentives to creating graffiti in the first place. Graffiti is one of the major issues in my electorate. We have long stretches of Colorbond fences that become blank canvases for these vandals to deface. Whilst volunteer groups do their best to clean it off—we have two hardworking ones with Locals Against Graffiti Gangs operating in Liverpool and the Volunteer Removal Squad in Menai—there need to be tougher penalties to deter it from occurring in the first place. I have been involved in graffiti removal programs and have put in the elbow grease to remove it. I have also joined with the Sutherland Shire Youth Council to plant shrubs to shield the Colorbond fences, but whilst these vandals think they can get away with it, they will always find a way.

The new legislation gives courts the ability to make vandals clean up graffiti—to see for themselves how hard it is—and gives the option to punish them by taking away their driver licence, and ensuring they have to front a court. The 100 Day Action Plan was also designed with the understanding that it is essential that the New South Wales economy be rebuilt, and it should be noted that this rebuilding is the first item on the Government's Five Point Action Plan. Rebuilding the economy will generate jobs, investment and revenues to enable taxes to be reduced, more infrastructure to be built, and more and better public services to be provided to our growing and ageing population.

To enable the Government to meet its election commitments, it will deliver the State budget on Tuesday 6 September; deliver its commitments for this term, over this term, starting with the 100 Day Action Plan, the 2011-12 budget and subsequent budgets; and implement mechanisms to strengthen fiscal and economic management, retain New South Wales' triple-A credit rating and ensure that growth in spending is less than or equal to revenue growth. The Government has introduced the Appropriation (Supply and Budget Variations) Bill 2011, which will ensure that government activities are appropriately resourced for the period leading up to the September budget. This bill has already passed both Houses of Parliament and has been assented to by Her Excellency the Governor.

I now wish to address commitments that were made to the constituents of Menai during the election campaign, a campaign that seemed at the time to go on forever. I am sure that it probably felt the same for most members in this Chamber. For far too long the citizens of New South Wales have become accustomed to the

normality of election promises being broken. This practice of talking the talk and not even trying to walk the walk has left New South Wales politicians with the worst profile imaginable. However, with the election of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government, thankfully, this shameful practice has now stopped, and when the Government demonstrates to the public its honesty and integrity the profile of members in this place can only improve.

The Government has committed to additional beds and nurses in local health districts and that commitment will help cut waiting times at Liverpool and Sutherland hospitals, reduce the pressure on our hardworking doctors and nurses and address the 16 years of neglect by the former Labor Government. This neglect will take years to correct and we will need to invest in training and infrastructure to provide these beds and nurses. I have twice visited Liverpool Hospital with our Minister for Health, Mrs Jillian Skinner, and have seen the pressure that the hospital and its staff are under. It is one of the State's busiest hospitals and it needs an injection of more beds and more nurses to help it to effectively and safely service our health needs. I have met with several of the doctors at Sutherland hospital and they have stressed to me the need for more beds.

The demand already exists, and more beds will be utilised to help reduce waiting times and the pressure on staff and patients in that hospital. Importantly, this commitment will provide better care to people who are unwell and in need of help. The Government has committed to referring the F6 extension to Infrastructure NSW for urgent assessment. This project is important to help people travel quickly and safely and to enable them to spend more time with their families and less time on the roads. With this in mind, there is a need to widen the congested M5. I was with the now Premier and now local western Sydney members at the Hammondville toll plaza where we announced the widening of the M5, which is greatly needed as the majority of traffic movements occur on the western section of the road.

Another announcement was that our Government will upgrade Deadmans Creek Bridge on Heathcote Road to make it safer. It is a dangerous section of road because of its narrowness, the speed of the traffic and the camber of the road itself. Heathcote Road is a major black spot, and this is one measure to alleviate some of the danger. However, more needs to be done and I was grateful to have the Minister for Roads and Ports on site recently to see what more can be done to further reduce the danger. I will keep talking to police, ambulance drivers and the bush fire brigade as well as the Minister and his department to identify other dangerous areas along this road.

Soon after the election, one of my first ministerial visits was from the Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, and the Premier. I joined them as they announced the statewide interactive whiteboard roll-out at one of my local schools: Illawong Public School. The New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring that our children's education is well resourced, supported and funded. The interactive whiteboards seem to have made a big difference to the way teachers are able to interact with the class as they really help to get students actively involved in answering questions via the touch screen.

One of the most called-for reforms was that we return planning powers to the community. The community knows what is best for its area and called for transparency and open decision-making. That is what this Government will be known for. This is an active Government and on Monday 11 July 2011 the community Cabinet came to Menai and adjacent electorates. An ambitious schedule was proposed by the Government with Ministers and staff travelling from one end of the electorates to the other. The morning schedule saw Ministers visiting Sutherland hospital, Sutherland Early Support Service, Menai Men's Shed, Menai Community Services, Enough is Enough anti-violence movement, Sutherland Tourist Park and Able Hire, where the Premier made an announcement concerning small business in New South Wales.

At the evening open forum I had the pleasure of being the master of ceremonies, introducing the Premier and Cabinet and then directing questions from the public to the relevant Ministers. There was no vetting of questions and, to the credit of the Premier and the Ministers, no questions were taken on notice. All questions were answered directly and honestly and it was a pleasure to be a part of the process. The two Ministers who received the lion's share of questions without doubt were the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure and the Minister for Roads and Ports. At one stage the Minister for Roads and Ports changed his portfolio, just temporarily, to the Minister for Heathcote Road as there were a lot of questions about that particular road.

As I mentioned earlier, the Premier, as part of the 100 Day Action Plan, made an announcement at Able Hire that as of 11 July 2011 the Government had introduced a strict payment regime for State agencies that obliges them to pay creditors within 30 days or face penalties for tardy payment. State-owned corporations will be encouraged to adopt the payment regime. Payments for outstanding accounts are to be made by government agencies within 30 calendar days or they will face paying penalty interest on the outstanding debt. The payment

policy will be effective immediately. The transition period for the 30-day payment policy is expected to apply for six months from 1 July 2011 to allow agencies to make appropriate administrative arrangements for on-time payment. This announcement will certainly ensure that small businesses can now make agencies accountable for swift bill payment, and ensure a steady cash flow for their businesses.

At the conclusion of the announcement the Premier was talking to Paul Bell, the director of Able Hire, where the policy announcement was made. Paul mentioned to the Premier that his daughter, Erin Bell, was a member of the Diamonds who had won the World Netball Championship in Singapore on 10 July 2011 with a thrilling one-point win over New Zealand. I take this opportunity to congratulate all members of the world championship team for a thrilling win against New Zealand and becoming world champions. I hope they will hold the title for many years. The community Cabinet was an outstanding success and much appreciated by the community who were involved in many aspects of the proceedings. At this very early stage of its four-year term of government the O'Farrell-Stoner Coalition has already demonstrated that it is a government that is prepared to consult with the community and to make important decisions for the future of the State. Her Excellency the Governor, in the closing remarks of her address to the Parliament, said:

I now leave you to the important tasks entrusted to you by the people of New South Wales.

The Government has taken these important tasks seriously as is demonstrated by the implementation of the 100 Day Action Plan and the Five Point Action Plan. I commend and thank Her Excellency the Governor on her speech to the Parliament.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [1.09 p.m.]: I would like to thank Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, the Governor, for her speech. Debates such as the Address-in-Reply provide us as politicians an opportunity to reflect on where we are, and where we want to go, on important policy areas. As a new member of the Fifty-fifth Parliament, and one of the youngest, I am excited about this historic opportunity to be part of the change in New South Wales and to be part of the solution, in the words of the Governor, to rebuild, revitalise and re-energise the great institutional, economic and human resources of our great State of New South Wales.

As education is the best legacy we can leave future generations, I welcome the opportunity to reflect on this theme today. Education is important as it is preparing people for tomorrow, with the limited resources, knowledge and skills that we have today. A good education is the greatest gift we can give future generations. It is up to our generation to give the next generation the skills and resources they will need in a world that will be very different from that we have now. We continue to struggle with teaching students about a world that we, more than ever, have no idea how it will look in five, 10 or 15 years time. A child that begins kindergarten in 2012 will graduate from high school in 2024. Ken Robinson recognised this modern educational challenge when he observed in his authoritative lecture *Do Schools kill creativity?*:

Nobody has a clue ... what the world will look like in five years' time. And yet we're meant to be educating them for it.

Our system has to be ahead of its time, and I fear that around the country new approaches are needed to ensure that our future generations are best prepared to enter into a changing and dynamic world. They need skills, not just knowledge, and the capacity to quickly adapt to advances in technology, pedagogy and thinking. All this begins with adequately resourcing schools and ensuring that all schools are sufficiently resourced to deliver a decent education. I welcome the Gonski review of school funding. However, with school choice comes the responsibility of the State and the school to ensure that any choice made by parents provides a minimum standard of education that will prepare students with a basic set of skills in reading, writing and numeracy. More so, any reform should be to increase the performance of everyone, not just certain groups, across the board.

With the imminent release of the Gonski report, some radical options need to be seriously considered. Personally, I would like to see a debate about charter schools occur in New South Wales. Charter schools are State-funded community schools, accessible to all for no additional compulsory contribution and run by local boards, while meeting minimum standards set down by the State. In other words, while the State continues the funding, the governance and running of the school remain in community hands. Across the world they go by several names—community schools, charter schools and independent public schools, as they are called in Western Australia. Both the values and the principles are the same. New South Wales should follow the lead of the new Coalition Government in Western Australia that oversees over 100 independent public schools. This number is set to double in the next two years, with hundreds of schools across the State voluntarily opting for greater autonomy. To quote the Western Australia's Education Department's website:

Independent Public Schools set their own strategic directions, have authority for day-to-day decision making and are in an ideal position to make decisions that best cater for their students. Parents and community members have an important and enhanced role in this initiative.

Inside their system they have primary schools and high schools. Some schools have entered the system on their own, others have entered in clusters to reach economies of scale in resource delivery. They include schools in well-off communities and schools in communities that are less well off. Western Australia has been inundated with current public schools wanting to take control of the day-to-day operations themselves. Each school has a board that endorses and regularly reviews the day-to-day operations including the budget, the school business plan and the selection of a new principal. The principal, not the department, has the role of selecting new staff, so school staff are employed on the basis of need, rather than arbitrary quotas or requirements set by head office.

A school can only become an independent public school after extensive community consultation. This ensures that schools that become independent are in a community willing to devote time and effort to achieving a top-class result. As a Liberal I do not believe the radical reforms we need in our education system can come from a centralised system run out of Sydney or Canberra. We need the people on the ground to make the decisions about how best to educate our children, but we need to make sure all students have access to a decent education that will prepare them for the future. In the same way as the Minister for Health has decentralised control of critical areas of our health policy with local health districts and community governance, we should give the power of schools to the local community if they so wish.

Overall, schools are able to equip their school based on their own needs, rather than by set standards. Communities feel empowered because they feel their decisions are having an impact on the operation of their schools. Most notably, they have been successful in both middle-class and less-well-off communities. As my Federal parliamentary colleague and shadow Minister for Education, Christopher Pyne, recently noted, an independent public school just outside Perth has used its extra autonomy to engage parents as well as students. He said:

This school is using the resources it has to reward parents and encourage them to become involved in their child's life at school. Parents are able to earn points in a reward system that allows them to access internet facilities, buy canteen lunches for their children, and pay for uniforms or excursions. Parents earn points by participating in activities such as mentoring, attending P & C meetings, volunteering at school carnivals or helping children at the school's read and spell club.

While not a measure of a holistic success of the school, it is no surprise that both the attendance rates and National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy results of that specific school have gone through the roof. In a sense, independent public schools are not just surviving because of a strong community; they are part of the broader scheme to build and strengthen communities across the country. The OECD recently found that greater community involvement in education meant better across-the-board results in mathematics, science and literacy. In my opinion, one of the best ways of engaging the community is by involving them in the everyday running of the schools.

The small decisions and large decisions alike in independent public schools are made by communities affected by them. Instead of the centrally managed Building the Education Revolution process, an empowered community could have avoided the debacle that was the Building the Education Revolution program. Furthermore, the local focus would have meant each community would focus on value for money and the needs of the individual school. The \$1.5 billion of waste across the country could have built, from scratch, around 60 high schools.

While I concede there have been some mixed experiences with independent public schools and their equivalents, particularly in the United States of America and Canada, it is imperative that a debate is had about their merits and their detriments. In Western Australia, for example, governments should have spent more time engaging the community, especially the teachers unions, on the need for change in the system. They should have better engaged with the Teachers Union to better integrate their thoughts and visions into local school governance and to ensuring better teaching standards.

In the United States of America the results have been mixed. However in New Orleans, where the State Government used the opportunity of Hurricane Katrina to build a school system afresh, the results are impressive. Over 60 per cent of the city's students now attend State-funded charter schools. In 2010-11 less than one-third of students were deemed to be failing. This number sounds very high, except when one looks at what the numbers were in 2005, before Hurricane Katrina. Back then two-thirds of students were failing. The greater the incentive there is to improve results the better we can become.

Without a doubt there have been instances where charter schools have been set up without community support, without proper planning and consultation, and have delivered less than optimum results for students. As we have seen time and again, good governments pursuing good policy can have success, whereas bad

governments pursuing bad policy will not. I am convinced this Government is a good government that will pursue good policy. However, we should not just confine ourselves to discussing the international experience, but look at a holistic model that can fit in with the outcomes of the Gonski review and our current socioeconomic status formula. An Australian model should aim to take the best of the experiences from around the world.

The New South Wales Government should take this idea seriously. I have written to the Minister for Education outlining my case for our State to debate the merits of independent public schools. We should use the imminent outcome of the Gonski review to debate school funding, and include consideration of independent public schools and fully funded non-government schools to cater for students with disabilities or learning difficulties. This measure has the strong support of Christian Schools Australia, the peak body representing 130 member schools Australia-wide with approximately 46,000 students and more than 2,000 teaching staff.

Like any reform, we must get the implementation right and have the right community model and government involvement, backed by strong metrics to assess the success of the newly formed school. Australia should be comparing itself to the fastest runners in the field, not the slowest. We should focus on skills rather than just knowledge. We should focus on an environment that fosters creativity, rather than discourages it. Our education system needs to be underpinned by solid minimum standards, yet give schools the freedom to cater for the individual needs of students to foster and create their own talents. Our State cannot afford to not have a debate about charter schools. New South Wales should not be a follower in education, it should be a leader.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [1.21 p.m.]: I contribute to the Address-In-Reply to the Speech of Her Excellency the Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, AC, on the opening of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. It was a proud moment for me on 26 March to be elected as the member for Castle Hill following the former member, Michael Richardson, who served the electorate very ably for many years. I wish Michael and Cherry all the best in his retirement. For many of his 17 years in this place he had a tough time, serving only one year in government.

Mr Craig Baumann: I was the poor bugger who had to sit next to him.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The member for Port Stephens reminds me that he had to sit next to Michael; I am sure it would have been enjoyable. For many years Michael faced difficulty obtaining funding for various things in The Hills district for which he worked tirelessly and by whom he is held in great regard. The neglect of The Hills district was evident in the result on election day when the Liberal Party received 80.8 per cent of the two party preferred votes. That result was indicative of the lack of support and funding for The Hills over the past 16 years. I am proud to have the responsibility to turn around the fate of my local community. I will continue to work energetically to achieve that result. One major objective of the Coalition Opposition leading into the election was to set out a five-point plan. I am proud to state that we have already commenced working on this plan.

This plan will, first, rebuild the New South Wales economy through lower taxes, cutting the cost of living and improving business growth; second, return quality to areas such as health, transport, education and community safety; third, renovate infrastructure to make a difference to our economy and people's lives; fourth, restore accountability to government by giving people a say on issues that affect them; and, finally, to protect our local environment and return planning powers to the community. I shall refer to each point in detail and outline what we have done in our early stages of government in delivering on that plan and in setting out a vision for the future. However, it would be remiss of me to commence my contribution without talking about transport because the north-west has been neglected for many years. In 1998 the Labor Government first identified the need to build a north-west rail line to the Castle Hill electorate. On 23 November 1998 transport Minister Carl Scully said:

New rail links across the north-western suburbs to Castle Hill from Hurstville to Strathfield and high speed links to Newcastle, the Central Coast and Wollongong are among 8 major projects to be built in Sydney by 2010.

Last year was 2010, we do not have a train line and our roads are congested. Not much has been done, but the previous Government did deliver a number of promises to the people of north-western Sydney that were continually broken. In 2005 the rail line proposal was delayed with the plan for it to be built in 2017. In February 2008 the Labor Government cancelled the rail line and its spin doctors went into action saying, "Don't worry about the fact that we're cancelling the rail line. We're going to build you a metro instead." The spokesperson for then Minister for Transport John Watkins said, "The Government has made it very clear that the metro rail is the future of public transport in Sydney." Unfortunately, the metro did not last all that long,

despite not just the Minister for Transport making the promises. Then Premier Iemma issued a press release saying "Premier Iemma unveils Sydney's first Euro-style metro rail project." The then Premier said in that press release:

The North West Metro is just the start for Sydney. We are undertaking the biggest transport infrastructure program in Australia's history. It will change the way Sydney works, lives and breathes.

It certainly did not do that. That announcement was made in March 2008 and by 31 October 2008 the north-west metro was officially shelved by the Labor Government. The lesson for us in government is to not promise things we cannot deliver. Our challenge is to manage people's expectations and deliver what we promise. I raised the issue of the north-west metro project on numerous occasions and the member for Toongabbie always said we did not have any money. Interestingly, after reading some articles, I learned that not long after the north-west metro was shelved in October 2008—in fact, in the same week—the CBD Metro was announced. When the north-west metro was axed a senior Government source said, "We can't afford it; it's as simple as that." The then Leader of the Opposition, now Premier, said:

After 10 years of promises, northwest Sydney have lost it in Labor. They can no longer believe anything that Labor says.

That was true not just for north-west Sydney; it was true across the board. Labor's handling of the north-west rail project and treating the people of north-west Sydney, particularly the people of Castle Hill, with contempt is why there are so few Labor members in this House today: It is a lesson from which we need to learn. I am proud as a member of this Government to say that prior to the election we promised to deliver the North West Rail Link for the people of Castle Hill. Many people say that pork-barrelling delivers for marginal areas. The Hills district was not a marginal area but the North West Rail Link was our number one infrastructure transport priority.

I am proud to state that since the election the Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering on this project, and it will ensure that it continues to forge ahead. I was present at the opening of the North West Rail Link Community Information Centre, which is a great resource for members in our local area. Members of the public have come into my office and provided feedback in relation to where the station should be or on how the train line should run. We hold briefings in that centre. It is great that the O'Farrell Government listens to the community. It is often the case that people in the community have expertise and knowledge that members of staff in the department do not necessarily have.

I am pleased that the Minister and the Premier have ensured that local people in The Hills district are having a say about one of the biggest projects that this State has ever seen. A lesson that the Liberal-Nationals Government learned from the former Government is to ensure that it implements projects that are in the best interests of this State. I will not dwell on the CBD Metro for my entire speech but I note that when the North West Rail Link was axed Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said to the former State Labor Government that there were no votes for the Labor Party in that area, which is why that rail link was not built.

Pursuant to sessional orders debate interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DEATH OF PRIVATE MATTHEW LAMBERT

The SPEAKER: It is with deep regret that I speak of the death of Private Matthew Lambert, who was killed during operations in Afghanistan on 22 August 2011. Private Lambert was born in Kogarah New South Wales in 1985. He joined the army from southern Queensland, enlisting in the 9th Battalion Royal Queensland Regiment in August 2005, transferring to the Australian Regular Army in February 2007 and posted to 2RAR in Townsville, also serving as a member of the Mentoring Task Force Three.

Private Lambert was the twenty-ninth Australian soldier killed in Afghanistan and the first from his unit. He served in East Timor before arriving in Afghanistan in June. Private Lambert has been awarded the following honours and awards: the Australian Active Service Medal with clasp International Coalition Against Terrorism, the Afghanistan Campaign Medal, the Australian Service Medal with clasp Timor-Leste, the Australian Defence Medal and the Timor-Leste Solidarity Medal. He is survived by his spouse, parents and family. I ask all members to rise as a mark of respect and in memory of Private Matthew Lambert.

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

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge the presence in the gallery today of the Hon. Milton Morris, AO, former member for Maitland in the Legislative Assembly from 1956 to 1980. The Hon. Milton Morris, AO, served as Minister for Transport from 1965 to 1975—the longest serving transport Minister in the State's history—Minister for Forests in 1975, and Minister for Decentralisation and Development in 1976. The Hon. Milton Morris, AO is a guest of the member for Shellharbour.

I acknowledge also the presence in the gallery today of Amy Taylor, AM, Marie Lyne, Laurel Kean, Joan Harvey, Dorothy Bramwell, Elizabeth Wilson, Elaine Wallace and Shirley Wilson, who are visiting the Parliament today celebrating the 70th anniversary of the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service, the Australian Women's Army Service, the Australian Army Medical Women's Service, and the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force. They are guests of the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

OMBUDSMAN

Report

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 43 of the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993, a report entitled, "Report of Reviewable Deaths in 2008 and 2009—Volume 1: Child Deaths", dated August 2011.

Ordered to be printed.

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Report

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 81N of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, an audit of the Commission for Children and Young People of the Child-related Conduct Declarations made by members elected on 26 March 2011.

Ordered to be printed.

SENATE VACANCY

Resignation of Senator Helen Coonan

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

MARIE BASHIR
Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 23 August 2011

Her Excellency the Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly a copy of a despatch dated 23 August 2011, received from the President of the Senate, notifying that a vacancy had happened in the representation of the State of New South Wales in the Senate of the Commonwealth of Australia through the resignation of Senator the Honourable Helen Coonan which occurred on 22 August 2011.

The Senate
Canberra
23 August 2011

Your Excellency

Pursuant to the provisions of section 21 of the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution, I notify Your Excellency that a vacancy has happened in the representation of the State of New South Wales through the resignation of Senator the Honourable Helen Coonan on 22 August 2011.

Yours sincerely,

John Hogg
President of the Senate

SENATE VACANCY**Joint Sitting****Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:**

- (1) the House meet the Legislative Council for the purpose of sitting and voting together to choose a person to hold the place in the Senate rendered vacant by the resignation of Senator the Honourable Helen Coonan; and
- (2) a message be sent informing the Legislative Council of the resolution and requesting the Legislative Council to fix a time and place for the joint sitting.

Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.**QUESTION TIME**

[Question time commenced at 2.25 p.m.]

ORICA PLANT INCIDENT

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. In light of the Minister's statements that people were informed when they needed to be and there was no public health risk from the Orica incident, what does she say to Stockton resident Aimee St Clair, whose five-year-old son has had irritable eyes since being allowed to play in his backyard in the days following the leak of hexavalent chromium?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I live in the Hunter Valley 20 minutes from Stockton. I am in the area all the time talking to people. I feel sorry for the residents of Stockton and the Hunter Valley because Opposition members are constantly upsetting and frightening them with their scaremongering. Independent toxicology results show no health risks. The people have an opportunity to talk to experts and they are talking to them. What they need now are solutions to make sure that this does not happen again.

The O'Farrell Government and I will make sure that safeguards are in place so that industry reports immediately. We will make sure that proper legislation is in place. The people are talking about solutions for the future. We are working towards solutions to make sure that everyone is informed and consultation takes place. We will work with the community. We are already working with the community on air quality monitoring. We will not engage in political games, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who wants to keep frightening people. We are giving people the information they need.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS MEETING

Mr ANDREW FRASER: My question is addressed to the Premier. Will the Premier advise the House about the outcome of last weeks' Council of Australian Governments meeting in Canberra?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The meeting of Territory, State and Federal leaders was a valuable exercise and secured important initiatives in areas such as mental health, disability insurance, the student visa program and national transport regulations. The Council of Australian Governments has agreed to the development of a National Partnership on Mental Health and agreed in principle to the development of a 10-year road map for national reform of mental health. As well, there was general agreement across the country in relation to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I am sure that will be of great interest to the Minister for Disability Services.

All Premiers supported the establishment of that scheme. The Council of Australian Governments set up a select committee to agree on the principles of a national disability insurance scheme with a view to having them finalised by the end of the year. That will build on the work of the Productivity Commission and will ensure that States and Territories have an important role in the design and delivery of the scheme—and that the Minister understands very well.

The Council of Australian Governments also discussed the importance of international education to our economy. That issue is particularly vital to New South Wales because so many overseas students are studying

here, and overseas education plays a significant role in our State's economy. International numbers have been hit by the high Australian dollar, Federal Government changes to visa requirements and increased competition from the United States of America, Canada and other countries. The Premiers put on the table with the Commonwealth a proposal for a three-year working visa for graduates with university or higher level vocational qualifications where a skills shortage exists to ensure that we not only attract more graduates but we make use of the skills that they have gained through their education in Australia.

There would not be a country member sitting on this side of the House who does not have somewhere in his or her electorate shortages of doctors and nurses. The Premiers are saying across party divides that if students are out here studying to be a nurse or a doctor or they are studying in some other area where there is a skills shortage, at the end of their studies, when they have graduated, they should be able to get a three-year working visa to apply those skills to this country. That would not only assist in overcoming the skills shortages experienced in New South Wales and other States; it would also ensure that the graduates return to their countries with even greater skills and that we can employ graduating international medical students in country areas.

The Council of Australian Governments agreed also to sign up to national transport reforms, establishing national transport regulators for heavy vehicles, rail and maritime safety by January 2013. The agreements will establish national standards that will significantly cut red tape and they are expected to generate economic benefits of up to \$30 billion over 20 years with reduced costs for Australian transport companies and reduced costs for exports and trade.

There was one area, however, in relation to which there was no agreement between the States and the Commonwealth, and that was in relation to a carbon tax. All the States went into the meeting with one simple request: that the Federal Government release its modelling that underpinned its decision to press ahead with the carbon tax. It was a reasonable request, simply ensuring that the States—regardless of whether they have a Liberal or a Labor government, regardless of whether they support or oppose the carbon tax—can make an accurate assessment of how much the tax will cost them; how many jobs, if any, were at risk; and what industries would be most affected.

[*Interruption*]

Has the Leader of the Opposition adopted a position yet on carbon tax? Is he for or against it? He has been sitting on a barbed wire fence for so long he is no longer a baritone. What we got from the Prime Minister was the most extraordinary response.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We used to have a New South Wales Premier who was known as "Yes-No" Reid. We now have "Yes-Dunno" Robertson. The Prime Minister told us that she could not release the Commonwealth modelling because it was unreliable in relation to States and regional areas. In other words, it is gross economic vandalism for a government to commit to a carbon tax that, whatever one's view, will have a significant impact on the economies of all States across Australia without fundamental information as to whether it is going to hurt or help. [*Time expired.*]

ORICA PLANT INCIDENT

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. How can the Minister maintain that the 16-hour delay in Orica informing her department was totally unacceptable but that the subsequent 54-hour delay in the Government alerting the people of Stockton of the presence of hexavalent chromium contamination was appropriate?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will remain silent. They are making it difficult for the Minister for the Environment to hear the question. Is the Minister happy to answer the question?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: It is all right; I answered this question yesterday. This is just a repeat of the same question. The Opposition does not have any other questions to ask me.

Mr John Robertson: We haven't got any answers yet.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I will give members opposite the same answer as I gave yesterday, because clearly they have no imagination—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: Clearly my point of order is on relevance if the Minister is going to give the same answer as she gave yesterday. This is a different question.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I gave a detailed time line yesterday. It is unacceptable that Labor's legislation left a 16-hour delay. What is acceptable is that this Government will ensure that it does not happen again. We will put the safeguards in place so that industry has the right requirements, regulators know what to do and the community is consulted. I am not going to use this community to give the Opposition political relevance. That is what this is about: the Opposition is trying to get political relevance and it is using the people of Stockton to do it.

NSW HEALTH RESTRUCTURE

Mr JOHN BARILARO: My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. How will NSW Health governance changes announced by the Government today support front-line doctors, nurses and health services?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: It is not a surprise that the member for Monaro has asked me this question. Many members on this side of the House, particularly those representing country electorates, are saying how fantastic it is that front-line doctors, nurses and other health workers are getting the support they need—support that was taken away from them by the former Labor Government. I particularly thank the member for Monaro, who joined with me in meeting with the Australian Capital Territory Chief Minister and Minister for Health, following which we announced our intention to move ahead with cross-border arrangements, which had come to a halt under the former Labor Government. I thank the member for Monaro and all other members who have shown particular interest in these reforms. Everyone in this Parliament in the last term will remember the Making It Work policy that we put out back in March 2009.

The Leader of the Opposition was not even here then. Making It Work was about giving health management back to the local communities and supporting them, devolving back to a structure that allowed doctors and nurses the responsibility for the resources they need. Today we have announced how this will happen, and I am very delighted with the response we have been getting from right across the State already. We are committed to getting rid of the middle layer of bureaucracy that was created by the former Labor Government—the clusters. We are moving around 8,000 people down to the districts, with \$80 million worth of support for the doctors, nurses and allied health professionals in delivering health care. This is the biggest change to health that we have seen in a very long time, and I congratulate all those who have been involved in this review. I will read a couple of the comments that I have so far received. They are only very short comments because this was only announced a short time ago.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much chatter in the Chamber. Members who continue to interject will be placed on calls to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I know the Opposition does not want to hear this. Professor John Dwyer, who is well-known to members, said:

I have just finished reading the document. Well done. This is what we needed to see developed to give us the contemporary health system we need at State level.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The Australian Medical Association media release stated:

Restructure of NSW Health is an amazing step in the right direction. The first devolution of responsibility to local health districts and removal of clinical support clusters under the State Government's new Ministry of Health plan is a major step in the right direction.

I recall hearing the member for Macquarie Fields running down the Australian Medical Association. I recall also that on one occasion he said in this Chamber that he was a proud member of the Australian Medical Association. Opposition members cannot have it both ways.

Mr Ryan Park: He is a member.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: In reality this Government is delivering on its election promises. It is devolving responsibility, abolishing the clusters, downsizing the departmental head office and making decisions closer to where they need to be made. I have visited 22 hospitals in the 20 weeks I have been Minister. A number of my colleagues on this side of the House and I visited 22 hospitals, spent a minimum of three hours at each hospital and no media flunkies were attached to us as is the case with Opposition members. We made sure that we spoke to the doctors, the nurses and the health administrators, who said to us, "Let us get on with the job of running our own health facility. Give us an opportunity to employ our own staff. Make sure that clinical front-line staff members are protected. Do not cut nursing jobs as the former Labor Government did." The former Government cut 340 nursing jobs in the Penrith district alone. This is about bringing people out of the bureaucratic middle cluster down to the front line to support doctors and nurses.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: In the end it is about providing better health care to everyone in New South Wales. I thank everyone involved and those who will be working with us to continue improving health care across the whole of New South Wales.

ORICA PLANT INCIDENT

Mr CLAYTON BARR: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear the question.

Ms Anna Watson: Throw them out.

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

Mr John Williams: A well-crafted question.

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

Mr CLAYTON BARR: In light of admissions from health officials at last night's community meeting that further testing is being done to determine any longer term health effects from the recent leak of hexavalent chromium, how can the Minister maintain that there is no public health risk in Stockton?

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order—

Mr John Robertson: It's too hard to answer, Brad: come and save her.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the point of order.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Robbo, it is not too hard; it is just getting very boring. Ask some new questions.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Auburn and the Leader of the Opposition will come to order so that I can hear the point of order.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Standing Order 126 states:

A Minister may be asked a question which relates to ...

Matters under the Minister's administration ...

As this is a health question it should be ruled out of order and it should be asked of the Minister for Health. Opposition members have been out of the job for only four months and they do not know to whom they should be directing their questions.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is a matter for the Minister. I accept the question, which, given the circumstances of the past week or so, is probably within the Minister's purview.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I thank the member for Cessnock for his question as it gives me an opportunity to correct the record. Health and the Office of Environment and Heritage are working together on Orica to obtain results. I have been advised that the Department of Health is not conducting further toxicology testing and has not requested the Office of Environment and Heritage to do so. I am further advised that Professor Alison Jones, the independent toxicologist, has confirmed that no further testing is required.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is a serious issue. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Professor Alison Jones looks forward to receiving the toxicology report so she can review it and ensure that it addresses community concerns.

The SPEAKER: Order! All members should be interested in listening to the answer.

SYDNEY FERRY SERVICES

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will address their comments through the Chair.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: How will the Government improve ferry services on Sydney Harbour?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that several of them are on a call to order and I warn them that they will soon find themselves on three calls to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for the question and for his interest in public transport issues. It gives me great pleasure to update the House on the ongoing reform of ferry services being undertaken by this Government. Over two years ago, in June 2009, the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals responded to the recommendations of the Walker inquiry into Sydney Ferries and we released our Fixing the Ferries policy—something that the former Labor Government did not do. The people saw our policy, they voted for it and I am pleased to say that we are now delivering on it. In May this year we asked the private sector to register its interest in operating Sydney Ferries routes and services. On that occasion I was pleased to update the House and to state that 28 companies put up their hands to be part of the process to deliver better ferry services.

In July this year the Government asked for official expressions of interest. I am pleased to advise the House that five national and international transport consortiums responded. They were Harbour City Ferries, HarbourConnect, SeaLink Travel Group, Serco Australia, Transit Systems and Forgacs Engineering. This Government will now review the strong submissions to determine a shortlist of companies that will be invited to participate in a tender process later in the year. The franchising process means that this Government will retain control of fares and routes and the franchise contract will include staff and safety obligations. All members would be aware that the Leader of the Opposition supports our model. He was so passionate about franchising that he wrote to the Labor Party to reassure it that franchising was well within the bounds of official party policy. We welcome his support in relation to franchising Sydney Ferries.

I am also pleased to announce that the Government has committed to inviting private sector ferry operators to express an interest in additional routes that they would like to provide on a cost-neutral basis to the taxpayer. As outlined on many occasions by the Treasurer, the member for Manly, the success of the privately operated, deregulated Manly high-speed ferry services has shown that there is scope for similar services on Sydney Harbour. We know that there is such scope. We want the private sector to tell the Government what extra peak hour ferry services it can provide for long-suffering commuters. Developing new routes, fostering innovative service proposals and getting more people off our roads and onto ferries are priorities for this Government. Any private sector operator or company that is interested in developing new ferry routes on Sydney Harbour should put their plans to the Government. They can be confident that members on this side of the House will deliver on their commitments.

There is spare capacity on our harbour and we need to take full advantage of that capacity. The experience of the private sector shows that people will use an efficient ferry service and that commuters want to

travel on our harbour—the best harbour in the world. I am pleased to advise the House of an important new development. For the first time NSW Maritime is opening up wharf access slots at wharf 6, Circular Quay, to commuter ferry operators during the peak as part of this expression of interest process. Charter and tourist operators traditionally use wharf 6, but spare capacity in the morning and afternoon peak will be made available. Commuter peak slots are also being made available at all other commuter ferry wharves owned by NSW Maritime, which is a first for the State.

To provide certainty for the process of franchising Sydney Ferries, proposals for additional services will not be considered on routes that duplicate those already served by Sydney Ferries or other services contracted by government. I encourage private ferry operators to step forward and participate in this process to help provide additional services for the commuters of Sydney who suffered for too long under the previous regime. These new services will be provided on interim three-month contracts which will be reviewed following the completion of the Sydney Ferries franchising process. The expression of interest document is being released tomorrow and submissions are to be received by 19 September. Members on this side of the House are committed to delivering on their transport promises. Today's announcement confirms our plans to put the customer in everything we do in public transport.

ORICA PLANT INCIDENT

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Can the Minister confirm that Hunter New England Health is conducting further testing to determine any longer term health effects from the recent leak of hexavalent chromium?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the opportunity to set the record straight. I am advised by Dr Kerry Chant that NSW Health is not conducting further toxicology testing and has not requested the Office of Environmental Health to do so. I can further advise that Professor Alison Jones has confirmed that no further testing is required and she looks forward to receiving the toxicology report for her reviews. I notice that the Leader of the Opposition has claimed in a press release that there is further testing. At the meeting last night which was attended by Professor David Durrheim—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: —from the Hunter public health office, he advised the meeting that risk assessment would be done on existing testing and it would be put on the Health website. That was done and it is there right now.

STATE BUDGET

Mr JOHN FLOWERS: My question is directed to the Treasurer. What are the economic challenges facing the New South Wales Government as it finalises the budget?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will direct their comments through the Chair.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Rockdale for his interest in responsible budgeting. For many weeks we have heard from members on the other side an absolute denial of what they have passed on to the O'Farrell Government. I thought it was worth telling the House exactly what their record was and what they have passed to the O'Farrell Government to deal with. What did we see under State Labor over the past decade? We saw the slowest economic growth of any State. What did we see in relation to jobs? We saw the lowest level of jobs growth of any mainland State in the past two years. What about business confidence? Under Labor we had the lowest business confidence of any State in the nation. Indeed, in the past seven years there was only one quarter when the State was not last. They had the lowest housing growth in the nation. Deloitte Access Economics puts this particularly well. It said that New South Wales has not suffered from bad luck; it has suffered from bad management. That is exactly what we have suffered.

That has provided an economic challenge for the O'Farrell Government. That is the record the Labor Government left behind, yet members opposite continue to be in denial. When I was recently flicking through some reading material on my lounge, which is what one does when one is not sure what to do, I found *Surfing World*, the *Australian Women's Weekly*, the Justin Bieber diary—that is for my teenage daughter—and under that were the shadow Treasurer's press releases. It is a shame he is not in the Chamber. I do not know where the

shadow Treasurer is. I understand he is up at Sussex Street organising numbers at the moment. Isn't it interesting, as soon as the shadow Treasurer is away who takes over as Manager of Opposition Business? It is the member for Toongabbie. Our money is on you, mate.

Mr John Robertson: Our money is on Gladys, not you.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Bankstown will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This is what the shadow Treasurer said in his press release. The Opposition needs to understand this.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He said, "Treasurer Mike Baird should listen to his own Treasury advice." Never has a truer word been spoken. Let us look at what the former Labor Government did in relation to Treasury advice. The incoming Treasury brief told us that if expenses continued to grow under Labor the triple-A credit rating would have been lost. That was the Treasury advice.

Mr Nathan Rees: Point of order: If you hang around long enough you might get hit by an asteroid as well but it does not mean it is going to happen.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Mate, I am trying to help you here; you are not helping yourself. The Treasury advice also confirmed that there had been a \$4.5 billion deterioration in finances. It confirmed that the former State Labor Government asked Treasury to hide deficits. Just imagine that sort of culture: it asked Treasury to hide deficits. It also confirmed that Labor excluded Treasury from costing the solar scheme. There was a \$5.2 billion deterioration in finances and Labor denied it.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The pièce de résistance is this: out of the oven came this press release on election eve. They told the people of New South Wales it was an updated budget forecast which secured the State's economic future and showed that strong budget surpluses would continue. What happened the day after the election?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There was a \$4.5 billion loss and a \$5.2 billion loss in total. We recognise the challenges we have inherited and the O'Farrell Government will fix the mess that Labor left behind.

STRATEGIC REGIONAL LAND USE PLAN

Ms CLOVER MOORE: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. Given the Government's commitment to establish a strategic regional land use policy, will the Minister commit to ensuring important agricultural land, aquifers, national parks and Sydney and town catchment areas are not mined and the new environmental plans will mandate protection rather than just be considerations in development decisions?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member for Sydney for raising the issue of getting appropriate protection in place for our important agricultural land and aquifers, which is a high priority for this Government. The reason it is such a high priority is that for 16 years under the previous Labor Government there was absolutely no focus at all on strategic land management. This Government has done more in four months in providing a strategic framework for managing agricultural and mining pressures than Labor did in 16 years. Already this Government has moved swiftly to introduce new measures to manage the pressures placed on our farming land from mining interests. We are developing the most stringent environmental standards for coal seam gas in Australia.

The Government is committed to restoring balance and creating certainty for communities, farmers and industry. We will provide the strategic growth management required to make New South Wales number one

again. The only strategic management done under Labor was to work out where the next donation was coming from, and Labor members did that well; where the next deal was coming from, and they did that well too; and how their mates would be looked after, in particular, Eddie Obeid, who was very special. He was one of the puppeteers. The last two Ministers for Planning, in particular, failed to address the big issues facing the State but spent an enormous amount of time ticking off developments behind closed doors with no thought as to how to make the planning system one in which community members would have confidence.

[Interruption]

The puppet Premier, right on cue. I am glad the member is still alive. The former puppet Premier—

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The former puppet Premier shows there is still some life in the old puppet yet. As planning Minister she spent more time working out how to get to be Premier than addressing the failings of the planning decisions. Decisions were made on a whim. There was no proper process. There were very few safeguards. The planning process was highly politicised. Because the member for Heffron is seeking to make herself the centre of attention again I will give her some more attention. Of course, history now records that when Kristina Keneally got to be Premier she then did to the State Labor Government what she had already done to the planning system: she completely trashed it; she trashed the Government. That is why there are just 20 Labor members on the Opposition benches.

The new Government is ensuring different values. Transparency, integrity and decency are hallmarks of the planning system that the Liberals and Nationals are delivering to New South Wales. Those are concepts with which the Leader of the Opposition would have problems. We are ensuring that competitive land use tensions are recognised and resolved in the planning system. It is a planning system, I stress specifically for the benefit of the member for Sydney, that recognises the important need to preserve our agricultural lands, our aquifers, our national parks and the sustainability of our towns and cities. That is why this Government has committed to a complete review of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act for the first time in 30 years. That is why the Government has initiated a review of strategic land use across the State. That is why the Government is developing a stringent regulatory framework to protect against aquifer interference. That is why we have made it clear that national parks will never be mined under this Government. And that is why we are working to develop guidelines around myriad other planning challenges that were ignored by State Labor.

Whether it is wind farms or coal seam gas mining, it is necessary that there be in place appropriate planning regulatory frameworks that recognise community concerns and that respond to community concerns. At the same time as we are developing these guidelines we are also working closely with local government to ensure that local environmental plans have more flexibility than was allowed in the 16 years of Labor. Not one of the numerous planning Ministers under 16 years of Labor—not one—had the vision to recognise the need to overhaul and review the planning legislation. Nor did they have the vision to recognise that there needed to be a serious effort to manage and balance strategic land usage. The best they could do was to rush forward with their mates and sign off on development applications, despite community concerns. Integrity, transparency and balance were not words well understood by Labor.

This Liberals and Nationals Government will ensure the community voice is heard, but there will also be certainty in land use. That is our goal, and that is what we will deliver. It would be unfair to say that Labor delivered absolutely nothing. It did deliver something: the lowest housing starts in 50 years. What a great success! Those who were not one of the favoured few developers would know that they were better off doing business in Victoria or Queensland. This Government will ensure that those who provide housing, those who provide employment and those who provide industry will have certainty, but it will be after the community has had its say on the strategic land use issues. We do not want to perpetuate the site-specific development application wars that were the hallmark of the Labor era. The member for Sydney and the community can be assured that this Government's approach to planning will be transparent, will operate with integrity and will deliver the balance that New South Wales needs.

ILLAWARRA APPRENTICE AND TRAINEE SUPPORT

Mr GARETH WARD: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. Can the Minister inform the House what the New South Wales Government is doing to support apprentices and trainees affected by the BlueScope Steel restructure in the Illawarra?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for Kiama for his question. What a contrast. The announcement that a thousand jobs were to go in the Illawarra prompted not a question from the Labor Opposition. The opportunity for a scare campaign in the Hunter prompted nine questions from Labor. Nothing more clearly illustrates the difference between the Labor Party and the Liberals and The Nationals. Labor engages in a scare campaign; the Liberals and The Nationals have a support campaign for the people who have been retrenched. This question asks what the Government will do to support not just those workers—because this is not just about the workers whose jobs will be lost—but the entire community of Wollongong and the Illawarra. It is illustrative of the fact that this very important question was asked by a member of the Coalition, not by a member of the Labor Party. The member for Wollongong is always preoccupied with other things—we know that—but the question relates to matters of substance.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order is the fact that at the moment the Minister is misleading the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The member for Wollongong has been here long enough to know that. The member will resume her seat.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Like everybody else, I did not listen to a word the member said. The TAFE NSW Illawarra Institute has worked with BlueScope Steel in the past to develop its skilled workforce, and with the announcement of its restructure and the loss of 800 jobs in Port Kembla the Illawarra Institute is ready and prepared to provide assistance to the company and its workers. The Illawarra Institute is linked to local and regional organisations providing services to companies and workers. The institute will continue to work with BlueScope to develop workers' skills to enable them to seek employment. In addition, the Department of Education and Communities has a retrenched workers program, and a rapid response team has now been activated to work with the affected workers.

The rapid response team will comprise officers from the Department of Education and Communities, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Trade and Investment NSW and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, and Centrelink will assess impacts on the workers and discuss the resources needed to provide re-employment opportunities. The team will put together a plan that will look at opportunities to assess workers' skills, identify local job opportunities and consider training needed to help workers access those jobs. In addition, State Training Services of the Department of Education and Communities will support apprentices and trainees through job placement and, where appropriate, fast tracking of apprenticeship completions. The TAFE NSW Illawarra Institute will continue to support apprentices currently enrolled in TAFE who are currently working with BlueScope. There are currently about 100 electro technology apprentices and approximately 50 in engineering trades.

Mr John Robertson: Do you actually know what they do?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It has been so long since you have had a real job you would not know what they do either.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. I advise the Minister not to respond to interjections.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: As Minister for Education I am explaining this not just to the Parliament, because I know people in the Illawarra will be reading about this, as will quite a few of the retrenched workers. They will want to be confident that the community—and the 93 members in this Chamber are the absolute representatives of the community—through the Government regards this as a most serious matter. They want to know that it has been raised in Parliament and they want to know that I have made appropriate comments. All we get from the Leader of the Opposition is whingeing and whining. I want to put his whingeing and whining on the record as well, so that those workers and the community understand his view on this important matter.

Mr GARETH WARD: Given the seriousness of this issue, I ask that the Minister have an extension of time.

The SPEAKER: Order! Because of the seriousness of the matter and the number of interjections, the Minister may speak for an additional two minutes.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I think the most disappointing thing for the affected workers in the Illawarra will be that the Leader of the Opposition used to be the head of Unions NSW. Of course, I do not say that in a partisan way—not at all—it is simply a matter of disappointment that the former leader of the peak union body is not interested in addressing the issue but instead is whingeing and whining about what the current Government is doing for workers.

Mr John Williams: He's thinking of himself instead of Wollongong.

Mr John Robertson: I was in Wollongong on Monday. None of you were. There was not one of you in Wollongong on Monday. I was there.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Listen to him—whingeing and whining.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: This is a serious issue for our local community.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the point of order. What is the standing order that has been breached?

Mr Ryan Park: Standing Order 129. This is a serious issue for our community. The Minister was asked what he was doing about support for apprentices and trainees at BlueScope.

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand the point of order. The member for Keira will resume his seat. The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We will continue to support apprentices currently enrolled in TAFE. As I stated, the Illawarra Institute is a terrific organisation and recognises the significance of the events at BlueScope. It will continue to support those employees and, most importantly, that community. TAFE across this great State is dedicated to making sure we have the right skills. With incidents such as this, TAFE is ready to support workers across this State to make sure they can get new jobs and be properly skilled. I thank TAFE for its fantastic efforts.

ORICA PLANT INCIDENT

Ms CHERIE BURTON: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. After 11 days without facing the media over her handling of the Orica chemical leak, why did the Minister today give journalists eight minutes notice of a press conference and then walk out halfway through and refuse to answer their questions?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Madam Speaker, prior to question time you acknowledged my great friend the Hon. Milton Morris, a former Minister and member for Maitland. Today he and everyone else in the gallery would have seen a transport Minister on top of her job and who knows what she is doing, a Premier who is in charge and a Premier and Treasurer who know what they are doing, working hard for the people of New South Wales. He knows the Hunter and, as I know, that the people of the Hunter in Maitland, Stockton and Newcastle care. Look at the results of the last election in the Hunter Valley: Newcastle, Liberal; Port Stephens, Liberal; Maitland, Liberal; Swansea, Liberal; and Charlestown, Liberal. Wallsend kept its local member because she complained so much about her Government. We are and will continue to be part of the solution; those opposite are part of the problem. That is what Milton Morris saw today.

Question time concluded at 3.12 p.m.

PETITIONS

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

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

Petition requesting improved bus services for the Walsh Bay precinct, and ferry services for the new wharf at pier 2/3, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pet Shops

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

Community Housing Mental Health Services

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

The Clerk announced that the following Minister had lodged responses to a petition signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Duncan Gay—Stanford Road Closure—lodged 2 August 2011 (Mr Clayton Barr).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Withdrawal of Business

Government Business Notice of Motion No. 2 withdrawn by Mr Brad Hazzard.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Eyewatch Project

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.14 p.m.]: My motion proposed for priority reads:

That this House notes the strong community support for the Government bringing Neighbourhood Watch into the twenty-first century with the launch of project Eyewatch.

The motion deserves priority because it addresses a critical problem arising from the neglect of governments over the past 16 years in this State. In many communities across the State a confidence crisis developed that the Government was not interested in confronting and reducing crime. The community perception that had developed under the long, dark years of Labor was that the Government was interested only in controlling headlines, not controlling streets, and interested only in reducing political risks to itself, not in reducing the physical and financial risk to ordinary members of the community arising from crime. Priority should be given to highlight how the O'Farrell Government is supporting police and citizens in local communities in confronting and reducing crime.

Recently Premier Barry O'Farrell, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mike Gallacher, and the Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione, launched the new Neighbourhood Watch pilot project Eyewatch. Under this scheme local residents are given the opportunity to participate with local police in active crime prevention using the social network site Facebook. The reinvigorated concept of the old Neighbourhood Watch program is about re-engaging the community in active crime fighting. As the Premier said at the launch, we want communities to be at the forefront of reporting crimes and being active in crime prevention in their areas. By working together and building intelligence residents can help police to reduce crime.

This matter is one of priority because over the past 16 years the old Neighbourhood Watch program was allowed to fall into disuse and in some cases became irrelevant. These types of programs need ongoing support and leadership to ensure their continued effectiveness, but that was not forthcoming under Labor. Perhaps it is appropriate that the first local Eyewatch group to be launched after strong local interest and concern was in the Quakers Hill Local Area Command, covering suburbs in the electorates of Riverstone, Toongabbie and Blacktown. In these electorates previously regarded as safe Labor heartland many residents felt their concerns about crime and antisocial behaviour were not taken seriously by the previous Government.

They felt let down by Labor and showed their anger on 26 March when Riverstone became a Liberal electorate, and Toongabbie and Blacktown became marginal electorates decided on the preferences of The Greens and the Shooters and Fishers Party. These are not the only areas in the State where concerns about crime and antisocial behaviour were left unresolved by the previous Government. The priority should be to address these concerns for all communities in New South Wales through intelligent, practical measures in cooperation

with local people. This House should give priority to considering the things that matter to the people who elect members to this place. It should give priority to investigating all reasonable steps to allow the people of New South Wales to feel safe in their streets, parks, shopping centres and homes.

Unlike those opposite, who consistently prioritised their media image and the headlines of the day, we give priority to examining the practical measures being proposed to address the concerns of New South Wales residents. The O'Farrell Government is focused on returning quality services in community safety and on taking real action to address real issues. By contrast, the Labor governments of the past 16 years focused on who was going to occupy which position, which faction or subfaction was next in line for advancement and whose turn it was to be Premier. Project Eyewatch is a tool that allows police and local people to work together.

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

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: Commissioner Scipione said customer service and finding ways of engaging with the community are crucial for police to be able to do their work.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toongabbie will resume his seat.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: Commissioner Scipione said:

We can't do our job without the community's help and that's why this project is so critical for New South Wales police. Times have changed and the old Neighbourhood Watch model struggled as people's lives became busier—they couldn't get to meetings, time is short and that's a fact of everyday life.

The commissioner pointed out that through the Eyewatch project community members can be involved via the internet, and using hand-held devices such as smart phones, computers, laptops and tablet devices. This is an important step on the way to allowing people to feel safe once again. For those reasons it is important that my motion be given priority today.

Orica Plant Incident

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.19 p.m.]: The Orica plant incident deserves priority because the people of Stockton are furious the Government waited 54 hours to tell them they had been exposed to hexavalent chromium—a chemical that causes skin irritation, respiratory problems and cancer. Orica reported the leak within 16 hours. The Government took another 54 hours to inform the public. This House faces a very grave situation: a jittery incompetent Minister who claims Orica's 16-hour delay was totally unacceptable and who fails to see the untenable position in which that leaves the Minister with a 54-hour delay. This matter deserves priority because the leak happened on Monday 8 August. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday kids played at the Stockton Early Learning Centre. Finally, on Friday 12 August, high pressure cleaners were brought in to decontaminate the area. The Minister airily informed the Parliament yesterday:

People were informed when they needed to be. The right processes have been in place all through this.

What planet is the Minister on? Is it planet Parker? When is it good practice to allow children to play in hexavalent chromium residue for three days? Minister, explain that to Amy Sinclair, a health worker from Stockton who is worried by her child's continued suffering from eye irritations for two weeks after the leak. This matter deserves priority because Stockton residents are still being kept in the dark. At last night's public meeting residents told me the Environment Protection Agency conducted tests only on Thursday after the leak when it had already rained but Orica took samples in the immediate aftermath of the leak. The question is: Why has the Minister not urgently directed the Environment Protection Authority to seize the samples taken by Orica on Tuesday?

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: It was this Minister who closed the Environment Protection Authority, who took its independence away from it, who merged it with the Department of Environment and Conservation. It is the Leader of the Opposition who is answerable.

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

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: A NSW Health official admitted last night more toxicology tests are underway to determine long-term health effects. The Premier and the Minister give residents the all clear while health experts are still doing toxicology tests on the long-term effects of hexavalent chromium. This matter deserves priority because the Minister's story and the Government's story are in chaos.

Mr Tim Owen: Why aren't you part of the solution instead of part of the problem?

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Government members can carry on all they like. On Friday 12 August the Minister said she first learned of the leak on Tuesday. On Saturday the Minister called a press conference and said she first learned of the leak on Wednesday. However, the Minister explicitly told the reporter from the *Daily Telegraph*, Geoff Chambers, that she was informed on the Tuesday just after the Office of Environment and Heritage was informed. Curiously, yesterday the Minister refused four or five times on radio 2GB to deny that she had told the *Daily Telegraph* she was informed on Tuesday. Even if members are generous and accept the latest story—that the Minister was advised on Wednesday by email alert—that alert made three comments. The first was that yellow and red stain residue had fallen over parked vehicles and other surfaces in Stockton.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: I would like you not to use scaremongering.

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

Mr Brad Hazzard: Clearly, the terms of the motion do not impugn the Minister; they seek generally to impugn Orica and the Government. Under Standing Order 73 I ask that the member be required not to attack the Minister. If he wants to make imputations or accuse someone of improper motives—

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. I warn the Leader of the Opposition against making personal reflections against the Minister. [*Time expired.*]

Mr John Robertson: You will not hide from this one.

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

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 66

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

Noes, 23

Mr Barr	Mr Lynch	Mr Robertson
Ms Burney	Dr McDonald	Ms Tebbutt
Ms Burton	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.

EYEWATCH PROJECT**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.36 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes the strong community support for the Government bringing Neighbourhood Watch into the twenty-first century with the launch of Project eyewatch.

Project eyewatch is about empowering residents with the ability to participate in crime-prevention activities to ensure community safety. It is a model that understands that residents cannot necessarily meet in the town hall anymore and that the world today operates differently. Project eyewatch will give community members the opportunity to participate in active crime prevention activities online in their own homes 24 hours a day, seven days a week. People can log on when they are on a train, at a bus stop, out shopping or just about anywhere else in their local community using the technology that is now available. Neighbourhood Watch groups can be mobilised through eyewatch using social networks. Eyewatch affords them the opportunity to participate with their local police in active crime prevention initiatives. This initiative acknowledges the way in which many people, particularly young people, access information these days and communicate.

In fact, for many people in our community it is a natural way to communicate. We are catching up with that reality. Civilian precinct coordinators and police coordinators at local area command level will be trained to participate in online crime forums, and accurate and up-to-date information will be provided to ensure safety and security. Eyewatch presents an opportunity for residents to be aware of incidents that are occurring in their neighbourhood and provides them with the ability to voice their concerns to police, obtain feedback and be part of the solution. Local residents have a wealth of knowledge about their own area and what is happening around them. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, said that eyewatch brings back fundamental community-based policing:

Police are only as good as the information they receive and there is no better CCTV camera in this State than the human eye.

The ability to interpret and report what is being seen is paramount to successful community policing. Eyewatch is about communities regaining control over their local areas and over crime.

Pilot programs for eyewatch have been established in 10 local area commands. Eyewatch has been established in Quakers Hill Local Area Command, as I said earlier, as well as in Tweed-Byron, Sutherland, Newcastle, Parramatta, Griffith, Orana, Campbelltown, Barrier and Cabramatta local area commands. Already some local area commands have had incredible results, just through word of mouth. The Quakers Hill Local Area Command Facebook page has 191 active fans, 434 monthly active users and 42,000 hits on the information page since its inception on 6 July 2011. Sutherland Local Area Command attracted 64 fans and 2,531 hits in less than 48 hours, and Campbelltown Local Area Command had 630 hits and 63 fans in less than 24 hours. I was privileged to be present both when Project eyewatch was launched in Parliament House and on the following day at its official launch in Riverstone, which is within the Quakers Hill Local Area Command. A driving force in the Riverstone area to be among the first included was local resident Paul Hutchinson. I described him at the launch—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Riverstone will be heard in silence.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: I referred to Paul Hutchinson on that occasion as a local hero, and I believe that to be the case. Paul became active in the cause after his elderly mother's home was burgled whilst she was

present, which caused a great deal of distress to her and to the family. Paul used Facebook to alert friends in the area of the incident and he received an overwhelming response. From that response was born the Facebook page that is now hosted by Quakers Hill Local Area Command. Since that time Paul has worked closely with Superintendent Gary Merryweather and other police at Quakers Hill, including community safety officer Constable Sue Carter, in developing the local project. The police emphasised that they still want people to report crime in the usual way, through Crime Stoppers, calling 000 for urgent help or calling the police assistance line.

Project eyewatch is a platform for the delivery of information to the community of New South Wales utilising Facebook as a network tool to create a twenty-first century neighbourhood community. Project eyewatch will give community members the opportunity to participate in active crime prevention activities online in their own homes. Some of the main benefits of Project eyewatch are that it gives the community greater access and allows real-time engagement; it seeks consensus on a problem; it provides accurate, up-to-date information to the community; it facilitates forums to find solutions; it creates an ability to provide feedback; it develops a high-value community network; it empowers residents with the ability to participate in crime prevention activities in their area; and it understands the reality of life that people cannot all participate in traditional ways in community activities.

It is appropriate that this House expresses its support for programs of this nature. The participants in local eyewatch projects deserve the commendation of this House for the time and effort they give and for the genuine interest they demonstrate in the welfare of their local communities. Project eyewatch is an initiative that has been accompanied by positive steps on other fronts by the O'Farrell Government to ensure community safety. This Government has enhanced police move-on powers, it has introduced the offence of intoxicated and disorderly and it has legislated to ensure that anyone who murders a police officer faces life in jail. All those initiatives have fulfilled commitments made by the Coalition prior to the election and each has been delivered early in the life of this Government.

Project eyewatch exemplifies the approach of a Government that is interested in addressing the concerns of members of the community. This contrasts with the Labor Government over the past 16 years, which was only interested in controlling the headlines and not controlling the streets, and which was far too interested in reducing political risks to itself and not interested enough in reducing the real risks of crime for ordinary people. Therefore, I am pleased to highlight today the way in which the O'Farrell Government is going about the task of supporting police and citizens in local communities by confronting and reducing crime.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.43 p.m.]: I address the House about the Government's self-congratulatory motion regarding the Neighbourhood Watch Program. It is staggering that the Orica plant chemical leak in Stockton can play second fiddle to a new computer program. The manner in which the residents and families of Stockton are being treated by this Government is utterly disgraceful. At best this Government has demonstrated that it is utterly incompetent in how it has handled this matter and at worst it is utterly deceptive.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Point of order: As much as I hate to take the point of order, the fact is that we are debating another issue. Question time has finished. The Opposition has had ample opportunity to raise issues that it believes are of public importance. We are now debating another issue. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I ask you to draw the member back to the leave of the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I uphold the point of order. I draw the attention of the member for Bankstown to the fact that the motion is about community support for the Government bringing Neighbourhood Watch into the twenty-first century.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I was just making some introductory remarks. While we are not opposed to the concept of Project eyewatch, and I have no doubt that it will add value to Neighbourhood Watch, what we are more concerned with is what is it covering up, particularly at this time? I am concerned that the motion is covering up the fact that the Minister for Police announced restructuring of the New South Wales Police Service and already has advised that some jobs will be consolidated. We all know that consolidation tends to mean that resources will be cut. The Opposition is particularly concerned that the nice glossy launch of Project eyewatch is probably covering up the real intention of this Government, which is to cut police resources, particularly in western Sydney. Members of this House have been asked to make submissions to the Minister for Police, who is carrying out an audit of police resources across Sydney.

Mr Kevin Conolly: Across New South Wales.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: Across New South Wales, I note. It is an audit to examine how the Minister for Police can redirect resources in Sydney to country areas—sadly at the expense, probably, of western Sydney. The audit has come with no guarantees, and many fear that it will lead to cuts in police numbers, particularly throughout western Sydney. The O'Farrell Government inherited a justice system that resulted in 17 out of 17 major crime categories becoming stable or decreasing, in stark contrast to how things were back in 1995. We now have close to 16,000 police officers, which is a 20 per cent increase since 1995, but all that is now at risk. In launching Project eyewatch what the Government is not telling the public is that it is probably intending to look at cutting resources to the New South Wales Police Service. It has said it is consolidating jobs. The Minister has made no commitment that he will do otherwise.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: The member is way off topic and should be brought back to the leave of the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have asked the member for Bankstown to return to the subject matter of the motion. Again I draw the member back to the leave of the motion. She has made her introductory remarks. She should now speak to the motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: Given that police will be running Project eyewatch, I would have thought that demonstrates there is a link between the two. Clearly the Government does not see the link between police and Project eyewatch. The Government says Project eyewatch is bringing Neighbourhood Watch into the twenty-first century with a new computer program. But what the people of New South Wales want—particularly in western Sydney—is police resources.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I am having trouble hearing the member for Bankstown.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I ask particularly the Liberal members of Parliament—the member for East Hills, who is absent from the Chamber, the member for Granville, the member for Parramatta, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Camden and the member for Mulgoa—what their thoughts are about police resources in western Sydney.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: I ask that you to bring the member back to the leave of the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I uphold the point of order and ask the member, for the third time, to return to the leave of the motion that has been accorded priority. The introductory comments have now finished. The member will speak to the motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: We know that Neighbourhood Watch is a good tool. There are people within our community who certainly—

Mr Geoff Provest: Then why did you starve it over the past 16 years? It's a disgrace.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I have been asked to come back to discussing Neighbourhood Watch and I am doing that. Neighbourhood Watch is a good tool. It is a tool that is highly valued in the community. There are residents in my electorate who value Neighbourhood Watch. They enjoy going to regular meetings, hearing from local police officers and other guest speakers. I have attended a meeting as a guest speaker. Our local council staff and elected officials also have attended many Neighbourhood Watch meetings. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [3.50 p.m.]: I support the member for Riverstone on this important motion, which is about supporting our police. Part of the police motto is working with and supporting the local community. Neighbourhood Watch is a valuable tool. The member for Bankstown said that Labor members supported Neighbourhood Watch, so I will give a little bit of the history. For many years I was a manager of very large clubs, both in Sydney and in Tweed Heads. Each club became the patron saint of Neighbourhood Watch. We supported it with meeting venues and so on.

But in the past 10 years the previous Labor Government starved it of funding. It gave them no money whatsoever. In my local area, and your area too, Mr Deputy-Speaker, we have 16 units and 800 volunteers. We kicked off School Watch in our local schools. We are about to kick off Marine Watch and Business Watch. We are one of the areas selected for Project eyewatch, which is about using modern technology and social media. Yet for years the previous Labor Government gave no support to Neighbourhood Watch. It canned the Safety House project straight up, and it starved Neighbourhood Watch of valuable assets.

Ms Cherie Burton: Point of order: I suspect that the rules apply to both sides. This is about Project eyewatch. It is not about the previous Government. I ask that the member for Tweed return to the leave of the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Tweed has been talking about Neighbourhood Watch. I am sure he will include the twenty-first century launch of Project eyewatch.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: It is all part of Neighbourhood Watch. The member for Bankstown interpolated how much the previous Government supported Neighbourhood Watch when in fact it starved Neighbourhood Watch. Obviously there is no crime in Bankstown, or the member for Bankstown is unaware of any crime. This is about working in conjunction with our hardworking Police Force. This enables them to be online.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Bankstown was heard in silence. Members will listen to the member for Tweed in silence.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: Mr Gordon Levenson, a secretary of our Neighbourhood Watch, has done a great job. In fact, he has been to Coffs Harbour and Casino to set up their Neighbourhood Watch. Eyewatch is the next progression of Neighbourhood Watch. It enables people to go online and actively participate in discussions about crime in their area. This was a cornerstone of the Coalition policy and it was well received in our area. In fact, it was overwhelmingly received. Members of my local Neighbourhood Watch recently attended a training session. I am pleased to say that Chief Inspector Joshua Maxwell, the project coordinator, will be attending our area in the Northern Rivers in the next few weeks to carry out further instruction and training.

For some time the Tweed-Bryon local area has had Neighbourhood Watch. We have had our own website, not funded by the previous Government but funded by local businesses and individuals that are prepared to invest their time for the betterment of the community. Our local superintendent, Stuart Wilkins, is a great supporter of police working in the community. I know that in his previous life the member for Campbelltown was a great supporter of the police working with the community. The previous Government alienated them. This is why this is a priority motion. This is why it is important to debate it. Once again the Liberal-Nationals Government has committed to work with the local people, to be open and transparent whereas the previous Government starved Neighbourhood Watch.

[Interruption]

It is not cost-sharing. The previous Government starved Neighbourhood Watch. How can the members for Kogarah and Bankstown say they supported Neighbourhood Watch? The previous Government starved it of funds and did not care about the people. It did not care about the hardworking men and women of the Police Force. It did not care about crime on local streets. Members opposite stuck their heads in the sand and did not care about it. It has taken a new Government to recognise the fine contribution of volunteers in our local community who have a concern about their community and who want to work with their police force to make it a better place. If it is not a deserving priority for the hardworking Police Force to work with the local community, I do not know what is. I am 100 per cent in favour of this priority motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [3.55 p.m.]: Project eyewatch aims to build and solidify the links between law enforcement, Neighbourhood Watch and social networking. It is an understatement to say that social networking has changed society as we know it. In much the same way that the short message service [SMS] made a quantum leap in how people communicate with each other, social networking and websites such as Facebook, Twitter and MySpace have brought about a revolution in information-sharing. It is admirable that the New South Wales Police Force uses technology and online community engagement to combat crime. Police officers are dedicated professionals. Every single person in the Chamber will agree with that. Their first proud responsibility is keeping safe the communities that they are sworn to protect. By partnering with local Neighbourhood Watch groups, it is hoped that Project eyewatch will be a handy tool in the fight against crime. If we look back on what Neighbourhood Watch was about, community safety was the priority.

Residents are the eyes and ears of the community, and community cohesion helps police undertake their vital work. However, the community and the residents are not the police. I commend the people of my electorate of Fairfield, particularly the Chester Hill Neighbourhood Watch, for all their work over the years in helping the police. I take my hat off to those fine men and women who have done a great job. But local

communities from Fairfield in the south west, to Lane Cove on the North Shore, from the Hunter down to Wollongong and in our rural areas want to see blue on their streets. The community wants to see front-line police pounding the pavement, pre-empting crime and making the community feel safe. I understand that the New South Wales Police Force employs smart policing strategies and techniques to focus its efforts on the most likely criminals of society. I know the Fairfield police do this particularly well. I especially congratulate Chief Superintendent Peter Lennon on all his work and all the work of his officers.

These techniques are highly successful, but we cannot discount the random acts of crime that occur in local communities. The proud men and women of the New South Wales Police Force want to be out on the beat. They want to talk to members of the community, listen to their concerns and eradicate the scourge of criminality that unfortunately rears its head from time to time. Public opinion is gauged heavily towards keeping a strong and well-equipped police force. I remind the House that the former Labor Government gave New South Wales its largest ever Police Force with more than 15,000 officers. What a great achievement. Why does this Coalition Government insist on conducting a police audit? Everyone knows that the purpose of an audit is to take stock of everything and then cut away the "waste". I do not think any of our hardworking, dedicated police officers are a waste. They are not waste. Their strength and sacrifice allows each and every one of us to go to bed at night feeling safe and secure.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The motion is about Neighbourhood Watch. The member for Fairfield is casting aspersions on the New South Wales Police Force. I ask you to bring him back to the leave of the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. The member was doing very well while he was referring to the motion, but now he has strayed from the leave of the motion. The member will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The motion states that our twenty-first century Neighbourhood Watch communities can be organised in online precincts and that police will be providing information in real time to these groups and the public through local area command local pages. Imagine this scenario: "Hang on a minute—someone is breaking into my car! How about I get out my i-Phone." [*Time expired.*]

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [4.00 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Bankstown, the member for Tweed and the member for Fairfield for their contributions to the debate and for underlining the importance of community safety and police activity in that regard that benefits all the people of New South Wales. Despite some members opposite straying from the subject matter of the motion, I thank them for acknowledging the value of Neighbourhood Watch and Project eyewatch and for their support for the motion. Nevertheless it is important to make a couple of points. I heard the launch of Project eyewatch referred to as a glossy event. Clearly the member for Bankstown who made that comment was not present at Riverstone on the Saturday morning when eyewatch was launched. She did not see the sausage sizzle run by the Marsden Park Rural Fire Service Brigade, the little stall being manned by Riverstone High School to promote its anti-bullying program and the dozens of locals who dropped in out of curiosity to see what was happening.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: Invite me next time.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: We will make sure the member is on the invitation list for the next one. The event was community focused. It was a grassroots event in the main street of what is still in many respects a country town. It was designed to build bonds between members of the community in response to an initiative by one of the members of the community. That is the strength of this program. Eyewatch and its predecessor, Neighbourhood Watch, are all about getting members of the community to build ties among themselves and with the police to support each other and protect the community. We are aiming to bring back and strengthen community ties so that people look out for each other and care about their area and their neighbours, and so that they will care enough to take action when they see that something is amiss.

The modern-day tools that allow them to do something, which the police are now harnessing, are Facebook, text messaging, the internet and smart technology in its various forms. These tools allow people to post messages on the eyewatch site immediately so that police can attend to them and gather intelligence much more quickly than might otherwise have been possible, and in turn they allow the police to post information on the site to reach a wide audience much more quickly and warn the community about intelligence they have and things of which the community should be aware. It is heartening to see this type of development occurring. It is immensely important that it has the community's support and that the Government's initiative has been so well received.

I take this opportunity to compliment the police at Quakers Hill Local Area Command who have been so willing to embrace this technology and the extra dimension to their role. I think they would say they find it enormously helpful in building bridges between them and members of the community and in bringing to their attention matters that otherwise might have gone unreported and that might not have fed into the broader intelligence picture that police need to be able to respond appropriately to crime and patterns of crime they detect in their areas. The tool they now have will ensure that the level of reporting is higher and therefore their picture of who is active on their patch will be more accurate so that they can respond in a timely manner. The police at Quakers Hill Local Area Command are to be commended for jumping in with both feet, adopting the technology quickly, and making good use of it.

I am heartened and encouraged by those developments but I believe that more can be done. The O'Farrell Government is committed to supporting police on many fronts, as I elucidated upon in my speech in referring to the legislative steps we have taken so early in the life of this Government to support New South Wales police. It is an attitude and a philosophy that this Government will continue to adopt in support of those who put their lives on the line for the benefit of this community. We will be behind them 100 per cent in our endeavours. The eyewatch program that has been introduced by the police under this Government is warmly welcomed by the community, and for that I am really grateful.

Motion agreed to.

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

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 23 August 2011.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [4.06 p.m.]: I support the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2011, which is in line with the commitment given prior to the election by the Government to the people of New South Wales to restore integrity, accountability and transparency to the New South Wales Government and to the public sector. That is something members opposite were lethargic about while in government. In fact, lethargic is probably the wrong word because they were completely and utterly scared of increasing the commission's powers. They were worried about what would happen to a number of them whose actions were referred to the commission over the past 16 years.

The object of this bill is to amend the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to strengthen, and clarify the ambit of, certain powers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the inspector of the commission. The bill makes it clear that the commission has power to gather, assemble and furnish evidence to the Director of Public Prosecutions for use in prosecutions after the discontinuance or completion of its investigations; broadens the powers of the inspector by enabling the inspector to report to Parliament at any time on any matter relating to the exercise of the inspector's principal functions under section 57B of the Act, if the inspector considers a report to be in the public interest; and makes it clear that the inspector may provide a report or recommendation, or any relevant part of a report or recommendation, concerning any matter relating to the inspector's principal functions to the commission, an officer of the commission, a person who made a complaint or any other affected person, if the inspector considers that the matter can be effectively dealt with by such a recommendation or report.

The bill also provides that section 40 of the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 does not prevent the use, publication or communication of protected information within the meaning of that Act for the purpose of the exercise of the inspector's functions under section 57B of the Act; permits a person who has been summonsed to appear at a compulsory examination or public inquiry for the purpose of producing a document or thing to produce the document or thing without appearing, if excused from appearance by the commissioner, for the commission and for any document or other thing so produced in accordance with the commissioner's directions to be privileged; makes it clear that the Industrial Relations Commission cannot deal with an application under part 6, unfair dismissals, of chapter 2 of the Industrial Relations Act 1996 by an officer of the Independent

Commission Against Corruption whose employment is terminated by the commissioner; and provides for the making of savings and transitional regulations and makes amendments of a savings and transitional or consequential nature.

The main aims of the bill are to facilitate the Independent Commission Against Corruption to assemble comprehensive briefs of evidence for the Director of Public Prosecutions to support prosecutions arising from corruption investigations; to permit the reports and findings of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption to be published more broadly; to permit the Independent Commission Against Corruption to provide more information about its use of covert surveillance to the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption; to ensure that a decision to terminate the employment of an Independent Commission Against Corruption staff member by the commissioner cannot be the subject of unfair dismissal proceedings; and to streamline the process for production of privileged documents so that it is not always necessary for the person producing the documents to appear in person at the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Over the years we have seen a number of matters involving Labor members and former Labor members referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. One that certainly comes to mind goes back to the 2004-05 scandal involving the Orange Grove matter. We had not only the former Premier Bob Carr and his chief of staff, Graeme Wedderburn, Diane Beamer and her chief of staff—

Mr Paul Lynch: What has this got to do with the bill?

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: It has everything to do with the bill. We are discussing the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2011, and it goes to the heart of the corruption that the former Government experienced in its 16 years in office.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order, Mr Deputy-Speaker.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind members to direct their comments through the Chair. I will hear the point of order of the member for Liverpool.

Mr Paul Lynch: We will have to reprise the debate we had yesterday when this bill was being debated and you were in the chair, Mr Deputy-Speaker. The bill is of very narrow import. If members start going through a whole series of incidents that are not directly relevant to the bill, that is fine, but people from the Opposition side will start talking about Don Page, which will be as relevant to this bill as the matter now being mentioned by the member for The Entrance.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I do not accept the argument in the point of order.

Mr Paul Lynch: Mr Deputy-Speaker, that is the point that we made yesterday, and you ruled in our favour. You need to make it plain where you stand.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I did not rule on a point of order involving a particular member of Parliament. If the member wishes to launch an attack on a particular member of Parliament, he must do so by way of substantive motion.

Mr Paul Lynch: "An attack on a particular member of Parliament"—or anyone else for that matter, which is precisely what the member for The Entrance was commencing to do. That is the debate we had yesterday. The Chair took points of order from the Opposition Whip, and ruled that the debate should not involve attacks on individual members. That ruling was right, and I ask that you uphold the ruling you made yesterday.

Mr Greg Smith: To the point of order: As I heard it, the member for The Entrance was not making an attack on any particular individual. His remarks related to a regime and a government that had an aura of corruption about it in certain respects. That clearly is an issue that went to the electors. The member was criticising the previous Government's handling of its members, its lack of discipline, and the fact that—

Mr Paul Lynch: You should read the bill.

Mr Greg Smith: I am talking about what was said by the member for The Entrance.

Mr Paul Lynch: I am talking about the standing orders.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard sufficient on the point of order. The member for The Entrance will ensure that his comments relate to the bill.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: I come back to the Orange Grove inquiry and the reason it is relevant to the bill. The bill is in line with the Coalition's election commitment to restore integrity, accountability and transparency to government. The Orange Grove matter was a clear example of a government completely and utterly ignoring what it should have done. There were 400 jobs at stake at Orange Grove.

Ms Cherie Burton: Point of order: The matter raised by the member for The Entrance has absolutely nothing to do with the leave of the bill. The member has nothing to contribute to the debate and does not understand the bill, and therefore seeks to mud rake. I ask that the member be directed to confine his remarks to the leave of the bill.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for The Entrance will ensure that his comments relate to the bill.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: The bill before the House is the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill. As I have already stated, it will facilitate the Independent Commission Against Corruption to assemble comprehensive briefs of evidence for the Director of Public Prosecutions to support prosecutions arising from corruption investigations. Clearly I was giving examples why the bill is important and why it was introduced: the Orange Grove affair, Karyn Paluzzano and Angela D'Amore—the list goes on. I mean, Joe Tripodi had a permanent seat with his name on it at the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

Ms Cherie Burton: Point of order: The member's remarks have nothing to do with the bill. Also he is casting aspersions and imputations on former members. That is an absolute disgrace. He should confine his remarks to the bill.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. For the third time, I ask the member for The Entrance to ensure that his comments relate to the bill.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: These amendments will implement the recommendations of two reports released in 2010 by the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption and supported by the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, as well as two more recent requests for amendments made by the commissioner. This is important legislation. It will restore integrity, accountability and transparency to the Independent Commission Against Corruption and to the Government. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [4.16 p.m.]: I support the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2011 which demonstrates the Government's commitment to improving ethical standards, accountability and transparency in public administration, as stated by the member for The Entrance. The New South Wales Government was not only responsible for introducing whistleblower legislation but also for establishing the Independent Commission Against Corruption in 1988. We all recognise that after a considerable amount of time things can be improved and laws can be strengthened. These amendments are about improving reporting as well.

Numerous examples of corrupt conduct by members of this Parliament that have occurred in years gone by illustrate the need for a strong anti-corruption body in this great State. The public certainly deserve a system that stamps out that type of behaviour and wrongdoing, and the bill endeavours to do exactly that. The amendments proposed by the bill will strengthen and clarify the Act by providing additional powers for the gathering of information as well as broadening the powers of inspectors.

Mr Richard Amery: I was not intending to speak. I was looking at a report.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I inform the member for Mount Druitt that this bill strengthens the Act and improves the system that will deal with and prevent corrupt behaviour that had been taking place in the past 16 years. The Public Interest Disclosure Amendment Bill 2011 and the Public Disclosure Act 1994 protect from reprisals public officials who report wrongdoing. There have been numerous examples of such reprisals—nurses and other public servants who did the right thing, reported wrongdoings and who suffered retribution. Ethical

standards and probity should be front and centre to every person, but particularly those in prominent positions of representation and positions of responsibility. People must have faith in the public service, faith in public administration, and faith in public officials. This bill makes changes to protect those who report wrongdoings and to protect persons who make the reports. The bill is a great move forward, and I commend it to the House.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [4.19 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I contribute to the debate on the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill 2011 and the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2011. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994 is crucial in maintaining the integrity of public administration and does so by protecting public officials who identify and report wrongdoing in the public sector. They need protection. The Act makes it a criminal offence to take action against a public official in reprisal for making a public interest disclosure. As a member in the Hunter region I am only too aware of the disgraceful way the Labor Party treats whistleblowers.

A brave former Labor staffer, Gillian Sneddon, was ostracised and treated like a criminal by the Labor Party when she reported that the former member for Swansea, Milton Orkopoulos, was involved in paedophilia. She was left virtually penniless and jobless by the party that purports to represent working people. She had given loyal service to the member and to the party, but was cast adrift. She was locked out of the office of the former member for Swansea one month prior to his arrest and was sacked on the day she gave evidence against him. Mr Orkopoulos accused Ms Sneddon of believing a drug addict over him. She subsequently suffered depression and an anxiety disorder. Labor's treatment of her was shameful. The election of a Liberal-Nationals Government finally realised justice for Gillian Sneddon when she was awarded \$438,000 on 21 July this year.

Milton Orkopoulos is serving nine years in jail for over 30 sex offences. The Swansea electorate now has a Liberal member for the first time in its history, my colleague Garry Edwards. The public saw Garry's qualities and rejected the disgraceful behaviour of the Labor Party towards a member of their community. This bill will protect whistleblowers from a repeat of that sordid episode. The Independent Commission Against Corruption not only provides a role in examining corrupt conduct: it also assists in providing public confidence in the public service. Public confidence is vital to allow community members to carry out their daily lives with trust. One reason the March election results were so comprehensive was that the public simply had lost trust in the Government. They felt their trust had been breached and voted to remove a Government that had the stench of corruption swirling around it.

Ms Cherie Burton: Point of order—

Mr Paul Lynch: The member for Charlestown needs to sit down when a point of order is taken.

Mr Greg Smith: From the peanut gallery opposite.

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

Mr Greg Smith: Through you, Mr Deputy-Speaker: What's that in the peanut gallery over there?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I will not accept that.

Mr Greg Smith: I heard a noise.

Mr Paul Lynch: You often hear noises Greg. That's part of the problem.

Mr Andrew Fraser: We all remember your inaugural speech.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I am trying to listen to a point of order taken by the member for Kogarah, who does not need any help from members on either side of the House.

Ms Cherie Burton: The member is straying from the leave of the bill. The bill is the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2011 which, for the member who has been here for five minutes, resulted from a report when Labor was in government. He should be careful in making his remarks. I ask that he be directed to return to the leave of the bill. His contribution is becoming ridiculous.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order.

Mr Andrew Fraser: To the point of order: The bills are cognate, and the member for Charlestown was speaking in debate on the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill.

Ms Cherie Burton: No he was not. He was talking about something completely different.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I will make that decision. The member for Kogarah will resume her seat. The member for Charlestown has the call. I remind the member for Charlestown that his comments should be generally relevant to the two cognate bills.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: There seems to be a disconnection between planet Kogarah and planet Earth. I will speak directly to the bill. The processes put in place by this bill will result in a robust framework to investigate corrupt conduct and, therefore, provide strong disincentives for such conduct. The Greiner Government created the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the O'Farrell Government will restore its integrity. A quick scan through the list of matters the Independent Commission Against Corruption has dealt with over the years clearly demonstrates its effectiveness in changing behaviours. In its early days it investigated a plethora of inappropriate transactions generally involving kickbacks for successful tenders, or works carried out by the private sector for the New South Wales Government or for councils. The interface between the private and public sectors had presented opportunities for unscrupulous individuals to fatten their wallets at the expense of the public purse and other contractors.

Of recent years, the frequency of this type of illegitimate and illegal activity appearing before the Independent Commission Against Corruption has decreased because the commission has created change within government, thus resulting in few examples of corrupt behaviour. The Independent Commission Against Corruption was a groundbreaking organisation when it was established all those years ago. It has made a substantial contribution to New South Wales over the past couple of decades. I am pleased to see its powers being strengthened. I commend the bills to the House.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [4.25 p.m.]: I support the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2011 and the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill 2011. I bring to the attention of the House the Supreme Court case involving Gillian Sneddon. In June this year the Supreme Court dismissed Gillian Sneddon's action against the State but awarded damages of more than \$400,000 in her favour against the former Speaker of the Parliament and the former Labor Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the jailed paedophile Milton Orkopoulos. Her case is symptomatic of Labor's treatment of whistleblowers, whether it be nurses who exposed the problem of Camden and Campbelltown hospitals—

Ms Cherie Burton: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. How is this relevant to the bill? If the member wants to go on about the Independent Commission Against Corruption, by the admission of his own mate over there—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Kogarah will resume her seat.

Ms Cherie Burton: If you want to talk about corruption, let's go back to Greiner, who is now head of Infrastructure NSW. If you want to go down that path, let's go down that path.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the member for Kogarah that she should direct her comments through the Chair. I will not tolerate that sort of behaviour.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: To the point of order: I point out to the House, and especially to those opposite, that I was quoting directly, word for word, from the Premier's remarks when he introduced this bill.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Uninterrupted.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: Uninterrupted, as the member for Wagga Wagga says. Not one point of order was taken from those opposite. What has been demonstrated by the actions of members opposite is that they are getting very touchy about the leave of the bill.

Ms Cherie Burton: How is this a point of order?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member is speaking further to the point of order.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: One bill is the Independent Commission Against Corruption Bill and the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill is the one from which I was quoting the Premier.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. There is no point of order. The member for Coffs Harbour will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I will continue to quote the Premier's speech.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): This is the introductory speech.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: Absolutely.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I do not have a copy of it here.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: It was the Premier's agreement in principle speech. Any further points of order are nothing more than hypocritical. The Premier went on to say:

Her case is symptomatic of Labor's treatment of whistleblowers, whether it be the nurses who exposed problems at Camden and Campbelltown hospitals or the brave Bimla Chand—

[Quorum called for.]

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

[Business interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Members' Speaking Time

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.31 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to restore the speaking time, lost during the quorum call, of the member for Coffs Harbour.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Attorney General has moved a motion to suspend standing and sessional orders. The mover has five minutes to speak to the motion.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Just put the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Would the Attorney General like to speak to the motion?

Mr GREG SMITH: Yes. The calling of a quorum interrupted a speech of one of the last speakers on this bill today, who was making good progress in the interest of the State in his speech. I have moved for the suspension so that subsequently I can move that the speaking time of the member for Coffs Harbour be reinstated to where it was before the interruption.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.32 p.m.]: The Opposition opposes the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Opposition is opposing the suspension of standing and sessional orders?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Yes.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It is not opposing the motion.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Consistently through this debate—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members of the Government, especially the member for Kiama, will remain silent and allow the member for Mount Druitt to make his case.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Government members have consistently spoken outside the bill. They have raised issues which Labor members have not done. We have not raised—

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: The standing orders allow a reply as to whether standing orders should be suspended, which you have properly acceded to. What the member for Mount Druitt is doing is arguing the merits of the preceding debate, which is not relevant to the issue of whether further time should be granted to the member who was previously speaking. The remarks of the member for Mount Druitt need to be relevant.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. The member for Mount Druitt has the call.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The issue about the quorum being called, a practice used by the present Government when in opposition—

Mr Gareth Ward: You have to be kidding. Point of order—

Ms Cherie Burton: You weren't even here.

Mr Ryan Park: Hear! Hear!

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Kiama will resume his seat. The member for Keira will be removed from the Chamber if he continues with that type of behaviour.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order—

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Despite the Government having a substantial majority, we never reinstated the time—maybe once in 16 years. These suspensions of standing orders are circumventing the standing orders of this place that require the Government to have a quorum in the Chamber when its members are speaking. Having a suspension of standing orders after each time a quorum is called I believe is circumventing the standing orders of this place and is something which former governments, Labor and Coalition, never did or did very rarely. This is now a common practice. I believe this suspension of standing orders should be rejected.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Attorney General is entitled to a response. All of a sudden everyone thinks he or she is the Speaker. The Attorney General will be heard in silence.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.34 p.m.], in reply: The member for Mount Druitt has a long memory, having been here a long time. I think that today there was a deliberate intent to stop the articulation by the member for Coffs Harbour of this important motion. My motion should be agreed to.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 65

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

Noes, 19

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

[Business resumed.]

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member's time will be restored to 12 minutes.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I return to the Premier's comments on Gillian Sneddon:

Her case is symptomatic of Labor's treatment of whistleblowers, whether it be the nurses who exposed problems at Camden and Campbelltown hospitals or the brave Bimla Chand, who exposed systematic bullying at RailCorp. Labor's treatment of people who stood up for the public good, who stood up for their beliefs, was nothing short of shameful and every single member of the Labor Party in this place ought to hang their heads in shame.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Coffs Harbour will be heard in silence.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: When the Premier made these comments in the House no interjections were made or points of order taken. I am reiterating the reasons for the introduction of the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill. The bill strengthens the capacity of the Ombudsman to oversight public authorities and resolve disputes. The bill expands the type of disclosures that can be made to the Chief Executive of Local Government in the Department of Premier and Cabinet regarding wrongdoing by local councils. During my time as shadow Minister for Local Government the number of rorts in local government—

[Interruption]

The member for Wollongong is interjecting about rorts in local government. Talk about being brave.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Coffs Harbour will be heard in silence.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: One of the reasons for the introduction of this legislation to amend the Act is because of the rorts that were endemic in Labor-controlled local government.

Mr Richard Amery: But never in National-controlled local government.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: Never. I refer to Liverpool, Wollongong, Strathfield and many other local councils.

Mr Richard Amery: Things have changed: they're not wearing white shoes anymore.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: The member for Mount Druitt makes light of the matter. It seems to be an admission that Opposition members are finally acknowledging the Labor Party rorts in local government and the

way that local government was run. Those who work in local government should be able to expose corruption in councils. The murmur of corruption among councils has increased to a shout. We have seen past examples of corruption. This legislation goes a long way to ensuring that matters of corrupt conduct, maladministration and breaches of pecuniary interest obligations under the Local Government Act will be properly investigated and acted upon by the Government. For far too long it has been an area of great concern within New South Wales. I intended to speak for only five minutes on this legislation but with all the interjections and with the childish tactics of the member for Liverpool I will have to speak longer.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: Mr Deputy-Speaker, just to enforce your previous ruling, the member for Murray-Darling should not interrupt the member for Coffs Harbour. He should be heard in silence. As a member of the Opposition I concede that a North Coast National Party member of Parliament is an expert witness when it comes to speaking on corruption.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! That is not a point of order. However, I am sure that the member's interjection will encourage the member for Coffs Harbour to use up all his remaining time.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: Mr Deputy-Speaker, I ask that you direct the member for Mount Druitt to withdraw that remark because it casts aspersions not just on me but on other North Coast members of The Nationals.

Mr Richard Amery: I am happy to withdraw it. They certainly would not be an expert witness.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: Mr Deputy-Speaker, I ask for that comment also to be withdrawn.

Mr Richard Amery: I decline. There was nothing offensive in that.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I note that. I note that in Standing Order 250 there is an opportunity for the Speaker to direct the member to withdraw. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I ask you to direct the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr Richard Amery: I have withdrawn it.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: No, you haven't.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members will direct their comments through the Chair. I ask the member for Mount Druitt to withdraw the comment.

Mr Richard Amery: Which part of it? I have already withdrawn the comment. Which part of the term would the member for Coffs Harbour like withdrawn? I have said I withdraw the comment and I made the comment that he is certainly no expert witness.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I will take that to mean that the member for Mount Druitt has withdrawn all the comments he made by way of interjection or in the points of order he has taken.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I will probably raise a matter of privilege later this day.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have ruled on that matter and the member for Mount Druitt did not disagree with what I placed on the record. The comments have been withdrawn.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I will read *Hansard* tomorrow. I intended to contribute to the debate on the basis of being very pleased with the amendments to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act which allow the Independent Commission Against Corruption to prepare a brief that can be used in public prosecutions. Because of the way the Independent Commission Against Corruption operated over the years far too often the brief was tainted because of the evidence given before the commission, and the Director of Public Prosecutions could not take action against people named by the commission as being corrupt. The amendments to the legislation in relation to the Act state quite clearly in schedule 1:

[1] Section 14 Other functions of Commission

Omit section 14 (1) (a). Insert instead:

- (a) to gather and assemble, during or after the discontinuance or completion of its investigations, evidence that may be admissible in the prosecution of a person for a criminal offence against a law of the State in connection with corrupt conduct and to furnish such evidence to the Director of Public Prosecutions

On many occasions in the past public officials who have been named by the Independent Commission Against Corruption and found guilty of corrupt conduct have not been prosecuted because the brief of evidence gathered by the Independent Commission Against Corruption during the investigation process could not be used as evidence by the Director of Public Prosecutions. A number of years ago I visited the Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption with former Attorney General John Hatzistergos and we looked at how the system worked over there. Originally Gary Sturgess, who devised the original legislation for the Greiner Government, based his premise for the legislation on the Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. The beauty about the Hong Kong Act was that the Independent Commission Against Corruption— [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption acts in total secrecy. The commission's building in Hong Kong has cells. The commission collates the evidence against a person against whom a complaint has been made and the evidence is investigated. When the commission gets the brief of evidence together the person involved is arrested and taken to the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and it is very rare that that person comes out again until after the court case has been heard and the sentence has been served. The whole of an Independent Commission Against Corruption investigation in Hong Kong is held in camera. Far too often, whether it concerns a member of Parliament or a public servant, when a matter goes to the Independent Commission Against Corruption the media have a field day. The former Government refused to answer any questions in relation to its members—and a raft of Labor Party members were referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption—using the excuse that the matter was before the commission and therefore the Government could not comment. I note that in the Premier's agreement in principle speech he said:

As part of our strategy to improve honesty and integrity in New South Wales, this bill will strengthen the operation of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I foreshadow that there will be further legislation about the level of court in which matters relating to jurisdiction will in future be heard. This flows from suggestions from the Independent Commission Against Corruption commissioner that the Attorney General is currently taking up with the commissioner and the Acting Director of Public Prosecutions.

I suggest that the Attorney General should also take up the issue of running the Independent Commission Against Corruption in New South Wales the way it is run in Hong Kong so that when these issues are investigated, when the brief of evidence is received, when the Independent Commission Against Corruption has that evidence and it is enough to charge someone, that person is brought in and charged and there is no interference, either on a political level or via media publicity, in relation to the case. The case can be constructed properly and prosecutions quite properly can ensue. Operating the commission in that way would give the public confidence in the Independent Commission Against Corruption, which it deserves. It should not be used as a political football. The member for Mount Druitt made an interjection that I objected to. He uses reference to the Independent Commission Against Corruption as a slur but he fails to acknowledge that the commission's investigations into North Coast land deals found no evidence of corruption whatsoever.

The Labor Party loves to throw that one up. Why? Because the media put it out as the government of the day having an Independent Commission Against Corruption investigation under its own legislation. A whistleblower, a real estate agent, referred a local government member in Coffs Harbour to the Independent Commission Against Corruption 17 or 18 years ago. The sad part about that case was that the man who was the whistleblower had his name mentioned in the commission that often—the case for corruption was proved against the councillor, whose name I cannot remember—that it was the whistleblower who was the one who suffered the ire of the community, because his name was in the media so often. That is a shame, and I suspect that has discouraged people from making disclosures to the Independent Commission Against Corruption that should have been made.

My plea to the Premier and the Attorney General is to look closely at the Hong Kong model. When they introduce further legislation they should include that model in it. It is the only way that we can have true confidence in the impartiality and fairness of any reports to the Independent Commission Against Corruption against anyone—a member of Parliament or a public servant. I commend the legislation to the House. I am saddened by the way this debate has gone on today, with the Labor Party trying to defend the large number of its members who have had car parking spots at the Independent Commission Against Corruption—some of them on a permanent basis. As members of this Parliament, we should send a message to the public that the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act and the whistleblowers legislation will protect them. The legislation ensures that anyone who practices or is involved in corrupt conduct in this State will feel the full force of the law and anomalies in legislation will not protect them. I commend the bills to the House.

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [5.02 p.m.]: I feel like I have jumped into the fire. I support the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2011 and cognate bill. I strongly support the

object of the bills, which is to strengthen the powers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the inspector of the commission. The Independent Commission Against Corruption does an excellent job in investigating corrupt practices by State and local officials and it is our duty as legislators to ensure they have the teeth to carry out their work. The work of the commission is incredibly important. The object of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2011 is to amend the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988 to strengthen, and clarify the ambit of, certain powers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the inspector of the commission.

The amendment will outline that the Independent Commission Against Corruption has a role to play after the completion of investigations by the Director of Public Prosecutions. The commission will be given the clear power to gather, assemble and furnish evidence after the investigations of the Director of Public Prosecutions are completed. This amendment will enable the inspector to report on any matter directly to Parliament if the inspector deems it to be of public interest. It also provides the inspector with the freedom to provide a recommendation to the Independent Commission Against Corruption on any affected person, on any matter that he or she feels is best dealt with in that way. The amendment will provide clarity to ensure that the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 does not thwart the inspector's use of protected information. The amendment will also give the commissioner the discretion to excuse people from appearing before a public inquiry if that person is appearing purely for the purpose of producing an item.

This amendment is essential to clarify the role of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and provide the inspector with the flexibility and power to effectively carry out the role. I am in favour of this amendment. It will assist the Independent Commission Against Corruption to hold parliamentarians and public officials to account. This sort of legislation would have assisted in shining further light on the sinister dealings of those opposite during their 16 years in Government. The flexibility and power that this amendment will provide to the Independent Commission Against Corruption would have undoubtedly come in handy during the commission's investigations of many disgraceful affairs of the previous Labor Government. These strengthened powers would also be useful during some of the current Independent Commission Against Corruption investigations into so-called Mr Kelly. What about Mr Kelly's replacement, second chance Steve. Some of us recall the Federal Labor Minister Ros Kelly—

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: This point of order has been taken on a number of matters in relation to some members using this bill as an excuse to attack either former members or current members of the Parliament. Some of the cases the member for Monaro is referring to may not have been finalised. This is again another case of a member of The Nationals lecturing the Parliament on corruption—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order.

Mr Richard Amery: He should be restrained from mentioning cases that may not have been finalised.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I am sure the member for Monaro now realises that. If members wish to refer to particular incidents they should point out how this bill will address that problem.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: This bill gives flexibility and power to the Independent Commission Against Corruption to pursue those who have been accused of corrupt conduct by allowing those investigators to get to the truth. I referred to the Federal case because we have seen time after time that it is in the Labor DNA to say or do anything for political convenience. When I was talking about Ms Kelly and the Federal scene, known as the "sport rorts affair", I was talking about that very point that the Labor Party—

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

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Ms Kelly resigned in disgrace. There is no hiding from that. When the Auditor-General investigated how she was making decisions about announcements within marginal seats—

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: The reality is that this speech now has nothing to do with this bill. The member speaking needs to understand a couple of things to get him back to the leave of the bill. The first is that he needs to read the bill. He clearly has not, because if he had he would realise that nothing he has said so far is relevant. Secondly, Federal matters have nothing to do with the bill.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Labor was more concerned about being liberated from liability than taking responsibility for reporting any possible corruption reported to it. We will go back to State politics, to the comments of Morris Iemma, a former New South Wales Premier, on dealing with corruption allegations, who said:

It is a liberating experience for politicians because once an anti-corruption allegation exists, it gives you a simple transparent response to any allegation of corruption—take it to ICAC.

We have seen Labor use this argument time and again, including when allegations were made of improper donations by the Transport Workers Union to the Australian Labor Party. There is no doubt that the Independent Commission Against Corruption did not strike the same fear into politicians on the other side in the last Government as it did when it was established in 1989. That is bad news for the public. Whenever faced with corruption claims, State Labor adopted a Pontius Pilate approach by telling informants to raise it with the commission. The public deserves a Government that is committed to stamping out corruption and enacts legislation to do it. This bill does that.

We have identified the weaknesses highlighted by the scandalous previous Labor Government and we are prepared to fix them. The bill clearly shows that the Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to improving accountability and ethical standards in public administration, firstly with the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill 2011. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1994 plays a critical role in maintaining the integrity of public administration in this State. It does this by protecting public officers who disclose wrongdoing in the public sector in accordance with the Act—whistleblowers. They bring wrongdoing and corruption to the attention of government and the community.

Like the member for Coffs Harbour, I will quote from the Premier's speech regarding Gillian Sneddon whose situation reminded us of how serious reprisals against whistleblowers can be. Members will recall that Ms Sneddon claimed to have suffered victimisation, bullying and harassment at the hands of Milton Orkopoulos and members of his staff. It is one of the sorriest episodes involving any member of Parliament and it is something that the Labor Party should always be ashamed of. The New South Wales Coalition was responsible for introducing whistleblower legislation and for establishing the Independent Commission Against Corruption through legislation in 1988. We recognise that two decades later the Act needs to be strengthened. After 16 years of Labor, numerous examples of corrupt conduct have shown the continuing need for a strong anti-corruption body in this State.

The bill will strengthen both the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. A strong Independent Commission Against Corruption will work proactively to prevent corruption and fearlessly investigate allegations when they are made. The bill will insert a new subsection into section 57B of the Act to permit the reports and findings of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption to be published more broadly. These amendments will clarify that the inspector may communicate his findings and recommendations to the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, commission officers, complainants and any other affected parties for the purpose of resolving a complaint or dealing with a matter.

To improve honesty and integrity in New South Wales, this bill will strengthen the operation of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. These two bills form part of a series of measures that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is taking not just in relation to whistleblowing and anti-corruption but also in other areas to restore public confidence in the administration of government and to deliver openness and transparency. Our side of the House believes in integrity; our side of the House believes in honesty; and our side of the House believes that we are accountable for our actions and that the public has a right to an accountable and transparent Government. This bill strengthens those principles and I commend it to the House.

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

FINES AMENDMENT (WORK AND DEVELOPMENT ORDERS) BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 3 August 2011.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.11 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Fines Amendment (Work and Development Orders) Bill 2011. The Opposition supports this bill. In fact I am mildly astonished that a bill

as progressive as this has come out of the current Government. In short, the bill continues and streamlines a scheme introduced on a trial basis by the previous Government. The objects of the bill are set out in the legislation. They are to broaden the categories of people who can be subject to a work and development order to include those who have a serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances and also to streamline the process of applying and administering work and development orders.

The work and development order scheme was implemented by the Fines Further Amendment Bill 2008, which was introduced by then Attorney General Hatzistergos. That legislation followed a number of reviews and reports. These included a Sentencing Council report in October 2006, a report by the Homeless Persons' Legal Centre and the Public Interest Advocacy Centre in April 2006 and the Standing Committee on Law and Justice report in March 2006. These reports highlighted that fines and penalty notices have a disproportionately severe impact upon some of the most vulnerable people in our society. The homeless, people with mental illness, people in acute economic hardship and people with an intellectual disability find it harder to deal with the fine system than do many others. They are less likely to be able to navigate the process of asking for an extension of time to pay or deal with the automatic processes applicable to people who do not pay fines.

One of the other aspects flowing from these reports highlighted the problem of secondary offending. Fine default can lead to licence or registration cancellation or suspension. This can happen very easily for someone without the organisational skills or means to pay a fine, and is itself a serious criminal issue with even more severe sanctions and penalties. These issues also have a disproportionate impact upon people living in rural and remote areas. Fines and penalty notices can lead to an extensive interaction of already disadvantaged persons with the legal system. Following the 2006 reports, the Government in 2007 asked an interagency working group to consider improvements to the Fines Act 1996. Following wide consultation, the result was the 2008 legislation, which introduced a work and development order regime to be run for two years followed by an evaluation. That evaluation has resulted in the bill before the House.

Last year forums were held to promote the scheme on the Central Coast, in Dubbo, the far North Coast, Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. At that stage more than 70 organisations had been approved to participate in the work and development order system. The range of organisations involved is very broad: the Salvation Army, Mission Australia, St Vincent De Paul, Access Community Group, Bankstown Multicultural Youth Scheme, Boys Town Engadine, Canterbury Youth Services, Come in Youth Resource Centre, Community Restorative Centre, Greek Welfare Centre, Marist Youth Centre, Parramatta Mission Uniting Church, Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales, Shire Wide Youth Services, Summit Employment and Training, and the Allen Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Centre to randomly name some of those involved. As at 14 April 2011 there were 143 organisations and 77 health practitioners enrolled in the scheme.

As at June last year, work completed by applicants had accounted for approximately \$29,250 in repaid fines. That has of course increased. The May 2011 evaluation of the scheme by the Department of Attorney General and Justice reported that as at 31 March 2011, 645 people had been issued with work and development orders and had reduced \$205,400 worth of fine debt. An additional \$1,826,440 of fine debt was under management under work and development orders. Media reports now suggest that 700 people have reduced their debit by a collective \$294,000 with a further \$1,933,755 under management under the scheme.

The original scheme provided for specified groups of people to be able to pay off fines they had incurred through voluntary work with approved charities, undertaking an educational, vocational or life skills course, undergoing financial or other counselling, undergoing medical or mental health programs or undergoing drug and alcohol treatment. For a person under 25 years of age, it could also include undertaking a mentoring program. The order was able to be made by the State Debt Recovery Office. The order could be made if a fine enforcement order had been made and a community service order was not in force in respect of the fine.

An application for an order had to be made to the State Debt Recovery Office by or on behalf of the person concerned. Those persons in relation to whom an order could be made were a person with an intellectual disability, a mental illness or a cognitive impairment, or a person who is homeless or experiencing acute economic hardship. This scheme having initially been established as a two-year pilot has now been evaluated. The evaluation has certainly been positive and this legislation flows from recommendations of the evaluation. The May 2011 evaluation has found that the work and development orders scheme has helped to:

Reduce reoffending in the fine enforcement system, and secondary offending in the broader criminal justice system. In particular, preliminary statistics indicate that 82.5% of WDO clients have not received another fine or penalty notice enforcement order since their WDO was approved.

Engage clients in appropriate treatment or activities that they may not otherwise have engaged in, including in particular mental health, drug and alcohol treatment.

Reduce client stress, anxiety and feelings of hopelessness and despair.

Promote client agency, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

Build client skills, provide them with an incentive to work, and may lead to employment or more employment opportunities.

Reduce costs to Government associated with fine enforcement, ongoing offending behaviour, welfare dependency, mental health problems and drug and alcohol addiction.

The major change introduced by this bill is to expand the classes of people to whom an order may be given by including those who have serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or addictive substances. Granted the other categories already in the 2008 legislation, this seems a logical and sensible step—an incremental change in the positive sense of that term. An order can already include undertaking drug and alcohol treatment and the Attorney reported when introducing this bill that 250 people had undergone this treatment. This amendment also provides that the only activities a person in this added category can be required by the order to participate in are counselling and drug or alcohol treatment.

The legislation proposes other amendments, which also flow from the evaluation report and aim to streamline the process of applying for an order. They include that practitioners and approved organisations can now decide whether a client is eligible under the scheme rather than wait for the State Debt Recovery Office. This is said to mean the process can be speeded up, and that certainty seems logical. I notice that appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure that this change does not attract inappropriate activity. As I say, the Opposition is delighted to support this bill, extending as it does a scheme commenced by the previous Government.

There are, however, a number of recommendations that were also made in the evaluation report that do not seem to have been referred to by the Attorney General when he introduced the bill. I seek advice from the Attorney as to whether these matters have been addressed and whether they will be pursued. If they have not been pursued, why not? Those outstanding issues include the recommendation that four small work and development order regional support teams be established and be located within Legal Aid New South Wales offices and the Aboriginal Legal Service in Coffs Harbour, Dubbo, Nowra and Campbelltown. The evaluation report also made the point that appropriate resources be allocated for educational and promotional material and that regional and remote areas and Aboriginal communities be targeted. This relates to recommendation No. 56 of the evaluation report.

The evaluation had a number of other recommendations concerning cautions, internal review and voluntary enforcement apart from work and development order provisions. I would be interested to know whether the Attorney General proposes to pursue those at another time and in another piece of legislation. As to other recommendations concerning the work and development order scheme, I particularly seek the Government's attitude to the following recommendations from the evaluation report: No. 18, about not just New South Wales Government agencies being eligible for approval; No. 24, guidelines to confirm that interstate organisations and interstate residents can be involved in work and development orders; and No. 27, the definition of acute economic hardship to be satisfied by receipt of an eligible Centrelink benefit.

I also seek the Government's attitude to recommendations: No. 32, education activities as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship to be eligible activities for a work and development order; No. 35, that the State Debt Recovery Office be provided with enhanced computer resources to service the work and development order scheme; No. 38, that resources be allocated for random audits of 5 per cent of all work and development orders in a two-year period; No. 51, that online reporting form be reviewed; and No. 52, awareness raising of online reporting options for approved organisations and health practitioners. As I say, those recommendations are made in the evaluation report, and I would seek the advice of the Attorney General, in reply, as to what the Government is proposing to do about that. Apart from that, as I indicated at the outset, the Opposition is delighted to support this legislation.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.20 p.m.]: I support the Fines Amendment (Work and Development Orders) Bill 2011. The bill is yet another example of how the Attorney General and the New South Wales Government are improving the administration of justice in this State. The Attorney General has highlighted to the House that fine debt is a significant problem for vulnerable people in our community. The Work and Development Order scheme addresses people who are homeless, mentally ill, intellectually disabled or who just do not have the money to work to pay their fines.

The work and development order scheme is open to people who are homeless, have a mental illness, intellectual disability or cognitive impairment, or who are experiencing acute economic hardship. The scheme was originally established as a two-year pilot, and the pilot was recently evaluated. The evaluation report found that the work and development order scheme helps to reduce reoffending, and provides a strong incentive for people to engage in unpaid work, educational and vocational courses, and mental health and drug and alcohol treatment. It improves mental health outcomes for participants, builds participants' job skills and opens up their employment opportunities.

The evaluation report recommended that the scheme be made permanent and made recommendations to improve the scheme's operation. The Government has accepted the recommendation that the scheme should be made permanent. With this bill, the Government seeks to implement two of the other recommendations made by the evaluation report. Before I turn to those recommendations, I should note that the Fines Act 1996 enables the State Debt Recovery Office to make a work and development order to enable a fine defaulter who has an intellectual disability, a mental illness or a cognitive impairment, is homeless or is experiencing acute economic hardship, to satisfy the fine concerned by undertaking certain activities specified in the order, for example, unpaid work, medical treatment or counselling.

The object of the bill is to introduce a new category of people eligible to participate in the scheme—people with serious addictions to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances. People who apply for a work and development order on this ground only—for example, they are not also homeless—must undertake drug and alcohol treatment or counselling as their work and development order activity. This will oblige them to address their drug or alcohol problem. Secondly, the bill allows approved organisations and health practitioners to determine whether a person is eligible for the scheme. The organisation or health practitioner will have to keep specific evidence on file to prove their client's eligibility, and may be subject to random audits to ensure their compliance with record-keeping requirements. This will significantly improve processing times and leave decisions about eligibility to those with the most expertise in the area.

Schedule 1 [4] to the bill will amend section 99B of the Act to enable a work and development order to be made in relation to a fine defaulter who has a serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances. Schedule 1 [6] amends that section to provide that, if an order is made in relation to such a fine defaulter, the only activities that may be carried out under the order are counselling and drug or alcohol treatment unless the fine defaulter also satisfies another of the existing criteria for the making of an order, such as having a mental illness. This provision will encourage a person who has an addiction to alcohol or other drugs to seek treatment. It is a common sense provision. It is a common sense reform, and I have no doubt that it will have great community support.

The Attorney General has stated in the House that the bill streamlines the work order application process. Under the present system, an organisation or health practitioner who is supporting a person applying for a work and development order must, first, compile the relevant documentation and show that the applicant is eligible; they must then set out the activities that the applicant will undertake, and send the application to the State Debt Recovery Office; and then, under the current system, it is the State Debt Recovery Office that makes the decision about whether a work and development order is appropriate. Schedule 1 [5] to the bill amends section 99B of the Act to remove the requirement that an application for a work and development order always be accompanied by supporting evidence.

Significantly, schedule 1 [7] inserts new section 99BA into the Act to require the State Debt Recovery Office, when determining an application for the making of a work and development order in relation to a particular fine defaulter, to rely on an assessment if provided by an approved person supporting the application that the fine defaulter meets certain criteria for eligibility. Those criteria are that the fine defaulter has a mental illness, has an intellectual disability or cognitive impairment, is homeless, or is experiencing acute economic hardship, or has a serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances. The State Debt Recovery Office need not rely on such an assessment if it has information that gives it reason to believe that it should not.

This section requires an approved person supporting an application for a work and development order or making an assessment of eligibility for an order to keep supporting evidence that enables the State Debt Recovery Office to require the production of that evidence. This means it is the organisations and the health practitioners who will now be able to determine whether their client is eligible for the work and development order scheme. As I have just stated, there will still be an obligation on the health professionals to collect the necessary documentation to prove an applicant's eligibility, but it will not be up to the State Debt Recovery Office to make the actual decision. The advantages of this change will be that it will reduce application

processing times, which will facilitate people getting into the scheme, and it obviously leaves decisions regarding work and development order eligibility to those with the requisite expertise, namely, the health professionals and organisations.

The legislation has built-in safeguards. Schedule 1 [8] to the bill amends section 99C of the Act to enable the State Debt Recovery Office to vary or revoke a work and development order if it is of the opinion that false or misleading information has been given in connection with the application for the order, or a report of an approved person in relation to the order or the person subject to the order does not meet or no longer meets the eligibility criteria specified in the application for the order as a ground for making the order. Safeguards in the bill will ensure that the system is not open to abuse. The bill will ensure that, if circumstances change, the State Debt Recovery Office has the ability to vary or revoke a work and development order. This is an innovative bill. It demonstrates that this Government is committed to positive reform in the administration of justice. It demonstrates that the Government is committed to practical reform. The bill will have the wholehearted support of the community, and I commend it to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [5.28 p.m.]: The Fines Amendment (Work and Development Orders) Bill 2011 is important legislation and continues legislation introduced by the previous Government. I commend the new Government for introducing this bill. I shall talk a little about the bill's impact on the Keira electorate. Sharon Callaghan from the Illawarra Legal Centre does an incredible job in our local community advocating for some of our most disadvantaged members. I spoke in detail with her and with members of our local TAFE in Wollongong about their role in advocating the continued use of work and development orders. Ms Callaghan told me countless stories of how work and development orders help in trying to get young people in particular back on the straight and narrow by encouraging them to accept the consequences of their actions. In doing so, this prevents them from reaching the point where they fall into a disadvantage cycle.

I am sure all members are familiar with how people find themselves in these predicaments. Sharon explained that often what happens is that these people incur large fines and because of their insufficient means they struggle to pay the fine. This results in them not having the means to get a drivers licence or a car, et cetera, to enable them to be engaged in the workforce and they end up in a cycle of disadvantage. Without these types of instruments people become entrenched on the path of disadvantage. This bill is an opportunity for those people to be able to get off that cycle in a meaningful and productive way whilst also making sure they understand that there are consequences for their actions. Sharon and the Illawarra Legal Centre deal with some of the most disadvantaged people in the Illawarra community, but they do not consider providing this assistance is taking a softly-softly approach; it is making sure that young people in particular are not continually disadvantaged as they move through adulthood to a point where they feel there is no way out.

This bill provides an opportunity for those with a mental illness, who are homeless, or who are in severe financial crisis to move forward. After the recent announcement by BlueScope more people will find themselves in acute financial stress—those who had a wage and no longer will have that in the weeks and months ahead. These are exactly the sorts of people for whom work and development orders are important. This also is an important tool for young people. I commend the previous Government and this Government for introducing this bill, and I commend the Attorney General for extending the operation of work and development orders. Some months back Sharon and others at the Illawarra Legal Centre asked me to lobby on behalf of their community for this instrument to be continued. I did and am pleased that a scheme introduced under a Labor Government will be extended under this new Government. That is good news for our local community.

The Illawarra Legal Centre promotes work and development orders by having its staff contact local groups to make sure they understand what the orders involve, running workshops through TAFE and making sure the service is promoted and advertised. Given the strength and importance of this package in many of our communities, more promotion is needed. Many community groups have not been informed adequately about work and development orders, particularly those in disadvantaged parts of my electorate to whom I have spoken. Governments and political parties of all persuasions do their best for their communities but sometimes the information from this place does not reach where it is needed most: on the ground in our communities.

Our communities need to know this service is available and organisations that provide this service need to know about the changes to continue their support of the scheme and support the people who need this kind of legislative instrument. As parliamentarians we must promote this service within our communities. We must make sure that our media outlets and community groups are aware of this service. People seek information first from our community groups, welfare organisations, housing agencies and other groups that help the disadvantaged. It is vital that the information in this Chamber reaches those groups to point people in the right direction to get off the cycle of fines impacting on their adult life.

One gentleman experienced the benefits of a work and development order after incurring over a period of approximately four years around \$8,000 in fines that were incurring interest upon interest. It is an incredible amount and it is easy to say, "Well, you should have just paid it off." This person did not have the capacity to pay: he had mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues along with an acute level of financial hardship. This person was an inspiration to others by taking responsibility for his actions. He did not want a handout; he wanted a hand up. He wanted to get out of the cycle of disadvantage. He recognised that his behaviour was inappropriate, but he wanted people to recognise that during that period in his life he was experiencing severe challenges and changes. Work and development orders are an opportunity, when used correctly, to enable people to get back into society, to contribute effectively in society and not have fines hindering their progress. I congratulate the previous Government on introducing this bill and thank this Government for extending it. As parliamentarians we have a responsibility to make sure our community groups are aware of the service and help people get off this cycle of disadvantage.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [5.36 p.m.]: I support the Fines Amendment (Work and Development Orders) Bill 2011. It is heartening to hear that this sensible bill has bipartisan support. This bill proposes to amend the Fines Act by extending the categories for work and development orders to people who have a serious addiction to drugs, alcohol and volatile substances. The bill will help to streamline the application process for a work and development order by relying on the assessment of an approved organisation or health practitioner—someone who knows about these people. The bill also will facilitate the appropriate administration of the work and development order. In other words, the bill will cut a lot of red tape associated with the process. The work and development order scheme was established as a two-year pilot to enable a fine defaulter who has an intellectual disability, a mental illness, a cognitive impairment, is homeless or is experiencing acute economic hardship to work off the fine by undertaking certain activities specified in the order—for example, unpaid work, medical treatment or counselling.

A pensioner in my electorate incurred a traffic fine for the first time in his life. He had been a safe and responsible driver for over 55 years but he incurred a speeding violation, probably due to the many confusing changes of speed signs on the many roads that the Liberal-Nationals Government and particularly the Minister for Roads and Ports have been auditing and changing. This poor pensioner's first response was horror as he had not received a fine in 55 years of driving. His second response was that he could not afford to pay the fine. He was doing it tough as a pensioner. This man was in acute financial stress. He would be much happier to work off his fine through a work and development order than pay a monetary fine. The valuation of the work and development order pilot found that they provided an incentive for participants to engage in drug and alcohol rehabilitation. During the pilot period over 250 people undertook drug and alcohol treatment as part of their work and development order. In doing so, some participants addressed factors that were linked to their offending behaviour.

Often drug and alcohol problems are only symptoms of psychological and other problems in people's lives. Addressing these issues gives people another chance at living a mainstream life. This two-year pilot scheme was so successful that over 80 per cent of participants did not incur further fines. The amendments will build on this success by specifically enabling people to apply for a work development order because they have a serious drug, alcohol or volatile substance addiction. If this is their only ground of eligibility—that is, they are not also homeless—they must undertake drug or alcohol treatment and/or counselling as their work development order activity.

I believe this is a positive initiative as this may be the wake-up call needed by many people who are seriously drug addicted—and I include other substances—to seek help and to receive help. This will encourage rehabilitation at a very early point of contact with the criminal system which currently is not the case. On a pragmatic note it would be much more cost-effective to keep people out of jail rather than incarcerate them. Normally people are not diverted into drug and alcohol treatment until they commit an offence serious enough to warrant an appearance in court. Jail is often referred to as the "university of crime", increasing the likelihood that upon release criminal behaviour will escalate and become behaviour of a more serious nature.

Drug and alcohol abuse has a very strong association with crime. Rehabilitation programs that are undertaken in an everyday environment have been shown to be much more likely to succeed than those undertaken in a jail environment. This has the potential to reduce reoffending and to reduce the personal, social and economic costs of drug and alcohol abuse. Extending this scheme, which will help more people, help to rehabilitate vulnerable people, prevent the escalation of self-destructive behaviour and prevent antisocial behaviour, can only be a good thing. This demonstrates the commitment of this Government to get people help when they need it and to improve people's lives to become more productive members of the community. I commend the Fines Amendment (Work and Development Orders) Bill 2011 to this House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.45 p.m.]: I contribute to debate on the Fines Amendment (Work and Development Orders) Bill 2011. The Fines Act 1996 enables the State Debt Recovery Office to make a work and development order to enable a person who has defaulted on a fine, who has an intellectual disability, a mental illness or cognitive impairment, is homeless, or is experiencing acute economic hardship to satisfy the fine by undertaking activities such as unpaid work, medical treatment or counselling. These provisions are specific in each order. The object of this bill is as follows:

... to amend the *Fines Act 1996*:

- (a) to extend the categories of persons who are eligible to be the subject of a work and development order to persons who have a serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances, and
- (b) to enable the State Debt Recovery Office to rely on the assessment of an approved organisation or a health practitioner as to whether a person meets certain eligibility criteria for a work and development order, and
- (c) to facilitate the appropriate administration of work and development orders.

This sensible and carefully considered legislation continues on from trials that were introduced by the former Labor Government. The trial, which was a two-year pilot scheme, produced positive results for participants. The original scheme was introduced so that people, who for financial or personal reasons were unable to pay their fines, could undertake some type of approved activity instead. An order of this sort would be made by the State Debt Recovery Office if a fine or enforcement order had been issued and a community service order was not in force in respect of that fine. The person involved would have to apply, or get someone to apply on his or her behalf, for an order to be made to the State Debt Recovery Office. The kind of work that people could undertake to pay off their fines included voluntary work with approved charities, undertaking an educational, vocational or life skills course, undergoing financial or other counselling, undergoing medical or mental health programs, or undergoing drug and alcohol treatment.

This scheme was introduced to protect the vulnerable in our community from the perpetuation of a vicious cycle. A fine default can lead to the cancellation of the registration of a licence and it can lead also to further penalties and other serious consequences. For example, some people work in industries where their licences are indispensable to their profession. The follow-on effect of a fine could cause much financial stress and hardship to a person and his or her family. Fines and penalty notices can lead also to extensive interaction between already disadvantaged persons in the legal system. The two-year pilot scheme that was introduced by the former Labor Government is now complete and the results are in.

The evaluation is reported to have shown that over 80 per cent of people who received an order have not had further fines or penalty notices. As a result secondary offending and recidivism have dropped and the mental health skills and employment opportunities for participants have improved. There was significant participation in vocational courses and mental health, drug and alcohol treatment and, as can be seen, the results speak for themselves. It is a great result for the two-year pilot project—a great initiative of the former Labor Government. This bill seeks to broaden the categories of people who are subject to a work and development order to include those who have a serious addiction to drugs, alcohol or volatile substances, and to streamline the processes involved in applying and administering a work and development order.

The original legislation and this scheme were trialled because the research that was conducted established that fines and penalty notices have a disproportionately severe impact on some of the most vulnerable people in our society. With the broadening of this scheme people who warrant fines and penalty notices will be made to repay their debt to society in a more meaningful and healing manner. Currently, more than 70 organisations have been approved to participate in the system, including the Salvation Army, the Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales, St Vincent de Paul and Mission Australia. As this sensible and logical bill will assist some of the most vulnerable in our community I commend it to the House.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK

Matter of Public Importance

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [5.58 p.m.]: The matter of public importance I raise tonight is National Science Week, which was held during the second week of August. Now entering its fourteenth year, National Science Week has cemented itself as Australia's largest festival. Last year's calendar offered over 1,000 events throughout Australia and reached an audience of over one million people. National Science Week is Australia's celebration of science and technology and is held in August each year. Many of the 1,000-plus events accessible to the public in recognition of Science Week are delivered by our universities, schools, museums and science centres. For more than 10 years National Science Week has provided an opportunity to acknowledge Australian scientists' contribution to the world of knowledge, to encourage interest in science pursuits and to get younger people fascinated by the world in which we live.

National Science Week continues to expand and attract a wide audience from children to adults, from science amateurs to professionals. Although Science Week is a Federal initiative, each of the States join in the fun and excitement of science by actively participating in the event. Here in New South Wales Science Week exceeded all expectations with a fantastic launch party held in Martin Place. Professor Mary O'Kane, the New South Wales Chief Scientist and Scientific Engineer, officially launched Science Week. Those who attended joined in the fun and got excited about science. There were lots of freebies on offer to those who came along, including magazines and umbrellas.

One of the highlight events, and one of the key events in New South Wales, was the Ultimo Science Festival, which had lots of activities and was fun for everyone in inner Sydney. Science in the City for primary and secondary schools featured again this year at the Australian Museum. Students lucky enough to attend had the chance to hear from Australia's own groundbreaking plastic surgeon Professor Fiona Wood as part of the National Science Week national tour. Professor Wood gained international recognition for her patented invention of spray-on skin cells for burns victims. She presented a free question and answer session at the Australian Museum as part of the national tour.

In New South Wales Science Week is celebrated through an initiative known as Science Ignite, which is a new concept that represents New South Wales science and science communication. It has evolved as a bigger and brighter version of New South Wales Science Week, no longer limited to just one week in the year. Science Ignite unites scientists, communicators, industry, schools and government with a vision for more science-related events, partnerships and public engagement. Every imaginable science show, talk, festival, debate, activity or resource available to the people of New South Wales can be found during this week.

Science is so much more than enthusiastic professors wearing lab coats and conducting crazy experiments. Science is the spark that sets our minds on fire. It helps us understand and experience to the fullest the world in which we live. Science could provide the answers to life's biggest challenges, such as how to attract the opposite sex, why people crave fatty foods or the secret to writing a hit song. Science can tell us what is happening billions of light years away, in the darkest, deepest oceans, or within the cells that make up our bodies. Scientists have given us the internet, high-speed travel, IVF, beer, MP3 players and rollercoasters. It has eradicated polio and smallpox in Australia and it is working towards cures for diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, AIDS and cancer. Our Prime Minister, Ms Julia Gillard, captured beautifully her own interpretation of the meaning of science when she said:

It is science, more than almost any other pursuit, which has freed humanity from the habits, fears and superstitions of the past. It is science which has created greater progress in the past two centuries than all the previous millennia of human history. And it is science to which we turn for a better understanding of ourselves and the future of our fragile planet.

The NSW Office for Science and Medical Research is part of Industry and Investment NSW and works with the scientific, health and medical research communities, the higher education sector and business to promote growth and innovation to achieve better economic, health and environmental outcomes for the people of New South Wales. I referred earlier to Professor Mary O'Kane launching Science Ignite in Martin Place. As well as being the New South Wales Chief Scientist and Scientific Engineer she is also Executive Chairman of Mary O'Kane and Associates Pty Ltd, a Sydney-based company that advises governments, universities and the private sector on innovation, research, education and development. She is also chair of the Australian Centre for Renewable Energy, chair of Development Gateway and Development Gateway International, chair of the CRC for Spatial Information, and a director of PSMA Ltd, Business Events Sydney, and the Australian Business Foundation. She is also a member of the Tax Concession Committee.

Professor O'Kane was Vice-Chancellor and President of Adelaide University from 1996 to 2001 and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) from 1994 to 1996. Before that she was Dean of the Faculty of Information Sciences and Engineering at the University of Canberra. She is a former member of the Australian Research Council, the Co-operative Research Centres Committee, the board of FH Faulding and Company Ltd and the board of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation. She is a Fellow of the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and a Fellow of Engineers, Australia. A program developed by the NSW Office for Science and Medical Research as part of the NSW Department of Trade and Investment is the New South Wales Science Communication Initiative, which aims to promote the value and importance of science to businesses, students and the broader community; to foster recognition of the contributions that scientists make to our everyday lives; to promote science as an attractive career choice for students; and to strengthen scientific knowledge, expertise and information sharing within the State. This initiative supports the State Plan and Innovation Statement by creating and strengthening links between schools, TAFEs, universities and businesses.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.05 p.m.]: On behalf of the Government I also acknowledge National Science Week and support the contribution of the member for Shellharbour. National Science Week is Australia's annual celebration of science and technology. Running each year in August, it features around 1,000 events across Australia, including those delivered by universities, schools, museums and science centres. More than one million people take part in those 1,000 events. This year the Government provided \$96,000 to 18 science events happening across the State, many of which have been run as part of National Science Week, which took place last week.

The Government recognises the importance of inspiring our next generation of scientists, who will be helping to tackle the big challenges facing the world. From information and communications technology and engineering to medicine, agriculture and clean energies, scientific skills are increasingly needed and valued in a wide range of careers, so it is crucial we actively promote maths and science and show students that those subjects can be interesting and fun. That is why the Government this year ran Science Exposed, a program which encourages community involvement in science events and gives young people more opportunities to engage in science activities. The 18 initiatives supported by the Science Exposed program were chosen for their capacity to get young people interested and excited about the sciences, engineering and maths.

Last Wednesday night 70 senior high school girls from across Sydney spent a night at Sydney Observatory alongside leading women scientists. Unfortunately, women are underrepresented in many science-based professions—something we need to address—and this event provided a unique way for girls to meet highly accomplished women working in science. I have the privilege of having the Parkes telescope in my electorate and we currently have one of the world's leading experts—a woman from NASA—working at the institute. It is fantastic to see the calibre of that individual working in such a fantastic facility in regional New South Wales.

Another event happening this Friday will see more than 900 students from 29 schools descend on the Parramatta campus of the University of Western Sydney to take part in one of the region's largest education expos. The students, most of whom come from western Sydney, will participate in interactive science experiments and demonstrations, will hear from up-and-coming young scientists and will have their questions answered during a careers panel session. Science Exposed is supporting events that will reach young people right across regional New South Wales in places such as Eden, Bega, Albury, Newcastle, the Hunter, Goulburn, Griffith, Maclean, Casino, Grafton and Lismore, which is very exciting. One of these events is the Hunter Valley Electric Vehicle Festival, which will take place in Lake Macquarie from 19 to 21 November. Schools from across the Hunter are being invited to enter the competition to build an electric vehicle from the ground up.

The vehicle will then be tested at Cameron Park Kart Raceway during the festival. This is a wonderful opportunity and an exciting event. The event is being run for the first time and teachers are already reporting that the competition has created an unprecedented level of excitement among students and staff. I am excited about this event. Engineering and science faculties are collaborating with the industrial design and arts departments towards the common goal of building the fastest and most energy-efficient electric car. Ten schools from across the Hunter have already signed up and more are expected to become involved. The Government is proud to be supporting these exciting initiatives which will give students hands-on experience, the chance to use and build on their science knowledge and abilities, and to have some fun doing so.

The Government is committed to supporting the State's science community and our research and development activities at our world-class universities and research institutes. Through the Department of Trade

and Investment and the New South Wales chief scientist and engineer, the Government works with the science community to promote the work of our publicly-funded research institutions and the groundbreaking research they do. The chief scientist and engineer also work with the research community to build strong links with industry partners and business. This is an important facet of the future of science. Industry and business will inevitably benefit from scientific advances that create a smarter and more innovative economy. Whether in Science Week or the rest of the year, the Government will always support our science community and encourage young people to be actively involved in this vitally important field.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.12 p.m.]: National Science Week is a celebration of the wonder of scientific research and its understated importance to our everyday life and the economy of New South Wales. National Science Week is primarily spearheaded by the Federal Government's Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research. National Science Week gives adults and children the chance to expand their mind, to think about the world and wonder about how stuff works and why it is so. Science is fun and who would not encourage children and adults to get involved and answer many of life's big questions.

Science is an essential part of education. As a former teacher in Fairfield, I understand and value the contribution that science makes to the world. It is important that we support and promote National Science Week to stimulate the minds of our youngest and brightest students. Many of us in this Chamber would recall the wacky experiments that were conducted by our science teachers years ago. For some of us it was many years ago. As wacky as they were, these experiments probably inspired a number of us here tonight to take up careers in health, science, education and engineering. Being married to a science and maths teacher, I know how dedicated our teachers are in educating the future doctors, nurses, healthcare workers and of course the scientists of the community.

National Science Week officially concluded on Sunday 21 August. However, I note science aficionados—be they backyard scientists or those who have dedicated their professional lives to further scientific research—will continue on with the celebration in the hope that the general community will have gained some level of understanding and appreciation of the significance of their research to our everyday life. I note for those secret science buffs sitting in this Chamber tonight that the Ultimo Science Festival is still in full swing and will continue until Sunday 28 August. For the young at heart the festival will feature the Great Big Science Gig—a very funny, very clever science rock cabaret—and the Weird Food Dinner.

I cannot stress enough the importance of science and scientific research to the future of New South Wales. Advances in technology have changed the way we live, learn, get around, communicate, eat, and what we do for fun has changed drastically in the last 20 years. All these changes are the result of technological advancement or the discovery of new processes for doing things. The advent of these social changes has resulted in new industries and new jobs and has established mini-economies. Just to name a few, mobile phones and advances in medicine and solar energy have come about because someone, or a group of people, decided to invest money in scientific research and development. It is an investment that has paid dividends for those with the courage of their convictions and for the economies of their respective countries that chose to foster and support their research.

My point is quite simple and it is a poignant one: investment in science and research is fundamental to the future of New South Wales. It creates new industries, employs people and creates wealth for the benefit of the community. The NSW Trade and Investment website recognises the importance of science and research to the State. It says it is pivotal for unlocking the State's intellectual capital as well as strengthening its competitiveness, productivity and innovative capacity. Despite the message of Science Week 2011, despite the rhetoric of government websites, this Government has chosen to see scientific research as a liability. Instead of investing in the future of New South Wales, particularly in regional New South Wales, it has decided to rationalise investment because of the fictitious black hole that magically appeared when Barry O'Farrell became Premier.

Last week the Hon. Duncan Gay, the Minister for Primary Industries, decided to axe a third of the staff at the major Department of Primary Industries research facility. The Forest Science Centre at West Pennant Hills was working diligently to create a sustainable environment for New South Wales in important fields such as salinity mitigation. Salinity is a major issue impacting on New South Wales farmers. Its aim is to stop farming land from being destroyed by salt in underground water rising and affecting the fertile topsoil. Once salinity takes hold the economic value of the affected farms plummets. Despite the importance of the work, during National Science Week the O'Farrell Government decided the services of the centre were surplus to requirements.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [6.17 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Dubbo and the member for Fairfield for their participation in this debate. The long-term goal is to enhance the development of science-based skills, uptake of science careers across the State and the transfer of science-based knowledge to grow the prosperity of New South Wales. The new science communication initiative is made up of two primary components: science promotion and science careers. The teaching and exposure of science is covered by these main components. Science and research play a vital role in our continued growth and it better our health, community, environment and economy. From increased life expectancy to new treatments for disease to technologies that change the way we live and work to addressing environmental changes, scientific research and the knowledge it generates affect us all.

I hope that the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research acknowledges the invaluable investment and progress made in this key area by the former Labor Government. I hope to see the value and importance of this initiative reflected in the upcoming budget. In keeping with the theme of science and the impending budget, it has been reported that 1,200 Department of Primary Industry jobs are set to be axed when the Coalition Government delivers its first budget on 6 September. This figure represents one-quarter of the department's workforce and has come in the wake of the news that 11 out of 31 jobs at the Forest Science Centre, also part of the Department of Primary Industries, would be scrapped.

Mr Stuart Ayres: Point of order: It is in relation to relevance. We are talking about National Science Week and we have moved to the Department of Primary Industries. We are also speaking about the budget black hole. I ask you to direct the member to keep his remarks relevant to the matter of public importance.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Shellharbour will return to the leave of the matter of public importance.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I believe I am attempting to do that. More than one-third of the scientists and the technical officers in the State's forest research unit have been sacked in the first round of job cuts at the Department of Primary Industries. The Public Service Association has confirmed to its members that the decision to cut research jobs was personally approved by the Minister for Primary Industries, Katrina Hodgkinson.

Mr Stuart Ayres: Point of order: Mr Acting-Speaker, I draw attention to your previous ruling. The matter of public importance is about Science Week, as has been clearly stated. It was delivered to the Chair today at 12 o'clock. The first speech was in the context and spirit of the motion, as was the second speech. Unfortunately, I cannot say that the member for Shellharbour is delivering this speech in the context or spirit of the matter of public importance. I encourage you to direct the member to confine her remarks to Science Week, which is the subject of the matter of public importance.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! The member for Shellharbour will return to the leave of the matter of public importance.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Over a third of the scientists and technical officers in the Department of Primary Industries forests research unit were told on Thursday that their jobs were gone. These jobs are overwhelmingly in regional areas.

Mr Stuart Ayres: Point of order—

Ms ANNA WATSON: You do not like the truth. It hurts.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! The member for Shellharbour will resume her seat.

Mr Stuart Ayres: You have ruled on the point of order twice. The matter of public importance is very clear. I encourage you to rule again in the same way. If the member does not adhere to your ruling you should rule her out of order.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the member for Shellharbour that she is introducing new information into the debate. The member will not canvass my ruling. The member will return to the matter of public importance.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Cutting these jobs will only hit service to farmers, business and landholders and will take millions in wages out of local economies.

Mr Stuart Ayres: Point of order: The member is clearly introducing new material and she is clearly in breach of standing orders. The member should not be speaking about this matter.

Ms ANNA WATSON: It is relevant to the matter of public importance.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! The member for Penrith has the call.

Mr Stuart Ayres: It is clearly new material. It was not raised in the speeches of other members. It is clearly in breach of standing orders. I know the member for Shellharbour is new to the Chamber but she should be aware of the standing orders.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! The member's time has expired. The matter of public importance having concluded, the House will now consider private members' statements.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GLENDALE TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL PRODUCTION

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [6.22 p.m.]: There is no denying that today's society is swamped with media. It is almost impossible to avoid what is going on in our local community, in society and in the world. We have access to hundreds of television channels, newspapers and, of course, the internet, supplying us with news stories from every angle. Unfortunately, however, this increase seems to have encouraged rather than discouraged an attitude of negativity towards groups that are unable to speak for themselves. One such group is the younger generation, our teenagers and children whose voices are not often heard and about whom it seems only negative stories are written. If you see the word "teenager" appear in the press it is often followed by the words "vandalism", "violence", or "misbehaviour", leading us to tar a whole generation with the same brush of disapproval.

But if we take the time to see through this negativity we will be in awe of the potential that looms around us, if we care to see it. Recently I was lucky enough to witness the Glendale Technology High School performance of *Let Me Entertain You*. It was three hours and 10 minutes of enthralling performance, combining music, dance and drama from both staff and students. It reaffirmed to me that we need to look beyond the surface. The performers seamlessly spanned a range of genres and styles, giving all pupils an opportunity to display their musical and theatrical skills and talents. My personal favourites included the covers of *Horror Movie* by Skyhooks, *Back in Black* by AC/DC, *Straight Lines* by Newcastle band Silverchair, and Bob Dylan's classic *Like a Rolling Stone*.

Mr Andrew Fraser: That sounds like the Labor Party.

Ms SONIA HORNER: That is not appropriate.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Geoff Provest): Order! The member for Wallsend has the call. Government members will listen in silence.

Ms SONIA HORNER: I must admit to making a slight blunder when expressing my delight over the gender equality promotion in one of the rap songs being performed. It transpired that I had misheard lyrics from the song, which I had thought was called "He's Doing the Dishes", but in fact was titled *The Distance*. It was nothing to do with the dishes or gender equality, a mistake my neighbour found hilarious. It was great to see both the students and adults enthusiastic about the show as there is nothing quite like watching a passionate motley crew of flannelette-clad Westies performing *Rock 'n' Roll Ain't Noise Pollution* or the school's relieving principal, Mark Sneddon, performing with gusto a rendition of Metallica's *Enter Sandman*. My considered belief is that Metallica material ought to stay in the '90s where it comfortably belongs. Louise Gough, a parent of one of the pupils performing, commented:

I am a proud parent of a daughter who performed at the Glendale Technology High School production in which I had the pleasure to see many students and teachers perform in music and dance.

It truly was an outstanding production and I feel it was very, very entertaining. I commented at the end of the show how great the band, singers, dancers and costumes were.

Overall it was a fantastic night by older students and teachers and it's a credit to them all for the time and effort put into rehearsals and everything that goes in putting on an excellent school production.

It was so good I just had to attend both nights and I'll definitely be going back to see the next one.

This view was reinforced by the fantastic turnout of parents, pupils and staff who braved the cold and came to watch the performance. It really showed the support that the community is willing to give to the pupils and how well received shows such as these are. If only more performances like this were given the praise and publicity they deserve then perhaps the tarnished view that we have of our young people could be replaced with one of positivity and praise and it might inspire others to take part in events such as these. As one of the teachers stated, "These students will remember their part in the production long after many other aspects of school life are lost forever. The production is about being part of the community." This production is not only about being part of the community but a chance for our community to see the wide-ranging potential that we Westies can be proud of.

GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [6.26 p.m.]: I speak today to raise awareness of a very special group in my electorate, grandparents raising grandchildren. The Council on the Ageing report into Grandparents Raising Grandchildren, commissioned in 2003, states:

No one knows how many grandparents are raising grandchildren in Australia today.

However, recent data by the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that in Australia in 2009-10 there were 16,000 families in which the grandparents were guardians or main carers of children aged 0 to 17 years. This compares with 9,000 foster families in which there was at least one resident foster child. It is interesting to compare these figures. On reading the Council on the Ageing report it is glaringly obvious that grandparents who have care or guardianship of their grandchildren face unique difficulties, and commonalities appeared across every State as research and consultative workshops were conducted. These commonalities indicate a growing frustration that grandparents are not duly acknowledged and recognised as a special group requiring assistance, and sorely lack parity with foster carers in terms of payments and support services such as respite.

Over the Central Coast there are five support groups facilitated by Central Coast Family Support in partnership with Central Coast Rotarians. The Central Coast Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program supports grandparents who have taken up full-time care of their grandchildren, who would otherwise be wards of the State. From an initial 60 families in 2005 the program has grown to support 150 grandparent families. It is now growing at an average rate of two additional families per fortnight, and the needs of these families far outweigh the current resources. The group began with initial funding for two years through the Area Assistance Scheme, but funding has not continued and the program has only been sustained through excellent management and the goodwill of the community.

I have had the pleasure of meeting with Anne Charlton, who oversees the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program and fights to raise awareness of the difficulties these families face. The program provides advocacy, counselling and referrals, and facilitates networking support groups with others who find themselves in the same situation. This in itself is immensely beneficial as many grandparents feel a sense of social isolation and disconnection and struggle with a lack of respite as in these situations it is difficult to find a minder for the children. Grandparents Raising Grandchildren runs respite activities such as picnics and camps, though they are restricted by the costs involved.

Grandparents in these support groups have taken on the role of parent, often in difficult circumstances, for children who have seen and heard too much and suffer from the effects of the traumatic environment they have come from. Most children are placed in the care of their grandparents due to one or both parents suffering from drug or alcohol addiction, mental illness, or sheer neglect, or through the death of one or both parents. As noted in the Council on the Ageing report:

The grandchildren may come to them unexpectedly, stressed and bewildered, often without adequate clothing, bedding, school uniforms etc. Grandparents also have to live through their own grief and loss, and often anger, at being placed in this situation by their own adult children.

In my conversations with grandparents in the local groups, I was overwhelmed at the sense of guilt they feel, and a fear that they might not do a good enough job raising their grandchildren. Most of the grandparents I have spoken with have care of the children as a result of drug and/or alcohol addiction. They ought not to feel guilty or fearful. Drug and alcohol addiction does not discriminate, irrespective of age, race, gender, income or profession, or whether they were good or bad parents. It is saddening that they have a sense of blame, or feel disheartened at the prospect of parenting again.

The children are often traumatised and require ongoing counselling and specialised care. Often they have mental or behavioural illnesses, and suffer a high level of anxiety—all requiring a high level of care and support. These children can develop antisocial behaviour, depression, anger and other stress-related problems due to the tumultuous environment that they have come from. Yet despite the high level of need in these children, the grandparents take them into their care and nurture them, providing a loving, stable and secure home, and a great deal of encouragement. This ostensibly places great pressure on the grandparents—financially, emotionally, and personally. Grandparents expressed the view that becoming a parent once again takes the joy out of being a grandparent; however, they will rush to say that despite the hardship, they love their grandchildren very much and want to provide every opportunity for them to be healthy and happy.

The financial burden is immense. Many find themselves spending their retirement savings and superannuation on their grandchildren or they try to stretch their pension; rarely is there enough to absorb the unexpected additional costs involved with raising a child. Their future suddenly becomes chaotic and they are forced to restructure their retirement plans. Often it means returning at least to part-time work or delaying retirement from work in an attempt to supplement the sudden spike in household expenses. It should also be noted that some grandparents additionally struggle with ongoing legal expenses, as they fight for the welfare and care of their grandchildren. The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program gives them hope and connects them with a community of others who are experiencing the same unexpected life change.

The single, part-time, underfunded worker, however, is not enough to continue this vital program, especially given the rapid growth in families—now up to 150 families, which equates to approximately 460 children. While ever there is disparity between the recognition of a grandparent as a full-time carer of children as opposed to a foster carer, programs such as Grandparents Raising Grandchildren are a vital and necessary link for these vulnerable families. I am honoured to be a patron of this wonderful program. I commend not only those who give their time and efforts to supporting the families involved, but also the grandparents themselves, who have sacrificed so much to give their grandchildren the best life they can provide. They are the heroes. Their sacrifices should not go unnoticed. They deserve recognition and support at all levels of government and within the wider community.

DAFFODIL DAY

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [6.30 p.m.]: Today I remind members that Friday is Daffodil Day. On Daffodil Day donations are sought by the Cancer Council of New South Wales. I congratulate Dr Andrew Penman, AM, and his team at the Cancer Council, and more particularly the mid North Coast team, in the Coffs Harbour electorate, headed by Patty Delaney, and the great group of people she has working round her—not just the paid employees but also the volunteers. For the information of the House, I note the efforts of Relay for Life, which is run by the Cancer Council in the North Coast region. That region is bounded by Red Rock in the north, just north of my electorate, Tea Gardens in the south, and Gloucester in the west. This year, Relay for Life raised \$443,331 for the Cancer Council. Also, Coffs Harbour ran a Dancing with the Stars night, which provided great entertainment, I believe. I did not get to it last year, because Parliament was sitting, but my wife attended.

Mr Chris Spence: Weren't you going to be in it?

Mr ANDREW FRASER: With two left feet, I can guarantee members that I was not going to be in it. The great job done by the people who organise these fundraising activities is recognised by all members of our communities. I suggest that there would not be a member of this House who has not in some way, shape or form been touched by cancer—be it through a relative, a close friend, a neighbour or a constituent. My history of involvement with the Cancer Council started some 21½ years ago when my wife was diagnosed with Hodgkin's lymphoma. My son, who is now 24, was just three years of age at the time. We have three children.

We were basically told, "Go to Sydney, you won't be coming home. It's stage four." I thought, "This isn't bad; it's stage four of 10; we'll get through this." I said to the doctor, "How many stages are there?" The

doctor said, "Four—and four is the worst." Basically, we were bluntly told that the chance of survival for Kerrie was pretty minimal. Twenty-one years later, she is now North Coast patron of the Cancer Council. In fact, she set up the Cancer Council shop in Coffs Harbour, to promote the great work of the Cancer Council and the support it gave us at a fairly low time in our lives.

There is an item about this in today's *Coffs Coast Advocate*. I compliment the *Coffs Coast Advocate* for the great job it has done this year in promoting the twenty-fifth year of the Cancer Council. We all turn up for the morning teas—and I congratulate the member for Oatley, Mark Coure, on running a morning tea this year. When we turn up we toss a gold coin or a \$5 note in the bin. The challenge I issue to every member of this Parliament, both in the other place and here, is to put \$50 in the bin. If we each put \$50 in the bin, this Parliament could raise \$6,750 for the Cancer Council, which will go to research aimed at ridding society of this insidious disease, and it is an insidious disease.

I remember saying to a doctor once, "Can't you just give Kerrie one dose of chemotherapy?" Her life was a misery when she was on chemotherapy. It was a month on the treatment, and a month off it, over seven months, followed by six weeks of radiotherapy. Anyone who has had that treatment, or been touched by someone close to them who has had or is having that treatment, knows that trying to keep down a glass of water is very hard. The doctor's reply was, "Yes, I can. I can cure the disease with one dose of chemotherapy, but it will also kill your wife." We have come a long way since then.

The treatments these days are better, and success rates are far better than they were in the past. The reality is that it is research done by groups such as the Cancer Council that has improved the quality of life of people who have been treated, or enabled them to survive this, in Kerrie's words, insidious disease. The challenge I issue to each and every member of this Parliament—which I will send in an email tomorrow—is: When you walk into the office of Mark Coure, who will be selling vouchers, make your donation \$50, to raise \$6,750. In that way, this Parliament can show its support for the Cancer Council, the victims and the people who know them, and give us hope that sometime into the future we will rid society of this dreadful disease.

BLUE MOUNTAINS, LITHGOW AND OBERON TOURISM AWARDS

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.35 p.m.]: I speak on the recent regional Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon tourism awards that were held recently at the Lithgow showgrounds. The theme was "A Night of Stars", and certainly many local tourist operators sparkled on the night. Regional tourism organisations play a significant role in the promotion of high standards within the tourism industry and the achievement of public recognition of success of the Regional Tourism Awards programs. The largest industry group and the largest employer in the Blue Mountains is tourism. So it is with great pleasure that I strongly support our local tourism organisation. Tourism, as I pointed out, is an important contributor to the Blue Mountains.

This year, ending March 2011, the region had 2.92 million visitors, who stayed more than 1.6 million nights and injected \$477 million into the local economy. The awards night started with a bang—literally. We were treated to a brilliant fireworks display in the showgrounds on a very cool, clear, crisp night. The fireworks display was provided by a local Lithgow company, Howard & Sons Pyrotechnics. All major stakeholders in the Blue Mountains and beyond attended the night. This was the big night for our regional tourism awards. The outstanding quality of our tourism businesses enhances the experience of visitors to the region, and it is fitting that their hard work and commitment to excellence is recognised by this year's tourism awards.

All members of this House have been reminded on numerous occasions that the Blue Mountains is a must-see destination for visitors to New South Wales. Its close proximity to Sydney means that it is just a short drive or train trip away for most visitors to our State. Once they arrive they are treated to some of our State's most breathtaking landscapes. Visitors can enjoy many adventure tours and walks within the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park. Indeed, the award for the 2011 major tourist attraction in the Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Tourism awards was the National Parks and Wildlife Service, which runs the national park. The award was accepted by Mr Geoff Luscombe, the Blue Mountains regional director, who reminded guests that the Blue Mountains National Park was awarded a major award in last year's State awards.

Other 2011 major award winners included Spa Sublime for Specialised Tourism Services, Blue Mountains Bus Company's Trolley Tours for Major Tour Transport Operators, Life's an Adventure for Adventure Tourism, Blue Mountains International Hotel Management School for Tourism Education and Training, and Old Leura Dairy for Unique Accommodation. Katoomba Christian Convention's Mark Boyd was

named Young Achiever in Tourism and Tom Colless was awarded for Outstanding Contribution to Regional Tourism. I congratulate each of these businesses and individuals on their hard work in making their businesses successful. Guest speakers on the night were Anthony Khouri, Executive Chairman of Bufori Motor Car Company, and Wayne Lange, Director of Tourism Operations for Destination NSW. Anthony Khouri started Bufori Motor Car Company with his brothers in Sydney, producing luxury cars made in Australia.

Together with Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Tourism Anthony is offering one of his cars as a promotion to encourage tourists to the Blue Mountains. Every person who stays at a Blue Mountains accommodation venue has a chance to win the car—it is a magnificent prize. This innovative promotion of the Blue Mountains by the tourism industry speaks volumes of the resourcefulness, energy and determination of our local tourist organisations. The main focus is to make the Blue Mountains a premier tourist destination to grow our local economy and improve the lives of our local community. The industry is working hard to achieve this. I am certain its efforts will be rewarded. Again I congratulate all winners and entrants in the 2011 Blue Mountains Lithgow and Oberon Tourism Awards.

ENDICOTT CUP

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [6.40 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the Endicott Cup that I attended on Wednesday 17 August 2011. I was honoured to attend the Sarah Redfern High School as the member for Campbelltown, the opal of the south-west, and participate in the Endicott Cup as a *MasterChef* judge. The Endicott Cup, named for Mrs Karen Endicott, the well-renowned and high-spirited principal of Sarah Redfern High School, is coordinated by teacher Mr Ross Dummett. The Endicott Cup is a fun, fast-paced and inclusive academic competition developed by Sarah Redfern High School in conjunction with the Minto Community of Schools. The cup is designed to develop areas required for success in high school education in an environment that extends and challenges every student. In fact, the skills displayed in the Endicott Cup would be most useful in this House.

The Community of Schools includes Campbellfield, Minto, Sarah Redfern and The Grange public schools. The Endicott Cup is designed to engage these feeder primary schools, particularly their top-end students, and develop a program that supports the good work being achieved by our local primary schools in extending our gifted and talented students—the best of the opals of the south-west. The Endicott Cup consists of a number of team-based events with students drawn largely from year 6 classes, and overall combined scores contribute to the schools' results. The competitions target numeracy and literacy. The numeracy competition includes "Thinking on your feet", which is a 10-question quiz loosely modelled on *Sale of the Century*, and *Jeopardy* that challenges teams with five group categories.

The literacy competition also includes a spelling bee that uses words from the year 5 National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy results to year 9 extension words, as well as public speaking involving the speakers preparing a three-minute speech that is marked on the written submission and delivery. I am sure Hansard would be pleased with that. A data analysis test also is included that requires teams to watch a 15-minute football clip, collect data and present it in frequency distribution tables—a necessary skill in today's society. A creative arts and hospitality competition also is held. The "So You Think You Can Paint" competition gives artists two stimuli that they must merge to create a final artwork within a set time frame. Some fine pieces were produced.

However, the piece de resistance was the *Junior MasterChef* competition. Students were required to cook an item from a recipe within a 40-minute time frame. I was a *MasterChef* judge with Peter Phelps, School Education director for Ingleburn, and Mrs Lyn Kenny. Each team had to prepare and cook an item from a set recipe—in this case a stack of pancakes. Teams were judged on process, preparation, cooking, presentation and, most importantly, taste. As my mum told me that I was a pleasure to feed, I enjoyed myself immensely in this competition taste test. I mention also that teams were marked on cleaning up. I am sure most mums and dads would be pleased with that.

My fellow judges and I were fortunate not only to taste test the four presentations, which were magnificent, but also to back up for a second round of tastings for the next group, which we undertook with great joy. Sarah Redfern High School believes that learning empowers individuals to achieve their greatest potential. The high school is committed to inspiring our students to achieve the highest standards of intellectual and personal development through a stimulating and engaging learning environment. The school develops students with a desire to learn, the ability to make calculated and informed decisions, and to accept challenges. While the team scores all contributed to the schools' overall scores in the famous Endicott Cup, in the end everyone who competed was a winner.

PARKINSON'S UNITY WALK

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [6.45 p.m.]: I inform the House of the Parkinson's Unity Walk to take place this Sunday 28 August. Over the past couple of years I have participated in this event because a few years ago a relative was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Obviously, the family rallied around our relative with support and encouragement, and also has taken the practical step of working towards finding a cure for the disease. Parkinson's Unity Walk began in Australia in 2008 and to date has raised more than \$600,000 to fund important research and increase support services for people living with Parkinson's, including their families and carers. In Australia more than 80,000 people live with Parkinson's disease, which is the second most common degenerative neurological condition. Members would know that currently there is no known cause or cure for Parkinson's.

Each day 25 people in Australia are diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. While the average age when diagnosed is around 60 years, many people are under the age of 50 years. Obviously, this has a devastating impact on people, given the absence of any known cure. For those not familiar with the effect and impact of Parkinson's disease, primarily it affects movement. People experience difficulty controlling their muscles due to a breakdown in communication between the body and the brain. While generally the disease progresses slowly, over time basic daily routines such as socialising with friends and family, even brushing one's teeth or buttoning a shirt, can become difficult without assistance. This impacts heavily on family and friends who necessarily often become care givers. This is just part of the reason why fundraisers such as Unity Walk are so crucial. Funds raised from Unity Walk go into research towards a cure for Parkinson's as well as to support family and friends caring for someone with the disease.

In recent times there have been promising media reports about the ongoing research towards a cure and some hope in the foreseeable future that there may be better news on that subject. Parkinson's Unity Walk is an annual event that takes place across Australia in each State. This Sunday in New South Wales it will take place at the Cathy Freeman Park in Sydney Olympic Park. For those who are active and energetic the eight-kilometre fun run starts at 9 o'clock and the slower paced walk begins at 11.30 a.m. For those who are competitive, the winners of the men's and women's fun run will receive a return flight to Hawaii with five nights accommodation—if anybody is interested in joining at this late stage.

The day caters for young and old, and welcomes families participating in the walk. Often many children are present with their families and this year an animal farm, circus performers and face painters will be at the event. Under certain conditions dogs are welcome to join the families for the walk. I would encourage all members in this place to consider associating themselves with this important cause and contributing towards the much-needed funds for research towards a cure of Parkinson's disease. I am looking forward to the event this Sunday and commend the organisers for all their work in the lead-up to the Unity Walk 2011.

TAREE VOLUNTEER RESCUE ASSOCIATION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [6.50 p.m.]: On Saturday 13 August 2011 I attended the Taree Volunteer Rescue Association headquarters in Taree for the commissioning of its new vehicle. The Taree Volunteer Rescue Association started in 1976—at that time it was the Taree Voluntary Police Rescue Squad—when the Pacific Highway went through Taree and no other rescue service was available. There was no police rescue. There was no ambulance rescue. There was no fire brigade rescue, particularly in regional areas. A group of civic-minded people in Taree got together and they formed the Taree Volunteer Rescue Association.

At the beginning of 1981, when I first went to Taree as a police officer, there was a sergeant there by the name of Bill Henning. Bill Henning was very much involved in the foundation and formation of the Taree Volunteer Rescue Association. He was the inaugural president and actively promoted the rescue squad in the community and within the police station and police community. It did not take me long to realise how important that rescue squad was. In those days there were dozens of serious road accidents each year. The number of road accident fatalities ranged between 20 and 50 fatalities in the area that the service covered from Bulahdelah in the south to about Johns River or Kew in the north. When I went out to many serious and fatal accidents it was the rescue squad that came to help.

I went to the Taree Volunteer Rescue Association headquarters for the commissioning of the vehicle. Leci Paulson, the president of the association, was there. Terry Wright, the only surviving founder of that rescue squad, was also there. I can remember an occasion when I was a detective and I went to investigate the tragic death of a fellow who was at the bottom of Juhle Mountain. I remember seeing Terry go over the side of the

cliff—abseiling that is—when I had difficulty even going to the edge of the cliff to have a peek over. He was there as a guest for the commissioning of this vehicle. The rescue squad obtained this vehicle. It is the third or the fourth vehicle the Taree Volunteer Rescue Association has had since its formation.

It does not receive assistance from the Government; funding comes from public donations and from its fundraising. It has done a fantastic job and it now has an A1 first-class truck that has been commissioned. The rescue squad comprises a number of members. The active members that are working all the time are Captain Allan Sheldon, Janine Golds, Tony Northam, Leci Paulson, Brian Cross, Brian Craig, Alicia Fergus, Gary Greene, John Street, Adam Murray, David Gary, John Chich and Pat Trotter. Even though other services are now available for rescue work in the area and on the Pacific Highway the Taree Volunteer Rescue Association is still very active. When I had my accident just before the election, the squad was one of the many rescue and emergency services that came out to the site of the accident.

Following the commissioning of the vehicle I went to the Greater Taree City Council for the Rural Fire Service awards ceremony. There were 20 recipients of awards at that ceremony. Following the ceremony the captain of the Diamond Beach fire service came up to me and introduced herself and reminded me—obviously I had no memory—that the Diamond Beach fire service was also called out to the accident that I was involved in. I place on record my thanks to the rescue squad and the Diamond Beach Rural Fire Service for attending that accident.

UMINA BEACH POLICE AND COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUB

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [6.55 p.m.]: I acknowledge and recognise the Umina Beach Police and Community Youth Club whose ethos is as follows: To get young people active in life; to work with young people to develop their schedules, their character and their leadership; to reduce and prevent crime by and against young people. The club was officially opened in 2001 by the then Minister for Police, Paul Whelan, I was mayor of Gosford at the time and the council was very supportive and worked very hard to ensure a site for this club. It is the first police and community youth club to be managed by a citizen and I congratulate the current manager, Alison Carpenter, on working so hard to make sure it is effective.

The partnership between young people, the community and New South Wales police is working to assist young people to develop the qualities of responsible citizens and leaders, and to avoid their becoming offenders or victims of crime. The police and community youth club achieves its mission through sports, arts, life skills and recreation activities, and through targeting crime prevention and reduction programs. Using targeted programs police, working with police and community youth clubs, develop initiatives with individual young offenders, initiate activity programs for hot spot juvenile crime areas in the local community, and undertake community policing projects such as driver education and school crime prevention visits.

The targeted program strategy ensures that the reduction of crime in local communities is being addressed in a strategic and coordinated manner. I acknowledge the police and community youth club youth case managers, senior constables Renae Jackson and Paul Scollon, for their work with one-on-one case management group programs for at-risk youth within the Gosford city boundaries. They always play a very active role in other club activities and programs as well, including the scooter and skate competitions, the youth band nights, and working alongside the Brisbane Water local area command with various programs and activities for children and youth. The programs available at Umina include fitness, weights, gym, indoor inline skating, leadership programs, competitive boxing and boxing for fitness.

It is the boxing program that I want to give special attention to and in doing so to recognise an exceptional young man. It is with great pleasure that I inform the House that Satalia Tevi Fui-Mo-Ana, a Umina police and community youth club member, was awarded as young male person of the year at the last police and community youth club State conference. In 2010 Satalia became the Australian amateur boxing champion in the under-14 school boys division. Satalia is the national golden gloves champion and the boxing champion of southern Queensland. He has represented the police and community youth club at the State of origin boxing tournament. In other sports Satalia has represented New South Wales primary schools playing rugby league and qualified at both a State and regional level for athletics representation.

Most impressively, Satalia has made a great impact on the many young people who know him and his huge work ethic and discipline have inspired many of his teammates. Many people in the community are aware of his commitment and drive, having seeing him on his daily runs or having noticed the way he never strays from the goal he has set himself to achieve—Olympic gold. Satalia is also a dedicated helper at the club four

days a week in the junior boxing program, where he is recognised as a role model by young members. The Police and Community Youth Club staff, police, volunteers and club members are incredibly proud of Satalia. He is working hard and he is focused. He is a pleasant young man who can achieve anything to which he puts his mind. Satalia is an inspiration to children, youths and adults and he deserves recognition. He is a determined young man, an inspiration and a role model for young people. Come the 2016 Olympic Games, he is a man with the potential to fulfil his Olympic dream and to make Australia proud.

TRIBUTE TO ERNIE "SNOWY" SMITH

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [7.00 p.m.]: Today I speak about a former constituent in my electorate of Wollondilly, Ernie "Snowy" Smith. Unfortunately, he is no longer with us but his actions and selflessness through a life of giving will ensure that his legacy will live on in our community forever. I am proud to represent an area that has produced fine community-minded individuals such as Ernie "Snowy" Smith. Snowy was a man of the people. He was actively engaged in community organisations from a young age. He worked as a local baker and bread carter for the local Maldon cement works. He had his community at heart and worked tirelessly for the area.

Snowy joined the Rural Fire Service in 1957 when he was only 14 years of age. This was the year that severe bushfires ripped through the Blue Mountains destroying 25 homes, shops and churches. A number of years later in Wingello in the neighbouring region over 250,000 hectares of land was destroyed and, sadly, three lives were lost. Snowy was not the type of man to turn his back on those around him in times of need. As captain of the Thirlmere Rural Fire Brigade he continued to work, fundraise and educate for the Rural Fire Service. He was involved in Safety House initiatives, local school fetes and sporting groups. People like Snowy exemplify the great electorate of Wollondilly.

I also mention Snowy's loving daughter, Paula Herbert, and her husband, Grant Herbert, and I thank them for sharing this story with me. Hearing the pride in their voices and reading accounts of Snowy's life remind me that in many respects the greatest gift is to give of one's time for a worthy cause. The examples set by men like Mr Smith have seen our community grow from strength to strength. In Wollondilly we are one. Although our geographic boundary may be extensive compared to other electorates—it covers two council areas and is divided by numerous rivers and mountain ranges—the people who reside there come together as one in times of need. They selflessly put up their hands to answer the call when natural disasters strike, whether they are bushfires, floods or gale force winds. They come together to raise money for local charities and they raise amounts big and small. Together as an electorate we prosper.

Snowy's legacy of a life fulfilled by community service is echoed across every part of Wollondilly. In Theresa Park we have Norm Shearer, former longstanding captain of the Theresa Park Rural Fire Brigade and now group captain in the Wollondilly region. Norm has seen action fighting countless fires and has given guidance to many firefighters battling large blazes in the electorate, including the 2001 Black Christmas fires. Norm has since turned his attention to training young fire men and women to ensure that the knowledge he has learnt through his years of service is passed on. Men such as Norm do not ask for thanks or even appreciation for the work that they do, despite placing themselves in harm's way; they do it because our area needs their help. That is all they require to answer the call.

Men such as Ken Chalker from Pheasants Nest Rural Fire Brigade share this passion for their community. Ken, who also is a group captain after many years at brigade level, has provided strong leadership and sound advice in many section 44 State emergencies as well as in local incidents in the Wollondilly region. Recently he has turned his philanthropic nature to assist with community projects, including the Warragamba Dam Fest to be held later this year. I thank both Ken and Norm for their hard work in the area. As winter draws to an end the men I have mentioned and many others just like them will begin to increase their training in anticipation of a fast-approaching fire season. As I represent one of the most bushfire-prone regions in New South Wales, I want to convey unreservedly my appreciation for the work of the men and women of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service. I pray for a safe and uneventful summer. I place on record my gratitude for the work of Snowy Smith and men like him who today have not been mentioned but whose work does not go unnoticed. Our area is a better place because of the work that they have done.

TRIBUTE TO ANDREW RYAN

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.04 p.m.]: Dubbo pride will fill the ANZ Stadium on Sunday week to send longstanding skipper Andrew Ryan out with a bang when he plays his final

home game for the Bulldogs against the Canberra Raiders. It gives me great pleasure to speak in the House as the member for Dubbo about one of my city's great sporting achievers: Andrew Ryan, better known as Bobcat or, in many circles, rugby league's good guy. The Dubbo electorate is the home of many sporting champions. They include Glenn McGrath, Melinda Gainsford-Taylor and our current Commonwealth gold medallist cyclist Megan Dunn, as well as footballers David Peachey, David Gillespie and Terry Fahey just to name a few. There are so many more. Andrew Ryan stands alongside them.

Andrew Ryan is a humble 32-year-old man who was born in Dubbo in 1978. His love for rugby league was forged whilst he attended St John's College. As a junior he played for Emu Plains Junior Rugby League Club and later made his debut with the Parramatta Eels in 2000, where he played 73 National Rugby League [NRL] matches. After three seasons with the Eels he accepted a contract with the Bulldogs in 2003, where he has played 211 National Rugby League matches. By the end of his career in a fortnight at the conclusion of the regular season he will have played 213 National Rugby League matches. Andrew Ryan, this probing second rower, has a long list of career achievements. They include captaining the Bulldogs to their 2004 premiership when he took over from the injured Steve Price on Grand Final day. He broke Bob McCarthy's 1976 record for the most tries in a season by a forward in first grade at club level, crossing the line 13 times during the year. He made 11 Test appearances for the Kangaroos and played 12 State of Origin matches for New South Wales and six matches for the mighty Country Origin team.

As well as being a leader amongst his peers on and off the field, Andrew's list of community involvement is as long as it is diverse. He is a tireless contributor to community causes and was awarded the 2010 Ken Stephen Medal for his efforts for the Bulldogs community programs. It is an outstanding achievement. He is the club's official Camp Quality ambassador, he fills an ambassadorial role with the Australian Disability Foundation and he played an integral role in Beyond Blue, becoming one of the Bulldogs' chosen charities. Andrew Ryan is a long-time supporter of Ronald McDonald House and a spokesperson for the Children's Hospital at Westmead Bandaged Bear Cup. He also was one of the faces of the State Government's "Tackling Violence" campaign.

Every year Andrew helps to run the Andrew Ryan Captains Cup, a junior rugby league competition held in Dubbo and Sydney, and he makes frequent visits to his old school in Dubbo St John's College. I am sure that Andrew's contributions to these community causes and endeavours will not cease on his retirement, as his new role with the National Rugby League involves mentoring young players who have moved from the country to the big smoke to chase their dream, as Andrew did some years before. This is a road Andrew Ryan knows all too well and one that he commenced in the 1990s. After a total of 286 first grade games, Andrew recently said he knew the time was right to call it quits from the game he loves.

Andrew's family and close friends have played a huge role in his decision to hang up his boots after a decade-long career representing his clubs, his State and Australia. Importantly, Andrew has represented the city of Dubbo with absolute distinction. Andrew Ryan is married to Olivia and is a dedicated family man who enjoys spending time with his three children, Lily, Jett and Evie. As an appreciative fan and the member for Dubbo, it will be a pleasure for me to be present at Andrew's final game on Sunday week. I wish Bobcat and his family all the very best for the future. At a time when sporting codes need people they can look up to as ambassadors and role models, they need look no further than Andrew "Bobcat" Ryan.

NORSKE SKOG ALBURY

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [7.09 p.m.]: Free speech is one of democracy's greatest virtues. But, as we know, it comes at a cost. Sometimes that cost relates to principles that must be defended or asserted; at other times there is literally a dollar price to be paid for the very materials we use and rely upon to bring us the news of the day. My electorate is home to Norske Skog, a company that is one of the largest producers of newsprint in the world. The Albury mill is capable of producing 270,000 tonnes of newsprint each year. It is also one of the world's largest recyclers of old newspapers, magazines and catalogues. Each year the mill collects 120,000 tonnes of recovered paper, 70 per cent from old newsprint and 30 per cent from old magazines.

Norske Skog supplies newsprint and related grades to Australian publishers and printers from its two paper mills in Australia—the Boyer Mill in Southern Tasmania and the Albury Ettamogah Mill in New South Wales—together with its Tasman mill in New Zealand. The mill employs more than 200 staff and supports up to 650 indirect jobs in the Albury region. It is estimated that the mill contributes \$150 million annually to the local economy. In March 2006 the Albury mill was upgraded at a cost of \$130 million. It is a dynamic, progressive

business. On Friday 19 August I hosted a visit to Albury by the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast. My aim was to encourage and stimulate the involvement of government at its highest levels with the team in charge of a major exciting energy development.

Norske Skog intends generating its own electricity. This plan is of statewide and national significance because this paper mill is one of the top 10 users of energy in New South Wales. Norske Skog's mill requires a vast amount of energy for use in the manufacture of paper. Currently that requires both natural gas and electricity. The company is planning to construct a biomass cogeneration plant at its Ettamogah mill. Essentially, this will produce energy from biological waste products, simultaneously saving on energy costs, reusing waste, liberating energy for other businesses and consumers to use, and significantly lowering the carbon footprint for the company and thereby the State and the nation. The power plant will produce at least 10 megawatts of electricity, generated on site. Of this, eight megawatts will be through green generation and two megawatts through gas generation.

The benefits are extraordinary. This will supply 100 per cent of the mill's steam needs, replacing two natural gas fired boilers. It will save energy because there will be a 75 per cent cut in natural gas consumption by the mill. It is a good move for the environment. The plant will burn unwanted mill sludge, pine bark and other timber waste from logging operations and tree waste collected from the Albury tip. At present most of this waste is disposed of by farm-spreading, through the landscaping industry or by being burnt on the land where trees were felled. Currently the mill uses electricity from the New South Wales grid that is produced by the burning of black coal. This energy will be replaced to a significant degree by the cogeneration plant.

The company, both globally and in Australasia, is aiming to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 25 per cent by 2020, compared with the 2006 base year. Locally, the mill aims to reduce its carbon footprint by more than 30 per cent, which is equivalent to a saving of 250,000 tonnes per annum of carbon dioxide. Overall, the cogeneration plant by itself will reduce the mill's carbon footprint by an estimated 100,000 tonnes of carbon annually. The project will stimulate the growth of other businesses as natural gas currently used by the mill will become available for other users to be established nearby in a planned industrial park. There will also be employment benefits, including an estimated 100 construction jobs over an 18-month period, and five full-time operational jobs on completion.

Research and preparations are underway now, with the local company planning to take the proposal to its board in December. Albury City Council and the State Government have both contributed money towards feasibility research, while the parent company of Norske Skog has allocated \$1 million for this stage. Everyone is taking this project seriously. One benefit which will flow from our recent meeting will be State Government efforts to tap into the Federal Government's \$10 billion fund for clean and renewable energy. We want projects such as this biomass cogeneration plant to come within the fund's criteria and be eligible for assistance. The company aims to complete the project in 2013.

I thank the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast for taking the time to visit Albury to come to grips with this exciting project. I also thank Ernie Hacker, the manager of the Norske Skog paper mill at Ettamogah, and Michael Machin, who heads the energy project. I wish them well and offer my continuing support. This August the paper mill celebrated 30 years of operation. The rest of New South Wales has cause to celebrate too as we watch the biomass cogeneration plant come to life, delivering a raft of financial, environmental and technological benefits to the State from Albury.

LUGARNO EVENING VIEW CLUB

DAFFODIL DAY

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [7.14 p.m.]: Recently I had the opportunity to attend the thirty-ninth birthday celebration for the Lugarno Evening VIEW Club. The VIEW club was established by the Smith Family in 1960 as a service organisation to women and the community. The purpose of the VIEW club nationally is to empower women to achieve skills and, through that, empower them to build confidence. Many communities across Australia benefit from the hard work of the VIEW club, which works to provide education to disadvantaged children and families. Some 20,000 women across Australia are involved with the VIEW club and they provide a great service and benefit to the community.

The guiding principles of the VIEW club best sum up the work of the club, and they include inclusive and welcoming; diverse and respecting; supportive and caring; locally focused while nationally active; and

collaborative and looking to the future. The Lugarno Evening VIEW Club in my community is a great example of all those guiding principles and it is a fantastic local organisation. It was an excellent night in which I joined with the members of the club to celebrate 39 years of work for the community, although I was somewhat outnumbered, being the only male in the room. The theme of the night was springtime racing and everyone was in good spirits to celebrate the milestone and to raise much-needed money for the Smith Family.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to Helen Taylor, a Hurstville Grove resident and president of Lugarno Evening VIEW Club, who, along with her executive, runs a vibrant and busy club. I thank the vice-president Adele Persi, the treasurer Elizabeth Roberts, the assistant treasurer Jenny Smith, the assistant secretary Bev Hart, the publicity officer Lynn Forrest, the correspondence officer Donna Peters and the welfare officers Pam Collins and Ellen Gray. I look forward to working with the VIEW club over the next couple of years to support it in the work that it does in the community.

This Friday 26 August 2011 is Daffodil Day. My office will be selling badges and pens to any interested staff or member of Parliament. I ask everyone to dig deep so that we can raise as much money for Daffodil Day as possible. It is a day to give hope for a brighter cancer-free future for us and for those we love. Members may be aware that I lost a parent to cancer when I was only 14 years old. This year is the twenty-fifth anniversary of Daffodil Day in Australia, and if members think that one in two people diagnosed with cancer is one too many they should get involved and dig deep. It is estimated that 114,000 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in Australia in 2010. One in two Australians will be diagnosed with cancer by the time they reach the age of 85. Cancer is the leading cause of death in Australia and more than 43,000 people are estimated to have died from cancer in 2010.

Nearly 15,000 more people die each year of cancer than 30 years ago, and that is due mainly to population growth and ageing. More than 60 per cent of cancer patients will survive more than five years after diagnosis. The survival rate for many common cancers has increased by more than 30 per cent in the past two decades, which is great news. The most common cancers in Australia are prostate, bowel, breast and lung cancers and melanoma. Around 434,000 people are treated for one or more skin cancers, with 420 people dying each year. Cancer costs \$3.8 million in indirect health system costs. This Friday is a great opportunity for all members of Parliament to get involved and to raise money for cancer research. The Cancer Council aims to raise \$9.5 million for Daffodil Day, and with everyone's support we can reduce the impact of cancer in Australia and give hope to the estimated 114,000 Australians who are diagnosed with cancer each year.

Private members' statements noted.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.19 p.m.
until Thursday 25 August 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
