

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 7 September 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.

TRANSPORT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 6 September 2011.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.00 a.m.]: The Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 is a hallmark of the Government's approach to many aspects of the management of New South Wales for the betterment of conditions for the residents of this State. In particular, we cannot achieve the objectives of reliability and efficiency without improving the administration of transport in New South Wales as a whole. This bill will implement significant changes to the administration of transport to ensure that the transport system can support the Government's program of economic development. It is a tragedy that New South Wales lags behind other States in economic development. As the Treasurer said yesterday in the Budget Speech, this Government is developing strategies to achieve better economic development in this State for the betterment of the citizens of New South Wales.

This bill represents one of the biggest restructures of transport services in the history of New South Wales and will fundamentally change the way in which the Government and the people of New South Wales approach public transport. To ensure that our transport system is responsive to the needs of commuters and road users it is important that our public transport agencies work together towards the same objectives—a simple thing but something the Coalition is bringing to all the initiatives we are putting in place across services to New South Wales. This bill details those objectives and ensures that our transport agencies will work towards those common objectives. Firstly, the bill ensures that the customer is put first by transport agencies when using public transport, whether it is trains, ferries or buses. Commuters want to ensure they will arrive at their destination quickly, efficiently and reliably.

The administration of transport policy must be based around the needs and expectations of customers and there must be clear accountabilities and clarity for providing transport services. Customer satisfaction through positive experiences on our different modes of public transport is important in ensuring that we retain and increase the number of people using public transport. If a commuter has a negative experience when using public transport that person is likely to return to driving a car, which contributes to our congested road network. The Government is working to ensure we develop and implement a transport wise customer satisfaction measure and increase real time travel information to customers. We need to assist travellers to get to where they want to go rather than create a barrier to that goal. In order for such objectives to be met the Government must ensure that transport agencies have a customer focus, and this bill implements that important principle.

The bill will focus on the customer: whether that is a public transport user, a motorist, a pedestrian, a farmer or an importer, the people of New South Wales will be put first. Secondly, it is important to the economic development of New South Wales that we achieve greater efficiency across the entire transport system to enable our State to become the number one State, and to rise from the shameful laggard position which we presently hold. Integration of all transport modes will be promoted by this legislation and there will be improved coordination of freight, maritime and ports operations. Importantly, this bill ensures that transport services must be provided in an environmentally sustainable manner.

In order to ensure that our transport agencies are able to meet these objectives in a collaborative and integrated manner the Government is establishing a new body, Transport for NSW, which will be responsible for coordinating services through all modes of transport. It will be tasked with ensuring that the customer is placed first and foremost and it will bring together policy and planning staff from all transport agencies in order

to coordinate the entire transport system. Transport for NSW will free transport agencies from focusing on the policy and administration of transport needs. These tasks are currently performed by eight separate organisations across the State. No wonder there is confusion about the outcomes of putting the customer first. This bill ensures that these organisations can get back to focusing on providing a quality transport service to the people of New South Wales rather than working on policy and administration separately and not in an integrated fashion.

For example, the bill will allow an organisation such as Sydney Ferries, which is important to the electors of Vacluse, whom I represent, to get on with the task of servicing its customers rather than providing policy advice directly to the Government. The people in the electorate of Vacluse are pleased to see that the transport Minister has announced some reforms of ferry services, some opening up to competition of those services and the possibility of new and expanded peak hour services. The policy and planning task currently performed by organisations such as Sydney Ferries will be taken over by Transport for NSW. The body will have responsibility for transport planning and policy and the general administration of transport in the State, including the oversight of budgets and the planning and delivery of transport infrastructure projects.

Transport for NSW will have responsibility for advising, assisting and making recommendations to the Minister with regard to overall transport policy. Again, it is about integration for a whole system of transport. The Government will be given direct advice from one body rather than separate advice from different transport agencies. The bill will abolish the Roads and Traffic Authority and create a new statutory corporation to be called Roads and Maritime Services. The new body will implement road construction and maintenance, driver and maritime licensing, vehicle and vessel registration, and property management. Road safety programs and laws will also be administered by Roads and Maritime Services. The new body will also be committed to service delivery to customers. Together with the other transport agencies, Roads and Maritime Services will operate under service agreements with Transport for NSW.

These service agreements will define the role and function of each agency and ensure that the entire transport system is coordinated and works cohesively. A number of other bodies are established by this bill. Firstly, Transport Service of NSW will be established to employ staff across the transport system in accordance with industrial laws and enterprise agreements. Secondly, there will be a Transport Advisory Board to provide expert advice to the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Roads and Ports. A Maritime Advisory Council will be established to advise the Minister for Roads and Ports on any matter referred to it in relation to recreational vessel safety, commercial vessel safety, extended priorities, research priorities and boating infrastructure. These bodies will work together to provide an integrated transport system.

For the first time Transport for NSW and the bus, rail, ferry and roads and maritime service agencies will form one team. The economies of scale that can be developed by integrating each of these transport bodies will help drive efficiency gains and overall effectiveness for the entire transport systems and for the people of New South Wales. By improving the administration of transport across New South Wales this Government can get on with its agenda of getting more people onto public transport and reducing road congestion while providing a safe and enjoyable experience for all transport users.

Transport, first and foremost, is about getting somewhere, whether to our family at night after work, to our work environment or to see our friends. Transport is about quality of life and is only a means to an end. Under the former Labor Government transport became a barrier to ends that were important: family life, work, economic development and general wellbeing. Shame. This bill has all the hallmarks of a Coalition approach to government, which was evidenced in debate on the bill yesterday and, indeed, in the State Plan. Clear policy, a strategy incorporating that policy, a plan for execution and integration are all a breath of fresh air to New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [10.10 a.m.]: I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, which is long overdue. This bill represents the largest restructure of transport in this State. For the first time there will be a holistic approach to improving public transport services. Congestion on roads and vital transport projects will be at the front and centre of that focus. For the first time customers will be the prime focus as the transport system will be designed around their needs and expectations. This policy is about coherence, integration across all transport modes, performance, service delivery and, more importantly, accountability of outcomes. Transport for NSW will be the one integrated transport authority responsible for coordinating and delivering services across all modes of transport.

This integrated approach is real reform and will streamline the delivery of transport services across this State. As New South Wales and its transport services grow, consolidation of functions in Transport for NSW

will mean fewer people in the back office and more on the front line. This 2008 pre-election commitment of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals is delivering yet again. It is fantastic that Minister Berejiklian and Minister Gay will be responsible for this important area. One has only to ask either Minister a question about roads or transport, as I have on many occasions, and their staff will respond. Congratulations Minister Berejiklian and Minister Gay on your wonderful work.

I emphasise that Transport for NSW will coordinate transport service delivery and planning into one agency to meet customer expectation. The proposal of a one-stop shop providing access to drivers licences, boating licences and information across all transport modes was well received by residents in my electorate of Drummoyne. A one-stop shop ultimately will eliminate time-consuming simple transactions across different departments in different suburbs in the same municipality, saving time for residents who already have busy lifestyles. The bill establishes Transport for NSW as an integrated transport authority with six divisions, abolishing four existing transport authorities—the Roads and Traffic Authority, NSW Maritime, the Transport Construction Authority and the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority.

Importantly, the 10 differing awards operating within the departments will be simplified and made consistent under one award with no-one being any worse off. This bill implements a much-needed policy, contrary to what the member for Canterbury said yesterday and who would have us believe otherwise. The bill sets out common objectives for public transport agencies that will put the customer first. I have listened to a number of members speaking to this bill and, while I sympathise with the member for Fairfield, who requested a number of upgrades via easy access programs for, from memory, Villawood and Chester Hill, he or his predecessor had 16 years to act. It is funny that now the member for Fairfield expects these services to be delivered to every station across the State. In my electorate a proposed upgrade of North Strathfield station by the former Australian Labor Party member failed to come to fruition.

I will continue to fight for the good people of Drummoyne. Of course, these projects are based on criteria, not on the pork-barrelling that operated under the last Government in various areas such as palliative care and planning. Services must be delivered based on need and proper prerequisites, not on pork-barrelling. I sought information on public transport issues from the Minister for Transport on 11 May this year. On 24 August the Minister again acknowledged my continued interest in public transport. I thank the Minister. Public transport is the lifeline of my community as many elderly residents no longer drive and have no other means of transportation. Alleviating traffic congestion and taking cars off the roads require an integrated approach from all parties to attract more people to public transport. This Government reduced train and bus fares even before this bill was formulated.

The budget shows that the Government's expectations will be matched by finance commitments. We have invested \$200 million to tackle black spots and reduce road congestion across this State. In the Drummoyne electorate alone \$900,000 has been set aside to address bottlenecks on Parramatta and Concord roads. Public transport will receive a significant boost from 261 new buses and an extension of light rail in the inner west. I look forward to ferry reform also, including restoring and expanding services, and replacing fleets in my electorate. Of course, this completely contrasts the previous Labor Government's planned decline in ferry patronage. Ferry transport is part of the Minister's proposal and once implemented will provide a more efficient transport system not only to my wonderful electorate but to this great city.

The Drummoyne electorate definitely benefits from this bill. The ferries that service my electorate along the Parramatta River, the train lines that service commuters from Rhodes, Concord West, North Strathfield all the way to the city, and the bus services that run through Drummoyne, Five Dock, Concord and North Strathfield are part of the transport network that needs this bill to improve the services that have been long neglected for 16 years. As we ensure customer focus through a coordinated approach to public transport the outcomes from all agencies with similar goals will ensure that the beneficiaries are the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [10.18 a.m.]: I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The bill establishes a new integrated transport authority called Transport for NSW. This authority will deliver a new era in transport services and experience for New South Wales. Transport in New South Wales will have a new DNA. Transport for NSW will be customer focused. The needs of daily commuters, including road and ferry users, will come first. To begin this realignment Transport for NSW will be responsible for the coordinated delivery of services across all modes of transport. Policy and planning experts will be brought together from all transport agencies to improve public transport services and to ensure a world-class transport system that people will want to use and they ought to have. The current silos around thinking, planning and delivery will be removed.

Transport for NSW will ensure that the needs and expectations of the customer are at the centre of planning and delivery of transport services. Who are the customers? They are the people of New South Wales and our interstate and international visitors who use the road and rail systems and who catch buses in local communities. We will all benefit from Transport for NSW as its objectives are: to plan for a transport system that meets the needs and expectations of the public; to promote economic development and investment; to provide integration at the decision-making level across all public transport modes; to promote greater efficiency in the delivery of transport infrastructure projects; and to promote the safe and reliable delivery of public transport and freight services.

I, along with other members in this place, could cite examples of failures in our transport system for hours—sadly, the Government inherited many of those failures from the former Labor Government—but I will now share with the House some specific examples in my electorate of Mulgoa. Ken Moriarty and his wife, Lorna, live in North St Marys—a suburb just outside of my electorate but within the local government area of Penrith City Council, on which I am a councillor. At the invitation of Mr Ray Williams, the member for Hawkesbury, last year Mr Bart Bassett, the then candidate for Londonderry, and I meet with Mr Ken Moriarty. Yesterday the member for Hawkesbury informed the House about the local community campaign commenced by Ken Moriarty after the decision was made by the former Labor Government to cut the Westbus route 782 service through North St Marys.

Ken Moriarty, who is a gentleman in his eighties, often walks aided by a walking stick. He was so outraged by the decision of the former Labor Government to scrap the Westbus route 782 service through North St Marys that he walked up and down the streets of North St Marys, knocking door-to-door, to collect signatures on a petition in protest at the former Government's action. For many the route 782 service was their only means of accessing doctors, chemists and shops, seeing their friends or attending local pubs and clubs. Ken worked hard to raise this issue and through the advocacy of the member for Hawkesbury at least half of that service was returned. But that is not good enough. What were some of the implications of cutting the route 782 service? Students from that suburb had to catch two buses and a train to school instead of one bus. Many of the elderly residents of North St Marys do not own a car. Many have no affordable means of accessing doctors or even leaving their homes.

The misalignment of peak hour bus and train timetables in the electorate of Mulgoa is another concern. I often notice those St Clair and St Marys residents who catch buses to St Marys station each day running from the bus stop to the station—about 250 metres. They run up two flights of stairs in the hope of catching the express rail service to the city. Many of them just miss that service and have to wait 10 to 15 minutes for the next one. A lot of young families live in my electorate. When parents or carers of young children go out for the day they usually take the paraphernalia of bags and prams with them. Some mums have spoken to me about the difficulties they face when boarding a bus with prams and bags. It is also challenging to board the older buses that are not designed for people with a disability.

The infrequency of bus services, particularly during the day, is also of concern to young mums. Glenmore Park is a major residential suburb in my electorate. The route 799 service through Blue Hills does not run on Sundays. That leaves the route 797 service as the only alternative. Unfortunately, to use route 797 service Blue Hills residents have to walk from 0.8 to 1.5 kilometres between the bus stops and their homes. According to the department's Outer Metropolitan Service Planning Guidelines the maximum distance as the crow flies of a bus or rail route from homes is 400 metres during the daytime and 800 metres during the night. Clearly, the non-running of the route 799 service on Sundays does not meet departmental guidelines.

The expansion of Glenmore Park further south into Glenmore Park stage two means public transport is even more challenged. If bus routes are not reviewed quickly even more residents will be forced to rely on private vehicles to get to work and to attend school or entertainment facilities. Last Christmas the residents of Glenmore Park suffered more inconvenience as a result of the sudden and unannounced cancellation of the route 799 service. During the Christmas-New Year period they did not have a bus service for seven days. As the route 799 service did not operate on a Sunday or on public holidays many residents were inconvenienced and late for work, and many missed out on post-Christmas shopping.

Lack of adequate servicing of our outer suburbs, especially in the evenings, is unacceptable. Public transport services should be available well into the evening for those people who study and/or work in Sydney or Parramatta yet live in the outer suburbs of the Sydney metropolitan area. The last bus service to leave Penrith railway station for travel to Glenmore Park is at 7.00 p.m. Those who have to work late, who attend late tutorials or lectures, or who enjoy evening entertainment are inconvenienced by the Glenmore Park transport service. Transport should be provided to a later hour in the outer suburbs of the Sydney metropolitan area.

For more than four years the new state-of-the-art air-conditioned Waratah trains have been delayed, which has further inconvenienced the long-suffering commuters on the western and Blue Mountains lines. Although the original announcement about the new Waratah trains was made by the former Transport Minister John Watkins prior to the 2007 State election, we are still waiting for the full complement—yet another failed promise and more long-suffering for the commuters of western Sydney, especially during the hot summer months and on freezing winter mornings. The people of western Sydney deserve far better. I turn to some of the road challenges faced by the people in my electorate of Mulgoa. It is probably unnecessary to mention the congestion on the M4 motorway but that is a daily frustration to its thousands and thousands of road users.

Improvements in public transport services would almost immediately address this. If affordable, clean, safe and regular public transport services are available people will be encouraged to leave their motor vehicles at home and use those services to travel to work, school or entertainment. That will have a direct and immediate impact on the congestion of all our major motorways. Another challenging issue that has arisen in recent years is the congestion of entry and exit ramps in peak hours. At times vehicles that are lined up for one to two kilometres waiting to get on or off the M4 are blocking the M4 slow lane, which is an accident waiting to happen.

In Glenmore Park there are only two entry and exit points to a suburb of over 5,500 homes—a suburb that continues to grow. Regularly the wait to get out of Glenmore Park is about 15 to 20 minutes. People who are waiting in their cars crawl along one by one trying to get out of their home suburbs before getting onto the M4 or other major road networks to travel to work or to education facilities. Additional vehicles are travelling from Erskine Park, Colyton and Mount Vernon through St Clair to reach a Penrith bound on-ramp to the M4. This issue can be solved quickly by building a Penrith bound on-ramp at the Roper Road overpass but regrettably at the moment that will not be addressed and vehicles will still need to travel through St Clair adding to the congestion on and wear and tear of local roads. This is yet another example where Transport for NSW, with a simple plan and policy, can oversee and address these missing access points—the missing links in the road—to provide greater quality of service to residents in New South Wales.

There are a couple of examples of dangerous situations in which vehicles travelling in the fast lanes on some of our major roads have to stop and wait before turning across multiple lanes of oncoming traffic. Because they have to stop in a fast lane it is causing incredible congestion on the roads and creating problems for those wanting to travel in that direction. Situations exist also at Mulgoa Road, Regentville, where vehicles stop to turn into the 7-Eleven to access petrol; at Mamre Road, St Marys, where cars stop while waiting to turn onto Lonsdale Road; and on Northern Road where vehicles stop in the middle of a busy 70-kilometre-an-hour road to turn into Castle Road at Orchard Hills. A number of accidents have already occurred at this location.

This is another example of the deterioration we have seen over many years through the failure of the former Government to plan and deliver improvements to our road and rail systems. The final example relates to Penrith Christian School which generated a petition to install lights or a roundabout at the intersection of Frogmore Road and Northern Road, which has been the scene of a number of accidents and many near misses. These examples further demonstrate the urgency of the O'Farrell Government's structural reform to the State's transport services. These examples of problems and challenges in the coordination and service level inadequacies cannot be solved by throwing more money at the sector; they can be solved only by a single and accountable body with responsibility for the design and delivery of transport solutions.

That is what Transport for NSW will deliver. Yesterday Treasurer Mike Baird delivered his first State budget for New South Wales. The budget revealed record spending of \$13.3 billion on public transport and roads across New South Wales. This is a \$1.4 billion increase on last year's figures and a 12 per cent increase on overall figures. The O'Farrell Government has initiated a new era of public transport. I commend the Ministers responsible for this revolution in transport for New South Wales—the Hon. Duncan Gay and Ms Gladys Berejiklian. I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [10.33 a.m.]: Once again I am 100 per cent for the Tweed. I believe it is important to make a contribution on what I consider to be an important document, that is, the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The purpose of this bill is to establish a new integrated transport authority called Transport for NSW that will put the needs and expectations of its customers at the centre of planning and delivery. This commitment was made by the Liberal-Nationals in 2008 and that policy has continued. I applaud those many people in the Liberals and Nationals who contributed to this bill. Over a period we witnessed the segregation and creation of silos in different government departments that resulted in inefficiencies, timetables that did not match and so on. At present transport planning coordination and service delivery are scattered

throughout many different transport agencies. There is limited coordination and customer expectations are not being met. By bringing it under one department I believe we will create greater efficiencies. Customers will see integration between train, bus, ferry and light rail timetables and an easy-to-use, state-of-the-art ticketing system that will ensure that public transport is an easy choice.

The one-stop shops interest me a great deal as they will enable people inquiring about driver licences, boat licences or information relating to other modes of transportation to avail themselves of that information in one location. As an example in the Tweed electorate we have some hardworking front-of-house staff from the Roads and Traffic Authority who do an amazing job, in particular, in relation to cross-border issues, people transferring from Queensland into New South Wales, et cetera. Members would be aware that I often visit many government agencies and I witness firsthand the great work that they do. Recently I visited NSW Maritime in the Tweed which has only enough funding to open its office on three days a week.

Anyone wanting to renew a boat licence, register a vessel, or gather any other information would have to pick one of the three days on which NSW Maritime is open. Having a one-stop shop within the Tweed would provide services six days a week. The boating industry is a big plus in the Tweed electorate and this Government has plans to increase marinas and so on in that area. Yesterday I was pleased to hear the Treasurer announce that this Government will allocate \$2 million to identify and revisit the viability of rail routes. Approximately six years ago the former Labor Government closed the north coast rail line in the Tweed which resulted in it losing the seat when I was elected in 2007. That crucial part of infrastructure in my electorate was closed.

Members would be aware that my colleagues and I have campaigned for many years to reinstate that rail line. I have received support from the member for Lismore, the member for Ballina—the current Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast—and the effervescent member for Clarence, who are all strong supporters of rail. This new organisation will be most effective in determining the Queensland rail verge from the Gold Coast airport, five kilometres of which is located in New South Wales. As a result of our campaigning, yesterday the Minister for Transport announced that \$2 million would be allocated for a feasibility study to identify a crucial route for the North Coast and, in particular, the Tweed area, which has the fastest population growth rate. This bill will enable Transport for NSW to negotiate and to focus on an issue that for too long has been fragmented.

I applaud Premier Barry O'Farrell for signing an important memorandum of understanding with Queensland on Wednesday last week. One of the key components of that memorandum of understanding was transport and cross-border issues to enable New South Wales to become number one again by having an integrated public transport system on the North Coast, which will extend as far south as the lovely town of Coffs Harbour. I am sure that the Assistant-Speaker would stand 100 per cent behind such a proposal. This bill will establish six divisions—customer experience, planning and progress, policy and regulation, transport services, transport projects, and freight and regional development, an issue that is close to my heart. Unemployment rates in the Tweed are usually 1 per cent to 2 per cent higher than the unemployment rates on the North Coast. Much of that employment growth has been inhibited by ineffective public transport and freight systems. After all, the North Coast sits beside the sixth largest city in Australia, the lovely Gold Coast.

This legislation brings together all the transport agencies into one organisation. I make a minor point about that. Because of the different laws in Queensland and New South Wales, NSW Fisheries has been negotiating with the Roads and Traffic Authority to put an information sign on the highway. That has taken six years, and six years later we have the art work for the sign but we still do not have a sign. That shows the fragmentation of different government departments. This legislation is important. It heralds a brave new look, not only for regional areas, where there is a focus, but also in the city of Sydney, where literally hundreds of thousands of people use our trains, buses and ferries. Obviously I am a frequent visitor to the great city of Sydney, and at times I have difficulty working out the timetables and connections. I am sure a large number of other visitors to our fine city experience similar issues.

It is important that while staff members currently filling these back-office functions are employed on one or more of 10 different awards the new agency will have one standard award consistent with the New South Wales public sector. Staff members who transfer to the new agency will do so with no financial detriment. Once again, those words alone show that the Government is clear, transparent and respects workers and their current awards. This heralds a brand-new beginning for transport, particularly public transport, in the great State of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [10.41 a.m.]: I have long called for coordinated transport planning, and I support the creation of Transport for NSW under the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. Transport for NSW is the new body set to coordinate delivery of all transport services and develop transport planning and policy. After years of neglect, transport reform is urgently needed to secure Sydney's economic, social and environmental performance. Transport is one of the major issues facing our city, and the problem is rapidly becoming worse. Already, traffic congestion is having a severe economic impact, with last year's State of Australian Cities report projecting an unavoidable congestion cost for Sydney of \$4.8 billion—up from \$3.5 billion in 2005. The projection for Sydney in 2020 is closer to \$8 billion if it is business as usual, so clearly it cannot be business as usual.

As Infrastructure Australia noted in its last annual report, Australia's productivity has slowed "as a direct result of infrastructure shortfalls". Without transport reform, Sydney will not be able to compete effectively with other cities in the Asia-Pacific region such as Singapore and Shanghai. Already we are struggling to keep up with other States and we cannot risk lagging at a global level. A major challenge for Transport for NSW will be to break the stranglehold roads planning has had on past budgets and move towards providing more transport options. I welcome comments from the Minister for Roads and Ports in the other place that cyclists and pedestrians will be considered customers under this bill and that Transport for NSW will need to service those road users. I hope this will lead to more bike and pedestrian friendly infrastructure investment.

Evidence shows that if walking and cycling are safe and easy, people will use these options for shorter trips, freeing up space on roads for people who have to drive and public transport services for people who come from outer areas. The City of Sydney's separated cycleway is already seeing a massive increase in bicycle trips, with travel in the local government area morning peak increasing by an average of 60 per cent over the past year. I have long advocated a light rail link to connect the Barangaroo development to the centre of the city. As I think I have said previously in the Chamber, the City of Sydney recently committed \$180 million to upgrade George Street to complement the light rail project. Light rail can be a stimulus to transform the way people use our city. It is a global city of Australia and it represents in just the central business district 25 per cent of the State's gross domestic product. It is critical that we promote the way people use the city.

We need to provide stronger pedestrian connections, because there are more than 600,000 people in that central business district each day as pedestrians. We need a greater range of recreational and retail options, and reduced noise and pollution along this important central city spine. It is essential for the economic viability of the city. The light rail service should also extend to the sporting stadia at Moore Park, where often on weekends we can have 60,000 people wanting to descend on that area. The Melbourne Cricket Ground can clear its stadium in 20 minutes; it takes hours to clear the Moore Park stadia. So it is vital that light rail is introduced as quickly as possible into this precinct, and also to go up Parramatta Road to the University of Sydney would be another important part of the light rail network.

I welcome the Government's commitment to starting construction of new light rail in the current term of government, with new routes through the city centre to Barangaroo, to Moore Park and beyond. While the budget delivered yesterday includes funding for an expanded light rail network, the \$103 million allocation pales in comparison to Pacific Highway funding of \$1 billion. I also maintain that there should be one Minister for all transport planning responsible for roads, cycling infrastructure and mass transit. I now refer to another part of the bill that is of concern to many of my constituents who have contacted my electorate office, and that is the treatment of staff currently working in a transport agency who will transfer to Transport for NSW. I do not support the changes that would have removed the existing protections and entitlements of these staff who will only have been guaranteed retention of their salary and superannuation, with potential loss to other conditions.

A number of transport agency staff have contacted my office and they are concerned. I believe it is unfair to make them do the same work under lesser conditions. So I support the Opposition amendments passed in the other place to ensure that the conditions and entitlements of any staff member transferred to Transport for NSW are preserved. In conclusion, I support the bill in its current form. I commend the Minister for Transport. Many people are optimistic about Transport for NSW because of the Minister's ability and her commitment. Certainly, as the Lord Mayor of Sydney I look forward to working with her on improving transport for a global city.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [10.47 a.m.]: It gives me pleasure to support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. This bill is yet another election commitment. Indeed, it is one of our oldest election commitments; it was first announced in 2008. Transport for NSW will bring about major positive changes for the people of New South Wales. We are combining a group of disparate and disconnected transport

agencies into one agency. There are real problems that need to be fixed in New South Wales and as far as I am concerned public transport is at the top of the list after 16 years of Labor Party neglect. My electorate of Coogee has the State's fourth highest usage of public transport in New South Wales. In fact, one in three of my constituents use public transport to travel to work. So it will come as no surprise that public transport, and specifically our buses, is one of the biggest issues on the minds of my constituents.

During my campaign and in my time as a member, public transport has been the most consistently talked about issue in the Coogee electorate, most likely because it has the potential to affect our lives more frequently than almost any other government issue. Coogee is one of the smallest electorates in the State. In an area spanning just 14.4 square kilometres, my electorate has 41 different bus services and one train station. In a few years time I am confident it will have a light rail line to the University of New South Wales. That is long overdue and it will be greatly welcomed. The Anzac Parade bus route is one of the busiest, if not the busiest, in New South Wales.

Coogee is well endowed with public transport services, but it seems that the previous Government aimed for quantity over quality. People in Coogee are familiar with the Anzac Parade conga line of crawling buses, the competition for space on consistently packed buses during peak hour, the old Mercedes Benz buses that take on the secondary function of a sauna in the warmer months, the car parks that we used to call roads and the unpunctuality of our buses, which are as consistent and predictable as the former Government's leadership. This is the legacy left by the former Government. The consistent mistakes over the past 16 years must not and will not be repeated.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Shameful.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: Indeed, it is shameful. Transport agencies under Labor competed for resources and took a myopic vision devoted to their own welfare, not to that of the commuter. They all sought to undermine each other's pursuit of their own particular agenda. They did not act as a team and they did not focus on providing the great services that our constituents expect. Transport authorities are fundamental to the provision of quality service and their cohesion is critical for real changes to be made. That is why Transport for NSW is an integrated authority split into six divisions: customer experience, planning and programs, policy and regulation, transport services, transport projects, and freight and regional development. An integrated agency ensures that customers' needs are at the heart of every decision. Shared needs, shared ideas and shared solutions will allow people access to better quality public transport in New South Wales.

For too long much-needed reform of public transport has stood idle. Transport for NSW will inject new vigour and innovation into a new future for public transport in New South Wales. Let us imagine bus, ferry, train and light rail timetables working in harmony, allowing people to travel seamlessly on as many modes of transport as they need. Let us imagine services arriving on time and operating on time throughout the day. Let us imagine public transport being more efficient and more pleasurable than driving a car. This one is easy: Let us imagine an integrated ticketing system allowing us to use the same ticket across different modes of transport. All this is possible and long overdue. Transport for NSW is the first step in this direction. Sydney has become more crowded but getting around does not have to be the chore that Labor allowed it to become.

A constituent of mine in a recent email told me that he had seen more efficient public transport systems in many less developed countries. He makes a good point: there is no excuse for the parlous state of our transport network. Transport for NSW will promote increased productivity by coordinating community movements and increasing the efficiency of freight, maritime and port authorities to ensure that they work together to provide better outcomes for the New South Wales economy. Transport for NSW will equip us with a transport division solely focused on freight for the first time. The benefits from increasing the efficiency of trade and maritime movements are obvious and are particularly important to our sagging and lagging economy. Transport is integral to the economic development and prosperity of this State. For the first time we will have an agency that focuses on this fundamental need.

This bill is about simplicity and efficiency. Currently across the transport network office staff are employed on more than 10 different awards. This bill establishes Transport Services of New South Wales, a distinct entity that will consolidate these awards into one simple award, which is consistent with the practice in the New South Wales public sector. All staff who transfer from old agencies to new agencies will not incur any financial detriment. The consolidation of these awards means that people doing similar or the same work will not be paid or treated differently. This is a fairer and more equitable system for all workers. It means we can

spend less time wading through red tape and more time and resources on providing better front-line services to the people of New South Wales. The task of providing quality transport that people actually want to use is a tough one, but it is not a challenge that this Government or I will shy away from.

Public transport should be an efficient and enjoyable experience, not one plagued with uncertainty, discomfort and delays. Trip times should be measured in minutes, not hours. The provision of major news services should be measured in years, not decades. Investment should be measured in billions of dollars, not millions. Without the long-term vision and cohesive planning that will be provided by integrated agencies such as Transport for NSW nothing would change. Bandaid solutions would continue to be applied to serious problems and half-baked plans hastily assembled and never costed would never come to fruition, and all we would have left are broken promises and long forgotten media releases. The establishment of Transport for NSW is the crucial first step in this direction and the first of many great reforms that this Government will deliver. It is a major step in making New South Wales number one again. I commend Minister Berejiklian and Minister Gay for their hard work and vision. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [10.55 a.m.]: I speak in support of the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, which was introduced in the upper House by the Hon. Duncan Gay, Minister for Roads and Ports. He is a great Minister. Over the next 20 years, as this Government progresses, he will go down in history as the best Minister for Roads and Ports that the State has ever seen. This legislation is good for regional New South Wales. It delivers on our election promises and it delivers for my electorate of Myall Lakes. Destination Myall Lakes is the best place in Australia. Members may not be aware that the Ellenborough Falls—which can be reached only by driving through Myall Lakes—is the second longest single drop waterfall in the Southern Hemisphere. It is listed as one of the top 10 waterfalls in Australia. The mighty Manning River, that great river which leaves the Clarence River for dead, is the only delta river system on the Australian continent. This bill is critical for my electorate because the Pacific Highway runs through Myall Lakes, as do CountryLink and XPT rail services. This bill is important and it delivers.

The object of the bill is to amend the Transport Administration Act 1988 and other transport legislation to establish new arrangements for the administration of the New South Wales transport sector. These new arrangements provide for: the establishment of a statutory corporation to be called Transport for NSW, which will have the central role in the governance of the delivery of transport services and infrastructure by public transport agencies; the establishment of a staff employment entity to be called the Transport Service of NSW, where staff are employed to enable Transport for NSW to exercise its functions; the establishment of a statutory corporation to be called Roads and Maritime Services and the transfer to this new corporation of the functions, assets, rights and liabilities of the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Maritime Authority of NSW; the abolition of the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Maritime Authority of NSW, the Transport Construction Authority and the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority.

This bill gives legislative effect to election commitments made by the Liberal and Nationals parties before the 2011 election to establish an integrated transport authority, Transport for NSW. This entity will be responsible for the coordinated delivery of services across all modes of transport, bringing together the coordination, procurement, policy and non-service delivery planning functions currently performed by a series of existing government departments. This includes the Department of Transport, RailCorp, the Roads and Traffic Authority, the State Transit Authority, Sydney Ferries, the Maritime Authority of New South Wales, the Transport Construction Authority and the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority. The Minister for Roads and Ports said in his second reading speech that this integration is required to "break down the silos that exist in the administration of the entire transport sector". He further added:

These changes are designed to abolish a dysfunctional structure and avoid the duplication and poor communications and replace it with a streamlined agency which plans and delivers to all transport modes.

Clause 1 sets out the name of the Act. Clause 2 provides for the commencement of the Act on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation. Schedule 1 to the bill amends the Transport Authority Act to establish and confer functions on Transport for NSW; to establish the Transport Service of NSW; to establish and confer functions on Roads and Maritime Services and transfer assets, rights, liabilities and authorisations as a consequence of the restructuring; to establish the common objective of public transport agencies; to enable the director general to establish the Government's expectations for service delivery by public transport agencies; to alter existing provisions for the transfer of staff between public transport agencies so that transfers will be on a no net detriment basis—that is in place of the current arrangements for a transfer to be on the basis of existing terms

and conditions of employment—and to make it clear that the obligation of a railway network controller to give authority to railway passenger services is an obligation to give reasonable priority to those services, and a priority that is consistent with arrangements for the Commonwealth funding of freight rail infrastructure.

Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Ports and Maritime Administration Act 1995. The Maritime Authority will be abolished and its functions, assets, rights and liabilities will be transferred to the new Roads and Maritime Services. Consequential amendments include amendments to provisions for the Waterways Fund. The Minister will be authorised to transfer commercial port authorities that are vested in the Maritime Authority together with the staff employed at those ports to a Ports Corporation. The bill provides for the Minister to establish a Maritime Advisory Council to advise the Minister on matters concerning marine legislation, maritime safety and the expenditure priorities for maritime infrastructure and research.

Schedule 3 to the bill amends the Transport Administration Act 1998 and other legislation to abolish the Transport Construction Authority, transfer the assets, rights and liabilities of the abolished authority to Transport for NSW, and makes consequential amendments. Schedule 4 to the bill makes amendments similar to those in schedule 3 in relation to the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority to the Transport Construction Authority. Schedule 5 to the bill makes amendments to various laws that are consequential on the abolition of the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Maritime Authority of New South Wales and the establishment of roads and maritime services. Schedule 5 to the bill also includes amendments to various laws that are consequential on the transfer of functions to Transport for NSW and other amendments in the bill. Other minor amendments are made to transport legislation, including law revision amendments.

As previous speakers have stated, the bill will produce better outcomes for New South Wales and better outcomes for regional New South Wales. To understand where we are today we must look at our history. We have had 16 years of Labor Government, 16 years of neglect, 16 years of mismanagement, 16 years of incompetence, 16 years of scandal, 16 years of corruption, 16 years of inertia and 16 years of paralysis in Government—16 years during which time nothing was delivered in transport and infrastructure for New South Wales. In 1998 the North West Rail Link was first promised to be delivered by 2010—axed. The South West Rail Link was first promised in 2004 to be completed by 2012—axed. Both of those projects were re-announced several times during 16 years of Labor Government only to be axed again.

Federal Government funding of \$80 million for the western metro project was returned because the project was never started. The Chatswood to Parramatta Rail Link was announced in 1998 as part of the action plan for public transport 2010. However, Labor managed to deliver only half the rail link three years late and at twice the cost. The Penrith fast rail was announced in 2006 but it was axed in the next year. The North West Metro was promised in 2008, but it was axed. The Hurstville to Strathfield rail link was promised in 1998—axed. The Bondi Beach rail link was promised in 1998—axed. The high speed rail link to Newcastle and the Central Coast was promised in 1998—axed. The high speed rail link from Sutherland to Wollongong was promised in 1998—axed.

The central business district new harbour crossing rail link was promised in 2005—axed. The CBD to Rozelle Metro was promised in 2008 at a cost of \$500 million, but without a sod being turned it was axed. In 1998 the previous Labor Government promised to build a number of transitways: the Parramatta to Blacktown transitway—axed; the Parramatta to Strathfield transit way—axed; the Penrith to St Marys transitway—axed; the Blacktown Wetherill Park transitway—axed; and the Blacktown to Castle Hill transitway—axed. That is just a sample of some of the transport infrastructure promises Labor made over the past 16 years. All of the promises were made immediately before an election and then axed straight after the election.

It has happened time and time again over the past 16 years. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has made the plans and commenced the letting out of tenders for the North West Rail Link. We are getting on with the job of delivering the services, delivering the infrastructure that we promised before the election. The Transport Legislation Amendment Bill brings all those agencies into one organisation, which will enable us to deliver on those promises. In four years the North West Rail Link and the South Rail Link will be up and running. I totally support the Transport Legislation Bill 2011 because it is good for regional New South Wales, it is good for country New South Wales and, in particular, it is good for Myall Lakes. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [11.09 a.m.]: I speak to the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The objects of this bill are to amend the Transport Administration Act 1988 and other transport legislation to establish new arrangements for the administration of the New South Wales transport sector. These new arrangements provide for the establishment of a statutory corporation to be called Transport for NSW which is

to have a central role in the governance of the delivery of transport services and infrastructure by public transport agencies; the establishment of a staff employment entity to be called the Transport Service of New South Wales, in which staff are employed to enable Transport for NSW to exercise its functions; the establishment of a statutory corporation to be called Roads and Maritime Services and the transfer to the new corporation of the functions, other than Transport for NSW co-ordination, planning and policy functions, assets, rights and liabilities of the Roads and Traffic Authority and the Maritime Authority of New South Wales; the abolition of the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Maritime Authority of NSW, the Transport Construction Authority and the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority.

Transport for NSW will have the co-ordination, funding allocation, policy and planning and other non-service delivery functions that are currently exercised by the Director General of the Department of Transport. These functions include planning, oversight and delivery of transport infrastructure, contracting for the delivery of public transport services, co-ordinating transport services, incident management, ticketing services and arrangements, and providing and deploying staff to public transport agencies. The Transport Service will comprise staff who are employed by the New South Wales Government to enable Transport for NSW to exercise its functions. On behalf of the Government, the director general will exercise employer functions in relation to staff, and those functions include fixing their salaries, wages and conditions of employment, although awards and other laws might also apply. Special provision is included for members of the Transport Service who hold positions in the transport senior service.

It is hoped that this raft of changes will not be just cosmetic and indeed will amount to improved services for New South Wales customers, including passengers of the public transport system, as well as result in improvement in the efficiency and productivity of public transport system functions. By creating a mega department, the Government will spruik about cost savings and increased efficiency, but at what cost? Job cuts have been flagged already. We all know that once a Coalition Government begins swinging the axe, it will find it hard to stop. We all know how the O'Farrell Government feels about workers' rights. As my colleague the member for Canterbury mentioned earlier, a significant part of the bill will entail the wholesale gutting of entitlements and projections for transport workers in Transport for NSW.

In its original form, this bill would have allowed the director general to transfer any transport agency staff to Transport for NSW, thereby removing from those workers coverage and protection of the Industrial Relations Act. The Government kept quiet about that. This is industrial vandalism from this Government. The staff will have no right of appeal. They will be sacked if they refuse to accept a transfer. But for the amendments, they would have had no rights to keep current entitlements beyond basic salary and superannuation. This Government is definitely not a friend of the workers. The Opposition will continue to fight to protect workers' rights, which is why we moved amendments to the bill in the other place—to preserve the conditions and entitlements of transport workers who are affected by this legislation. While the Government is attempting to take away workers' rights, the Opposition will stand up and fight for them.

Another concern of the Opposition in relation to the bill is the amendment of section 99D, which relegates passengers on CityRail trains from being a "priority" to a "reasonable priority". We know what the Government means. It is prioritising delivery and transportation of freight ahead of the one million rail passengers who rely on the State's public transport system to get to work, to see their families, and to go about their daily business. Obviously freight trains are very heavy and can be notoriously slow. Everyone knows the frustration of sitting on a passenger train when it stops for no apparent reason. I feel that that will be a more common occurrence for passengers who board trains and travel through Cabramatta, Regents Park and Canley Vale.

I will relate to the House one of my experiences as a public transport passenger. When I was a young apprentice, I would board an afternoon train in the city and alight at Cabramatta. The junction between Regents Park and the Granville line occurs between Cabramatta and Canley Vale and invariably, when the train arrived at Canley Vale station, the train would stop for no apparent reason and remain stationary for approximately 10 minutes. After approximately seven minutes, we could hear the freight train that was only a matter of 100 metres away as it headed down the line through Liverpool and towards Melbourne or elsewhere. In the approximately seven minutes we waited, the train I was on could have gone to Cabramatta, the passengers could have alighted, it could have continued to Liverpool where again passengers could have alighted, and it could have exited the line, leaving the freight train able to proceed uninterrupted on its way. But that never was the case.

Passengers sat in the stationary train at Canley Vale station for up to 10 minutes while the freight train went through, regardless of whether it was summer or winter or whether it was cold or hot. The issue was not so

much waiting the 10 minutes but rather that many of the passengers missed their connections. In my case, I had to travel from Cabramatta to Bonnyrigg, which involved a bus journey of approximately 20 minutes. Unlike the central business district where buses come along every five or 10 minutes, I had to wait half an hour for the next bus—all because the freight train took priority on the line. I know that the Federal Government is working very hard to build a new Brisbane to Melbourne freight line, which will pass through Cabramatta. The western suburbs will bear most of the burden associated with transportation of freight for the nation, and rightly so: we need a good freight line, but it should be a dedicated freight line, and not one shared by passenger trains, and that is what the Federal Government intends to build.

Until that happens, passenger trains will be halted while freight trains pass by. One wonders why a freight train could not wait five or 10 minutes, considering it is not transporting passengers. It seems incongruous that we are concerned about the welfare of animals during transportation to farms or abattoirs but not about the welfare of passengers. To assign "reasonable priority" to human life is a downfall of this legislation. I urge the Government to prioritise passenger trains over freight trains. I have based my comments on personal experience of freight trains taking priority. I assure the House that as an outcome of this legislation, passengers will be waiting on trains for approximately 15 minutes while a freight train passes by, and how the Government can stand by while one million CityRail passengers are relegated to second preference is beyond a joke. Trains are one of the best modes of moving people from place to place en masse. They are fast, and they can transport a lot of passengers.

To relegate rail passengers behind the delivery of freight is a slap in the face to the voters of New South Wales, particularly the voters of south-west Sydney whose line carries the bulk of freight trains. That is not a good start by a Government that was voted into office on the slogan of "Start the Change". The only change accomplished by the Government is sending the State backwards. This is an important statement. History tells us, and we should not be surprised, that a previous Coalition Government in its first term axed 8,000 jobs and closed 13 country rail lines. That is how much the Greiner Government cared about workers and passengers of New South Wales. We shall see if the new O'Farrell Government avoids the errors of its predecessors. The Government has not learnt the lessons of the past. The cosmetic changes effected by the Coalition Government are true to type: promise the world, but deliver little while at the same time strip away the rights of workers. That again proves that the Coalition is a menace to public sector workers.

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [11.16 a.m.]: What a fantastic initiative the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 represents to the people of New South Wales. What a pleasure it is to participate in debate on reform that is both historical and unprecedented. Transport in this State has been the misery of many thousands of road, rail, bus and ferry passengers for way too long. Transport in this State was mismanaged by the Labor Government for far too long—a Government that could not bring about necessary reforms and wasted millions of dollars on transport projects that produced nothing. While elderly and disabled people within my electorate struggled to climb steep steps and ramps to gain access to Panania railway station, the Labor Government wasted \$100 million building a turnaround at Revesby station despite the existence of a perfectly good turnaround at the East Hills station.

While thousands of commuters suffered in stuffy and overcrowded buses and train carriages, the Labor Government wasted \$100 million on the failed Tcard. While the M5 resembled a parking lot each morning and afternoon, the Labor Government wasted \$500 million on the CBD Rozelle Metro. Although I am not a regular user of public transport, my constituents are, and they have told me about the problems they face each day as they struggle to go to work and to go about their daily business. The time for complacency has ended. The time of waste and mismanagement at long last has come to an end. With the creation of Transport for NSW the daily grind of many millions of travellers across this State will become easier and more comfortable.

As stated by the Hon. Duncan Gay, Minister for Roads and Ports, the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill represents an opportunity to improve the administration of transport in New South Wales. The Transport Legislation Amendment Bill will finally make the customer the hub of the wheel. The bill will make it possible for a coordinated approach to be taken to the delivery of services across all modes of transport. This bill simply makes sense because it will integrate train, bus, ferry and light rail timetables. It makes sense because it will create a state-of-the-art ticketing system that will make using public transport an easy choice. It makes sense because it will merge the disjointed services of eight separate and independent government authorities into one cost-effective centralised agency. It makes sense because it removes duplication of effort, resources and manpower. But, this bill also makes sense because it recognises that freight is the lifeblood of this State's economy.

By bringing together freight planning, maritime regulation and port authorities the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 will not just resolve the kinks and bottlenecks in the State's supply chain but it will help in the economic development of New South Wales, increase the efficient transportation of goods and reduce the cost of getting products to where they need to be. Under the current system, transport planning, coordination and service delivery is scattered across many transport agencies. There is limited coordination and the reasonable expectations of my constituents are not being met. There is no doubt in my mind that the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill will be welcomed by the people living within the East Hills electorate.

I have no doubt that they will welcome being able to get their driver licences and boat licences from the one shop. I have no doubt that they will welcome having one point of contact to discuss their taxi, bus, train, light rail, ferry, community transport, cycling and/or walking needs. I have no doubt that they will welcome a transport system with a timetable that matches the arrival time of a train with the departure time of a bus. I said earlier, it is a privilege to be able to stand in this House and speak about this bill. On behalf of the long-suffering motorists, commuters and other transport users of the electorate of East Hills, it is also a privilege to commend this bill to the House.

The previous Labor Government did put in a turn back at Revesby station and by doing so it cut the electorate of East Hills in half. Commuters who caught the train to Revesby had to wait 20 minutes to commute to Panania or East Hills. My electorate was literally knifed straight down the centre. The former Labor Government wasted so much money on that turn back that could have been better used elsewhere to get other projects off the ground. The member for Cabramatta referred to the Government putting freight trains before passenger trains but he is wrong. For the life of me I do not understand why the former Government put freight lines in front of passengers. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [11.24 a.m.]: I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. This vital bill will bring about overdue change in the administration of transport in this State. It has been driven by the obvious need to create a better transport system that enhances and maximises benefits for the economy and the community at large. This bill will fundamentally change the way we approach public transport in our State. This Government will not repeat the mistakes of the past 16 years with various transport agencies competing for the resources rather than working as a team. This bill will enable the various modes of transport and their associated property and procurement activities to be coordinated into one agency for the first time.

This initiative of the O'Farrell Government is delivering on a commitment made in 2008 by the Liberal-Nationals to the people of New South Wales. The bill implements the announcement made on 15 July by the Minister for Roads and Ports. The commitment was made because we believe, as now, that we have transport planning and service delivery scattered across so many agencies with so many masters that it is not a good structure for the delivery of a coordinated outcome to meets customers' expectations. It should come as no surprise that customers told us that their expectations were not being met. I will give several examples from the City of Gosford, where I have been involved with local government for many years. The City of Gosford is dissected by a railway line that crosses the major arterial road route, but on the back streets it divides a major teaching hospital with the centre of the central business district.

For the past 20 years local government has sought to have these two roads upgraded and widened. When council made a submission to improve these two roads and provide access it spoke to the Roads and Traffic Authority. The Roads and Traffic Authority referred the council to RailCorp. RailCorp said it was not its concern, and told council to go back to the Roads and Traffic Authority. The council was going around in circles. That is a prime example of two government agencies that were not working together. A better example is what occurred at 6.00 p.m. last Friday evening at the Woy Woy Rawson Road crossing. A gentleman must have lost his way, because he made a right-hand turn onto the railway. His car got stuck as a train carrying 15,000 commuters was approaching and the inevitable happened. His Honda Integra suddenly became a convertible and ended up under a train. Fortunately, nobody was injured as the driver was able to exit the car prior to the train colliding with the car.

Thousands of commuters were delayed that evening on the Rawson Road Crossing at Woy Woy, which is another piece of infrastructure that local council tried so vehemently for 16 years to have upgraded, but nothing was done. The crossing has been in existence for more than 105 years and the first crossing was made by a horse and dray. In the past the council had pursued with the Roads and Traffic Authority and RailCorp the necessity to have a more effective crossing of the railway at the bottom of what was Bulls Hill and Woy Woy Road. When I was mayor 10 years ago the council approached the Roads and Traffic Authority and RailCorp with a proposal, but both agencies had the same attitude, "It's not our problem. It's somebody else's." Planners in

Gosford council have long eyed a tunnel under the railway line at the start of Bulls Hill to connect with Nagari Road on the other side. But RailCorp has strongly resisted the plan and has thrown the project back to the Roads and Traffic Authority. The argument keeps going around in circles with no resolution.

This morning I read in my local *Central Coast Express Advocate* that Mr Bob Staines, a former editor, said in his column "Straight from the Shoulder" that it had long been a commitment to try to get something done but nothing had ever been done. He also highlighted a range of other issues relating to better access to the peninsula—Woy Woy Road is the second major access to this area and nothing has been done. The editorial highlighted me as the local member and predicted on the eve of the Budget Speech that no money would be allocated for the crossing. The writer of that editorial will have to eat humble pie because yesterday's budget includes \$1 million for the commencement of the investigation and planning for its removal. That is a demonstration of this Government's determination to act. We are blessed that no-one has been injured or killed on the crossing in recent years, although there have been fatalities in the past. Something is finally being done to address this major issue.

This bill will establish a new integrated transport authority entitled Transport for New South Wales. It will focus on providing a service for the people of New South Wales and put the needs and expectations of its customers at the centre of planning and delivery of transport services by coordinating policy formulation and planning across all modes of transport. This measure will ensure that the agencies act as one team with a holistic focus on transport consumers, whether it be public transport users, commuters, motorists, pedestrians, farmers or importers. It will amalgamate into one family the previously separate entities of RailCorp, the Roads and Traffic Authority, NSW Maritime, the State Transit Authority, Sydney Ferries, the Transport Construction Authority and the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority. These separate entities had separate reporting lines, they did not have an integrated focus and, as is true in all large organisations, they were no doubt in conflict or competing against one another at times. That is not the most efficient structure to maximise efficiency and service delivery to our customers.

This bill brings those entities together as one integrated transport authority with six divisions under one responsible Minister. Those divisions are: policy and regulation; planning and programs; transport services; transport projects; customer experience; freight; and regional development. The new integrated agency must have customers at the centre of all decision-making. After all, it is the customers—that is, the taxpayers and residents of this State—who will pay the bills and they deserve to be the centre of attention. The customer experience division will ensure that transport planning policy, investment and services are driven by customer need. As well as focusing on the public's needs and expectations, the new agency will promote economic development and investment. This integration will produce efficiencies across all transport modes and promote the safe and reliable delivery of public transport and freight services.

Customers will also see the integration of bus, ferry, train and light rail timetables. Infrastructure designed to support walking and cycling will be planned taking into account all road users' needs; it will not be an adjunct that causes more problems, which has occurred in Sydney. An easy to use state-of-the-art ticketing system will be developed to make public transport an easy choice. For the first time key freight system components such as road, rail, maritime, ports and intermodal terminals will be consolidated to provide a single point of contact for industry. The Government wants to improve public transport so that people regard it as a truly reliable, regular, clean and safe option. Over time, and as customer confidence grows, fewer people will feel that they need to drive to work because public transport will become their preferred option. That will also benefit the social and occasional public transport user.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Minister Berejiklian and Minister Gay on this initiative. I also take this opportunity to thank those who provided assistance after the incident on the Woy Woy peninsula on Friday. It could have been a horrendous accident: there could have been a fatality. I congratulate the emergency workers and the officers of the RailCorp Emergency Train Recovery Unit, who worked so quickly and efficiently. The accident occurred just after 6.00 p.m. and the line was clearly just after 10.00 p.m. That was an exceptional performance and it never happened after incidents on the F3 under the previous Government. No-one was injured but thousands of people had their journey home disrupted, because nothing has been done to upgrade the crossing over the past 20 years. Now, after 16 years of Labor administration, we have a Coalition Government that is committed to starting work on the planning for a railway bypass. We will now see some action. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [11.35 a.m.]: The Opposition will not die in a ditch about the principle of the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, which is the amalgamation of government

agencies into one controlling, planning and constructing entity. In fact, former governments, both Coalition and Labor governments, have done likewise over many years. The new Transport for New South Wales body—adding the word "for" to a proposal put by the previous Government—will result in abolition of organisations such as the Roads and Traffic Authority, NSW Maritime, the Transport Construction Authority and the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority.

The merging of government agencies into one larger entity is not a new formula; even this bill has its origins in work that has been ongoing for years, admittedly with some differences. Those differences were picked up by the Opposition and I am pleased that the Legislative Council has amended the bill, especially in relation its impact on employees. The merger of conflicting transport entities into one controlling body has been tried and in some cases—reminiscent of an episode of *Yes Minister*—has been the subject of satire, criticism and humour.

The Opposition's position on this legislation was presented by the Hon. Penny Sharpe in the other place. While we will not fight to the death about this bill, we have sought and have achieved some amendments. While some amalgamations of government agencies have been successful to a degree, I have always felt that when a government agency is merged into a larger entity that agency has become more remote from the people it has been established to serve. However, such moves are now a trend and this proposal is similar to past mergers—except for the impact on employees, which the Opposition has addressed in the other place. We must expect that because we are dealing with a bill, irrespective of its origins, that has been introduced by a Liberal-Nationals Government.

Of course, we must always examine the impact of any Coalition legislation on employees, and that is, virtually without exception, a negative story. Few will mourn the loss of the Roads and Traffic Authority. The authority had many successes, but many found its operations to be cumbersome and difficult, and it has proved troublesome when members seek cooperation in their electorate. I must admit that I was somewhat amused by the tale recounted by the member for Tweed, who said that after many years of trying to have a sign erected on a highway all he had was the artwork. I look forward to hearing his private member's statement when the new sign is erected.

The test for the new entity will be the emergence of a new culture. I am sure that all members who have battled with the Roads and Traffic Authority to get safety rails erected, pedestrian crossings constructed and so on will watch the progress of the new entity with keen interest. I have listened to many contributions by Government members and they have followed their usual practice of reading out speeches prepared by someone else, although some did make their own contributions, bagging the former Labor Government or Labor governments in general.

Mr Steve Cansdell: Plenty of ammunition.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The member for Clarence should not interject. The transport authorities often put out anniversary publications of transport in New South Wales. I suggest to the member for Clarence that he go to the library and ask the staff to give him a couple of those publications to read. They make interesting reading. When I read them I am always shocked to see how little non-Labor governments have contributed to transport infrastructure in this State. Whether it is historical fact or, you might say, my version of history, I have always put in these debates a challenge to Coalition members to prove me wrong. I will help out members opposite on this occasion. It will not take me long to give the highlights of the contributions of non-Labor governments to transport infrastructure in New South Wales, generally around seven or eight items—able to be counted on one hand of any National Party member.

The Silver City Comet was established by a United Australia Party Government in 1938 but was abolished by the Greiner Government. The M2 motorway was known throughout the public-private debates as the worst private contract by a road builder in the State's history. The Xplorer train, which is still providing a good service, was introduced by the former Coalition Government between 1988 and 1995. The city-airport rail link was supposed to cost the taxpayer nothing but ended up costing more than \$700 million, the most costly rail line per kilometre in Australia. The Askin Government implemented a big reform when it painted the red rattlers blue in the 1970s. That was later reversed.

The toll on a section of the M4 was removed by the Labor Government when we introduced Cashback and gave western Sydney motorists an extra lane. Coalition governments closed more than a dozen country rail lines and deregulated private coach timetables. Country members, including the member for Clarence, might be

particularly interested in this because it relates to his area: the former Coalition Government deregulated road coaches. I have researched this in *Hansard*, which shows that private coach drivers were required to drive coaches between various parts of the North Coast of New South Wales at an average speed of over 100 kilometres an hour in order to meet timetables.

When I highlighted that, the timetables were changed somewhat but we found that many coach companies were required to meet timetables going from Dubbo to northern New South Wales and to all regions of the State at speed limits which were not achievable within the timetable in view of the many stops which coaches were required to make. The issue comes back to the attacks introduced in this debate by Coalition members. The member for Gosford made some comments, the member for Myall Lakes gave us his normal 16-year speech and there were a couple of others who threw some comments our way. The strategy of the Coalition members is to highlight a number of projects that were in the planning stage, strategy plans, white papers and so on and then to say that they were axed.

Mr Steve Cansdell: Tell us about Murwillumbah.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I understand that the Government is reintroducing the Murwillumbah rail line. That is good to hear and I am sure I will welcome that by way of press release when that project recommences. But let us not use this particular bill to attack projects that did not happen under the Labor Government, which has been the main contribution by Government members. The Labor Government constructed most of the M4 motorway transport infrastructure in this State. We introduced the Xplorer XPT country service, which still provides a great service to country and regional New South Wales. In 1964 we introduced the silver double-deck trains and we introduced all the rolling stock now operating on the Sydney system. We re-established the Broken Hill service discontinued by the Greiner Government in the 1990s. A few years back we built the Cahill expressway. We introduced the bus services now carrying thousands of passengers by express bus services from the north-western suburbs of Sydney.

We built all the bus lanes now in operation in Western Sydney, north-western Sydney and south-western Sydney. We upgraded nearly all of the major railway stations on the Sydney network. I am pleased as the member for Mount Druitt to highlight the \$12 million project implemented by Minister Carl Scully at Mount Druitt, which provided lifts, elevators and a transport interchange. The Labor Government introduced the concept of commuter car parks. I will not list all of them but the principle that a railway station should have a commuter car park was introduced by the Wran Labor Government in the 1970s. So how can members opposite use this bill to sustain an argument that Labor Governments have done nothing? If that is the case the Government should be asking the member for Liverpool to give the money back. He has had the Liverpool-Parramatta transit way built and the widening of Cowpasture Road in western Sydney. Hoxton Park Road has also been widened.

This is road transport infrastructure that members opposite say was never built or was announced and axed. Liverpool railway station has been redeveloped and the turnback in the extra platforms has been commenced. The Warwick Farm station commuter car park is now in operation. The level crossing at Liverpool Hospital has been replaced as part of the hospital redevelopment. These are just some of the projects that Labor governments have undertaken, both in the past 16 years and in past decades. The Labor Party is proud that this bill is before the House. It has some of its origins with the New South Wales Labor Government. I recall working in both the shadow Cabinet and the Cabinet with the then transport Minister Brian Langton. In 1995 he was trying to get a number of proposals together for the combined management of rail, bus and ferry services across Sydney. These proposals were not implemented, which meant that many issues concerning who was responsible for different aspects of transport did come before subsequent governments.

The Government at that time was wrestling with the problem of competing interests between rail and road transport, bringing about amalgamations of government agencies. The Hon. Penny Sharpe has already highlighted the speech made by the present Opposition leader in relation to the amalgamation of transport services as a result of legislation put through this Parliament only last year which has its origin in those Labor proposals. The last Government started the process of combining all New South Wales transport modes. It gave to Transport NSW the power to fund, plan and regulate all transport operations. For example, Sydney Ferries continued to run ferry services but timetable planning, boat purchases and a lot of the day-to-day services would be carried out by Transport NSW in a coordinated fashion. These are issues the former Labor Government was involved in.

The Roads and Traffic Authority was not happy about its guaranteed funding being taken away and spent on other forms of public transport. This will be the challenge for this Government in implementing the

legislation. Members opposite will find that those who are advocates of road transport or road haulage will always be in conflict with those who support freight rail. It is the great challenge in making this legislation work and not be just words on a piece of paper. I am pleased to be able not only to speak on the history of amalgamations of government agencies in trying to coordinate the planning of government departments but also to point out that this bill is a continuation of much work that has been done by Labor governments in past years in an attempt to resolve this issue. The Labor Opposition rejects arguments by Coalition members about the role of the former Labor Government and previous Labor governments.

Labor's achievements during its period in office include rolling out new Metro bus routes—and I hope the one from Mount Druitt to Castle Hill goes ahead. The building of the South West Rail Link is a project started by the Labor Government and this new Government is taking credit for it. The inner west and CBD light rail extensions, the Kingsgrove to Revesby quadruplication, the duplication of the Cronulla line, the Richmond line duplication, the Epping to Chatswood line, the Sydney Olympic Park line and delivering the new OSCar and Waratah trains are the things that the previous Labor Government is proud of and it is a better record than the record of a previous Coalition Government in axing 8,000 rail jobs in its first year.

The Government will try to better the job losses under the former Coalition Government. Let us not forget the history of rail services that the member for Cabramatta earlier informed this House about: 13 country rail services terminated and 13 country rail lines closed in this State. Coalition members have made jaundiced and dishonest presentations in their contributions on this bill, in fact on any bills related to the budget, infrastructure or transport in this State.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [11.50 p.m.]: I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. I do so as an agent for change and as a voice for private and public commuters, businesses and families alike, all of whom have suffered substandard transport services at the hands of inept politicians and a poorly structured public service, especially in the transport and roads portfolios. This bill is not about restructuring or looking at functions across those portfolios. The objective of the bill is simply to begin the process of delivering a modern, integrated transport network in New South Wales—nothing more, nothing less. I absolutely reject the assertions of the former speaker, the member for Mount Druitt, that what is being proposed is simply a continuation of the agenda of the former Government. That is dangerous ignorance. When the previous Government formed the transport and roads super portfolio it was throwing agencies together from the perspective of cost savings and shared services.

Very little focus was given to service delivery or to doing something for the commuters of this State. It was all about back-office functions. First and foremost I am a community representative in this place but in this debate I will draw on my experience as a senior executive of the Roads and Traffic Authority. In 2000 I played a small role in helping to deliver transport services for the Sydney Olympic Games. I can vividly remember a headline that appeared on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald* at the time. The headline was to the effect: "It took seven government agencies and \$4 billion to make you late to work this morning." I cannot remember whether that headline appeared in 1997 or 1999 but I do remember that nothing has changed since then. Transport for NSW will fix that, and it is not before time. Hallelujah.

Transport for NSW is an integrated transport authority, but it is not the first integrated transport authority in New South Wales. The Olympic Roads and Transport Authority, which was put together in the lead up to the Sydney Olympic Games, was the first. The words "integrated" or "integration" are of great import to this debate. I believe those words to be the most misunderstood, overused, meaningless, overrated and costly, and most rarely achieved adjective or noun, depending on their use, in the English language. What does the word "integration" mean? What does it look like? Whilst our most important stakeholders are the commuters, it also has meaning for the operators of the transport services and, in terms of the regulators' perspective, for the Government. The word "integration" in referring to a transport system means many things. The fact that the former Government espouses the line that it began this process some time ago shows that many of those things were lost on it.

The integration of transport is spoken about with telecommunications information services. It is spoken about with integration in the city and the State that it serves, not only in its current form but for the future. It is spoken about with integration of supporting services and infrastructure. It is spoken about with transport modes such as physical integration, scheduling integration and ticketing integration. It is spoken about with integration between people and things, commuters and freight. The integration of value between the different transport modes is spoken about. It may even be spoken about with the integration of emergency services and transport networks. Many of those concepts were lost on the former Government but we now have Transport for NSW,

which is a beefed up version of the Olympic Roads and Transport Authority. It is hoped that Transport for NSW will achieve for New South Wales in the medium and long term what the Olympic Roads and Transport Authority did in the lead up to the Sydney Olympic Games.

Members would remember the transport challenge during the Olympic Games and the outcomes of that challenge. It would be wonderful for New South Wales if those outcomes were carried forward into the future. I remember after the Olympic Games abusive telephone calls being received at the Roads and Traffic Authority with people saying, "Let's get you lot out and let's bring back the people who ran transport during the Olympic Games." I did not have the heart to tell them that the same people were still running transport but the difference was that the former Government did not have the political will to take forward the lessons learnt and do something with them. The Olympic Roads and Transport Authority did something that no other government agency was able to do: it was able to integrate transport planning, service delivery, funding, regulation, ticketing and infrastructure delivery across all transport modes.

More than that, it integrated transport and roads to the point where they were not seen as being in competition but as part of the same system. The Opposition claims that Transport for NSW is not new. That is a demonstration of ignorance, the same dangerous ignorance that led to the acknowledged unprecedented waste of money in the history of this State. I digress slightly. When the transport super agency was created the former Government thought that throwing transport and roads agencies together meant integration—from the comments of the member for Mount Druitt those opposite still appear to think that way. Those opposite refused to listen to the professionals then and they continue to do so today. Those opposite continue to deny what other jurisdictions across the world have been able to do.

Transport for NSW is needed for three main reasons. First, under Transport for NSW we would not have had the CBD metro failure, with \$500 million flushed down the toilet. Second, under Transport for NSW we would not have had the integrated transport ticketing fiasco. Some members have cited a waste figure of \$100 million but I can assure them that more than that amount was wasted in that fiasco. The \$100 million was the direct cost but legal challenges as to what has occurred are ongoing, and the difference between delivering integrated ticketing in 1989 to what it will be in 2015 is estimated to cost \$875 million. That fiasco cost \$1 billion. Third is the additional lane on the Iron Cove Bridge at a cost \$175 million.

Latest statistics reveal that commuters travelling to the Sydney central business district in the morning peak over the Iron Cove Bridge spend 15 to 20 minutes more in traffic queues. That must be a first: the State has spent \$175 million to increase commuter journey times. And what people are being charged in tolls relative to the value derived from using Sydney's motorways makes no sense. Transport for NSW will ensure that those sorts of things will not happen and cannot happen. Integration is difficult to achieve. Many government agencies have tried and there have been many failures—some very costly failures. How in heaven's name could the former Government have ever thought it could have introduced a single transport ticket for use across all transport modes when it did not have a single authority sitting over the top to drive the project through to completion?

How could it have done that without Transport for NSW? From my professional background I can answer that. It stood no chance of success. It was not delivered, it cannot be delivered and it will not be delivered without Transport for NSW sitting on top to ensure that all the vested interests of the different transport modes are addressed to provide optimum outcomes for the people of New South Wales. More than anything else Transport for NSW will do three things, which have not been spoken about in debate until now. First, it will make sure that the Government drives convenience for transport users. Convenience means convenient schedules, convenient ticketing, convenient intermodal transfer and convenient commuter car parking. Convenience is a key element for Transport for NSW.

The second key element is that Transport for NSW will ensure that reliability is front and centre in delivering transport services. Reliability requires an investment in infrastructure but not just money. It needs the right money applied at the right time to the right things. It requires an investment in infrastructure according to priorities that address the long term. Another matter that has not been mentioned is that reliability requires that we get better at how we manage transport incidents, because transport incidents make the journey unpredictable and affect people the most. Those things have to be done—convenience and reliability. The third key element is that Transport for NSW will for the first time in our history—other than when the Olympic Roads and Transport Authority existed—monitor and closely manage the performance of service providers. It will ensure that we derive value for money and that the quality of services is paramount.

Another element that Transport for NSW will do—it is very much like what the Olympic Roads and Transport Authority did—is demand management. We have not heard much about this but the future of transport in New South Wales requires that we become better at demand management across our road and rail networks. We must think about changing behaviours to better match the demand versus the capacity of our transport system. It was done brilliantly during the Olympic Games, but more consideration must be given to this in the future. Transport for NSW will have many challenges and will need to lead a public debate on transport policy that has been ignored to date. Frankly, without an integrated transport authority such as Transport for NSW critical issues could not and will not be addressed. I will give some examples of things that have not been mentioned in this debate so far.

Transport for NSW will have to consider whether we only undertake high-value travel in peak travel periods of the business day. Do we utilise opportunity-based transport services for low-value travel? Do we moderate demand by ensuring that everyone understands the true cost of travel in New South Wales? Do we encourage local travel and some of the infrastructure changes that entails? Do we also look at changing the start and end times of business, commercial and educational activities? These are all things that have to be addressed in the future for New South Wales. Another thing we need to do is change people's mindsets from transport and roads, and passengers and freight, to one where we simply talk about the transport network. To do that requires a vision, and it requires something to drive the effort to achieve the vision, which means that we need a strategy. It also requires a team of professionals in an organisation specifically structured to facilitate the integration of ideas, capabilities and outcomes to better serve the economy and the people of New South Wales.

I believe that Transport for NSW will do all those things. It will create and drive the vision, it will formulate the strategy, and it will drive capability through the organisation and its people. I have been advocating for an Olympic Roads and Transport Authority model in New South Wales for more than a decade, having made representations to the former Government on a number of occasions to no avail. I have seen one transport disaster after another, and I have heard announcements after announcements and re-announcements after re-announcements. I thank God and the transport Minister for fixing one of the major structural deficiencies in the New South Wales public service. I wish the Director General of Transport for NSW and his team all the best in their endeavours as they put their shoulders to the transport task.

In conclusion, I feel compelled to reflect on comments made by the member for Mount Druitt about how difficult it was to deal with the Roads and Traffic Authority as a public sector agency. Having worked within the Roads and Traffic Authority during one of its more difficult, traumatic periods, I found the Roads and Traffic Authority to be one of the most politicised public sector agencies I have ever dealt with. The reality was that it was affected by political expediency and inept politicians getting in the way of service delivery. There are many good people in the Roads and Traffic Authority. I sometimes feel a little not discouraged but annoyed on behalf of those good people in the Roads and Traffic Authority who cop a bagging from politicians when at the end of the day they have suffered mostly from the politicians of the former Government. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [12.04 p.m.]: On behalf of The Greens, I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.

Mr John Williams: You beauty.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government members will resist encouraging the member for Balmain.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I am acknowledging the positive contributions of members opposite. When the Government takes positive steps and engages a great deal of Greens policy, I support that.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Balmain will not cast aspersions on the Government.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: If one looks at The Greens website one will see that The Greens have a similar policy to the Coalition, because it makes sense. Bringing together passenger, freight and active transport to operate in a coherent way is a sensible policy that has been argued by transport planners, community activists, councils and a whole range of other governments both in Australia and internationally. We commend the Government for recognising the need to bring these different elements together. We hope that this bill will make a significant contribution over time—it is not a short-term answer—to bringing the operation of passenger,

freight and active transport, public and private, together in a positive manner. One concern about the bill that members in the other place discussed—I will briefly mention it here—is the relationship between Infrastructure NSW and the new corporation of Transport for NSW.

One challenge will be not only integrating all the different elements involved in transport but also ensuring strong and positive integration between the new corporation and Infrastructure NSW. We have argued that the new arrangements for the delivery of transport services need to be closely integrated between both organisations. We have argued that the Director General of Transport for NSW should be given a seat on the board of Infrastructure NSW because the makeup of Infrastructure NSW has no transport focus. Because we know that the people of New South Wales take infrastructure so seriously, we have argued that the Government should consider including the Director General of Transport for NSW on the board of Infrastructure NSW. While we know that the Government has not yet made that commitment, we hope that over time it will see the benefit of ensuring that transport is front and centre, or at least represented on the board, of Infrastructure NSW.

The plans that will be drawn up by Transport for NSW will need to interact with the plans that Infrastructure NSW is developing. We believe it would be optimal if the director general is on that board. We are also given to understand that planners in Transport for NSW will make long-term transport plans and present them to Infrastructure NSW for consideration. Our concern is that there is no guarantee that the plans put forward by the transport experts will be adopted. Infrastructure NSW is responsible for developing the sectoral plans, including transport, so it will be interesting to see how these two statutory bodies relate. We hope that in the future if there is a problem or a concern, or if inefficiencies have developed as a result of that lack of integration of transport and infrastructure, the Government will address that quickly.

We are pleased about—there was discussion about this in the other place—the inclusion of active transport, that is, pedestrian and cycle transport. We know that daily, whether it is in the city or across New South Wales, many people walk and use bicycles; they are active in relation to their transport. We understand that Transport for NSW will have a senior active transport officer. We hope that will make a difference when it comes to attacking the discrimination and negativity, in particular, from the Roads and Traffic Authority that has been focused on pedestrians. One simply has to try to cross the road in the city to note the amount of time given to pedestrians as opposed to vehicles. We are encouraged by the Government's commitment to cycling.

The Greens are disappointed that the GreenWay project, which seeks to support and integrate the light rail project, in the words of the Minister, was deferred. Many people would be aware that light rail is an important but growing part of the transport mix in Sydney. Buses are causing significant problems in the central business district. In an electorate such as mine which is not serviced by heavy rail the number one form of public transport is buses, with ferries coming a close second. However, when buses travel into the central business district in morning and evening peak periods it creates massive congestion. Light rail is an obvious way of reducing our reliance on bus transport. The Greens recognise the Government's commitment to completing that light rail project.

The GreenWay project is important because the line from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill has already been constructed—it is a disused freight line—so it would be a relatively simple project to run the light rail. Anyone who has travelled on the train to Lilyfield would be aware of the light rail stop signs and the tracks that go off into the distance. This relatively inexpensive project will have a significant impact on vehicle movements because there are already over two million passenger trips on light rail. The Government's commitment to introduce components of MyZone has significantly improved customer trips, which the Minister reported as having increased by almost 20 per cent. The GreenWay proposal will parallel the goods line which has not been touched in many years. In fact, there are bandicoots in that space in the inner west.

Mr Kevin Humphries: Don't touch it.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: We want to touch it. It is wonderful that native flora and fauna are prospering in an area that has not been touched for so long because of the freight line. The GreenWay project is a fantastic opportunity to integrate cycleways and pedestrian ways into light rail. There is much disappointment about the deferral of the GreenWay project because 20 schools or more in the area have been working on it. We believe that the GreenWay project is critical to increasing the number of pedestrians and cyclists who come into that corridor and who use the light rail service. We are disappointed that the GreenWay project has been deferred but we will fight hard with our local mayors and communities to ensure that it is implemented. As I said earlier, 20 schools or more have been working on this project. The former Labor Government allocated over \$1.8 million to promote this project and to ensure that there was community involvement. The community and a

coalition of four local councils have been working hard to promote and support the GreenWay project. However, the Government said that this project would be postponed as it required a more detailed and active transport policy.

The GreenWay project includes one of the most significant projects ever to be put forward for Sydney—480 kilometres of cycleway network that would cost the same as 1.5 kilometres of urban freeway. The City of Sydney and a coalition of 15 other councils—I am aware that many Government members and Opposition members have worked in local government—will integrate their cycleway plans and work together on that incredible GreenWay project, for which this Government has allocated only \$179 million. The City of Sydney and other councils commissioned independent research that identified it would deliver at least \$506 million, or \$3.88 for every dollar spent. Over 30 years, the net economic benefit from reducing traffic congestion by 4.3 million trips would lead to a \$3.88 return for every dollar spent. Compare that with the former Labor Government's allocation of \$168 million for the Iron Cove Bridge where the cost benefit return was less than \$1 for every dollar spent.

The GreenWay project, which has been allocated \$179 million by this Government, will deliver significant economic benefits, reduce congestion, improve health and fitness and result in an improvement to people's mental health as they will be engaging in physical exercise. The GreenWay project, which will form an integral part of that process, is not something that needs to be integrated; it is a link that needs to be supported. Light rail is a critical element of that project. The Minister for Transport will have a fight on her hands because the bureaucracy is not supporting this Government's position on light rail. Yesterday the Minister said in this Chamber that it would take until 2014 before the Government was able to provide light rail services when the line is already there and the tracks have already been laid. It is the most incredibly straightforward process but I believe that this Government will encounter many problems.

The Greens are calling on all local governments, which are 100 per cent behind this light rail project, to work with the Government to ensure that we bust through RailCorp bureaucracy which, quite frankly, never wanted this to happen. That is the challenge that the Minister for Transport will face. Fewer than six staff members are working on this light rail project—it does not need 600 staff members—which would be built in a matter of months and not years if RailCorp were pulling its weight. Agencies and entities that are stand-alone power silos seek to obscure, to reject, to confront and to say, "Let us send this project off to the steering committee. If we hear any more about this light rail project we will send it off to the steering committee to review the matter and it will take three months", or, "RailCorp will need to look at it for another two months", or, "What about this and what about that?"

The Minister should consider speaking to the people at Metro Light Rail. When the first component of light rail was built it took less than 12 months. It is not that hard. The line exists and there is massive community support for light rail. Councils are giving some financial support by providing access ways. Everyone is ticking the boxes but the problem confronting the Minister is the bureaucracy. I hope that this bill will help to deal with that issue in the long term. We will do anything we can to get the departments working together collaboratively and making some decisions to support that inner local area.

Other members have reflected on the fact that this bill will deal with intractable problems that were created by former governments—the Roads and Traffic Authority being one of the most significant problems—and they have spoken also about the problems relating to the Roads and Traffic Authority. What we require is legitimate integration and community input and consultation. The final point I wish to make relates to the issue of environmental sustainability. The Greens recognise and support the Government's inclusion of environmental sustainability in these types of bills. Of course, transport must be a focus in legislation of this type. However, we asked the Minister in this House and the Minister for Roads and Ports in the other place about the definition of "environmental sustainability" in schedule 1, item [2]. New section 2B(g) states:

... to promote the delivery of transport services in an environmentally sustainable manner.

That is the definition of "environmental sustainability" put forward by this Government. We asked the Government to look at the common law record and to use the words "ecological sustainability" in future legislation. It might not sound like much of a difference but there is a significant difference between the words "ecological sustainability" and the words "environmental sustainability". The words "ecological sustainability" are recognised in statute and in common law and are used in almost all the other bills that relate to environmental matters. There are clear definitions about what involves ecological sustainability and we know that ecological sustainability is jobs rich; we know that it delivers jobs and good outcomes for the environment.

We recognise the positive elements that are contained in this bill. We recognise that this Government needs to be investing in what commuters want, in particular, effective and integrated public transport. We also know that motorways often have a dismal cost benefit return.

I cannot believe that this Government is considering proposals such as the M4 East which would involve upwards of \$8 billion. This Government must build the northwest heavy rail, a multibillion dollar project that would not be supported by a couple of hundred million dollars a year. Let us get on with building the public transport infrastructure to which this Government is committed. Let us build the public transport infrastructure in the growth areas of our local communities. The multibillion dollar motorway proposals are a significant investment that cannot be supported because of this Government's commitment to the construction of the North West Rail Link, which we strongly support. When the former Labor Government put forward its proposal to build the Rozelle Metro, members of the community and I said, "Do not spend \$6 billion to build it in Rozelle; spend it on the North West Rail Link". This Government should spend the money in growth areas that have been recognised by transport planners.

Dr Geoff Lee: Spend it in Parramatta.

Mr John Williams: Spend it in regional areas.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I recognise the interjections from members opposite relating to regional New South Wales as it also needs its fair share of investment. However, I think that members opposite would agree with their own Government that has said its investment priority is the North West Rail Link. That is where the growth is and that is where the public transport infrastructure challenges lie. The Greens support the Government's proposal to build the North West Rail Link. I congratulate all those in a number of different organisations who have been fighting for many years for integration. The Greens acknowledge that integration is important and we encourage the Government to ensure that it takes seriously the integration of transport and infrastructure.

The Greens will be working closely with the Government to ensure that the infrastructure that has been promised—the GreenWay project—is built. We will do everything in our power to help to support this Government to build the light rail much earlier than 2014. It is ridiculous that such a short stretch of track work from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill will not be completed before 2014. I look forward to working with the Government to realise its public transport infrastructure commitments and to ensure that we have a truly integrated transport system for the benefit not only of active transport and road users, but also for the benefit of the New South Wales environment.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [12.19 p.m.]: I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. I acknowledge some of the comments made by the member for Balmain who preceded me in this debate and find it interesting that one of the very few things still growing in Balmain is the bandicoot population. If the Government was trying to build more rail infrastructure in western New South Wales and there was one bandicoot or a semblance of a bandicoot anywhere near that rail line, members on the crossbenches would be up in arms about the Government trying to push through development. Government members might enjoy a walk along that goods line in Balmain—I have not seen a bandicoot colony for a long time.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: It is interesting how priorities change among some groups when a Government is endeavouring to expand the State's economy and provide services for the general public in inner city areas, Parramatta, areas west of the Great Dividing Range, the North Coast, and South Coast areas of the State because it always results in two conflicting sides to the story. But what is even more interesting is how some inner city communities, which are hell-bent on holding back regional and western communities and their economic development when it comes to obviously needed infrastructure, seek the support of regional members of Parliament when the need for infrastructure in their electorates is equally obvious. Inner city members in future should not hold back regional communities for the sake of benefiting their own electorates. However, I am pleased there are still a few bandicoots running around in inner city areas.

Mr Jamie Parker: It won't hurt.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: It will not hurt at all.

Mr John Williams: But all of them are members of the minor parties.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: As the member for Murray-Darling reminds me, there is an old saying, "If you lie down with dogs, you wake up with fleas". Now we can expand that to include bandicoots. What an interesting analogy.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The Minister will confine his remarks to the leave of the bill.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: The member for Murray-Darling and more recently the member for Myall Lakes take up the cudgel with me on preference deals and suggest that nothing has happened in the city, particularly in Balmain, because of the convoluted preference deal between Labor and The Greens. That deal absolutely ensured that nothing would ever happen in the inner city, and that includes the 12 railway projects announced by the Labor Government. Nothing ever happened, which proves that Labor is long on talk and short on walk.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: The member for Balmain will not mind me disclosing to the House that in his previous life he was nicknamed the horny goat.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I apologise, Mr Acting-Speaker, but we might refer to him as the Balmain bandicoot in future.

Mr Jamie Parker: I am not good looking enough for that. But I have noticed the tie.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: Yes, he has noticed my tie and it is good to be on friendly terms. The New South Wales Government is committed to improving public transport for customers in this State by ensuring better integration of all aspects of transport. That can only be done by establishing an integrated transport authority. I commend the Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian, and the Minister for Roads and Ports, Duncan Gay, for the work that they and members of their staff did in consultation with statutory authorities. There are plenty of good people who work within the Roads and Traffic Authority. For years under Labor they were browbeaten. Any decent proposal and any good idea with any semblance of efficiency or productivity emanating from organisations such as the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority, the Roads and Traffic Authority and Sydney Ferries was usually held down by Labor members. The previous Labor Government could not make a decision, which is why the current State Government must instigate reform—and fulfil another election promise—by establishing an integrated transport authority.

Any attempt to achieve improvements for customers without establishing an integrated authority would simply repeat the mistakes that have been made over the past 16 years that were characterised by various transport agencies competing for resources based on their own vision of their particular mode's part in the transport task, rather than by working as one team. I understand that planning for Transport for NSW is well and truly underway and that the organisation is currently delivering on some of its initial benchmarks. I also have been advised that work already has commenced on a structure for the new integrated authority which will comprise six divisions. But fancy having to wait 16 years before the concept of customer experience is introduced to transport for consumers in this State.

The customer experience division will focus on customer service and will ensure that transport customer needs, preferences and opinions are paramount in our decision-making, planning, activities and operations. It will develop a thorough understanding of the customer that will drive evidence-based decision-making. The division will lead the organisation in ensuring that transport planning, policy, investment and services are driven by customer needs. It will also shape and position public transport as the most attractive option for the people of New South Wales by making it seamless and easy to use—even for bandicoots—and will be the advocate for public transport users and road users in the operations of the integrated transport authority.

The planning and programs division will bring together the planning of all modes of transport into one division and establish close links between planning and development of transport investment programs. It will

identify transport needs and produce integrated transport plans as well as manage the overall investment budget of Transport for NSW. The planning programs division will work with the New South Wales Government, the community, and transport customers to develop integrated strategic plans that are linked to land use. It also will manage and coordinate Transport for NSW submissions to Infrastructure NSW.

As recently as this morning I met with the Australian Transport and Energy Corridor group that emerged some years ago to examine the feasibility and development of an inland rail route largely within western areas of New South Wales to connect Brisbane with Melbourne. The inland track project never would have seen the light of day under the previous Labor regime because Labor had no facility for driving infrastructure projects. I had a meeting with the then Deputy Labor Premier, John Watkins, at which I learned that the New South Wales Government would not match the Queensland Government's commitment to construct a corridor for inland rail because the New South Wales Labor Government could not get past competing priorities of track congestion in metropolitan areas.

When it came to inland rail and more efficient rail use in this State under Labor, which is supported by The Greens, western districts of New South Wales were never ever going to get a decent run. It is ironic that some members on the crossbenches in this House and in the other place have made remarks about freight without ever instigating a commitment to solving the problems of the past. The Australian Transport and Energy Corridor negotiated contracts with a number of Queensland mineral companies and had the support of the Queensland Government to undertake private-public partnerships, but that is something that never happened in New South Wales under a Labor Government. However, that must come to the fore in New South Wales if we are to rebuild our economy, rebuild our regions and kickstart this State to make it number one again. We must have programs or front doors, so to speak, for infrastructure in this State.

In recent years the only infrastructure funding received by New South Wales under Labor was \$100 million to examine the strategy of a rail corridor between Parramatta and the city, but \$93 million of that Federal funding had to be returned because the New South Wales Labor Government could not spend the money under its regime. Any decent funding that was attracted to New South Wales was stymied by the former Labor Government's back-of-the-envelope submissions that were totally rejected. While Queensland and Victoria attracted billions and billions of dollars in infrastructure funding, New South Wales was left out. That will no longer be the case. The planning and programs division will develop a very close link with Infrastructure NSW, which is another example of the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals meeting another election commitment. The transport projects division will be accountable for delivery of major public transport projects, including strategic procurement for rolling stock and fleet.

The previous Labor Government gave away this State's export freight core rolling stock to Pacific National for nothing and the whole division ground to a halt four years ago. It was not until members of the former Opposition put a proposal before the then Government that we were able to get our export rolling stock for the 2009 wheat harvest. If it had been left to the devices of the former Government the 5 million tonne freight task worth billions of dollars would still be stuck up country. This division will have a focus on delivery and planning, including accurate estimating and close monitoring of construction delivery. I refer to that other great project—the Tcard—when the previous Labor Government lost another \$100 million down a black hole. What an amazing performance.

An issue close to my heart is the new Freight and Regional Development Division that will ensure that New South Wales supports improved productivity, particularly in the regions, with an efficient and effective freight transport system. The Freight and Regional Development Division will be the central point of coordination for the Government's role in freight transport, distribution and servicing of New South Wales. It will, for the first time, consolidate the coordination of key freight system components such as road, rail, marine, ports and intermodal terminals and will provide a single point of contact for the industry, something that has been sadly lacking until now. The Freight and Regional Development Division will ensure that the New South Wales freight networks support regional development by connecting to key locations where freight is generated and delivered.

The Policy and Regulation Division will drive strategic policy for the Transport portfolio. It will drive the development and implementation of customer-focused policy solutions in some of the following areas: procurement and performance of public transport, national transport reforms and initiatives, transport network and service access pricing and driver and vehicle licensing and registration—it is great that this Government will reward good drivers with rebates for their licences. The division will target areas around roads, maritime,

boating and public transport safety. The Policy and Regulation Division will be the Transport for NSW interface with industry stakeholders on policy matters and the reform processes. It will shape the New South Wales contribution to the national agenda, again something that has been sadly missing.

The Transport Services Division will plan and procure the best possible transport services for New South Wales to deliver on Transport for NSW customer strategy and standards, and to deliver value for money for the New South Wales public. It will procure transport services from the operating agencies, including RailCorp, the State Transit Authority and the new Roads and Maritime Services. The Transport Services Division will develop and manage performance contracts with those agencies and work with them to plan and deliver a seamless transport system for the people of this State. The key tasks of that division will be service planning, development and improvement; service procurement, including contract development; ticketing services, including the electronic ticketing system; and an integrated timetable development, something which all people in New South Wales are looking forward to.

This has been a big issue for all members who represent regional electorates, who I am sure have already spoken to this bill. I remind those opposite who raised concerns in the Legislative Council and also the member for Balmain that not all people have supported issues around freight. We know that passenger transport will always take priority in the State, but if our freight cannot be moved then we will have problems. One can always do better with a better integrated system of movement, particularly in the inner city, where there is spare capacity on the rail network.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: That is the difference: this Government will govern for all the State, not just part of the State. I remind the member for Bankstown that in 2009 the *Canterbury-Bankstown Express* reported through the Rail, Tram and Bus Union that in 2009 leaked Labor documents showed that Labor was planning to slash 300 front-line jobs. The union pleaded with the former Labor Government to stop cutting front-line services. The former Government cut front-line services, and if the member for Bankstown wishes I will provide her with a copy of that article. The former Government had no consideration of front-line services, but this Government is restoring that balance to the people of New South Wales.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [12.34 p.m.]: I welcome the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, as all members should. Finally we have a Government and Ministers who are committed to delivering transport for this State that works. After 16 long years it is a breath of fresh air to be able to speak to Ministers about issues, Ministers who listen and respond. Following a momentous win in March, this bill represents three years of policy development. I have great pleasure in speaking to this bill. One only has to look at yesterday's budget and the Treasurer's announcement about investment in transport: investment in infrastructure is being made across the board, whether it is in major metropolitan cities or regional and rural New South Wales through roads, bridges and new rail links, including the much talked about north west and south west rail. This bill will deliver integrated transport services that have been talked about for so long.

This bill creates a Customer Experience Division. A local member receives more complaints about customer service in the Roads and Traffic Authority than in any other agency. Just yesterday problems were brought to my attention about the lack of urgency placed on drivers licence tests. Country towns do not have enough people on the front line to ensure that people can undergo that test, which places a great impost on constituents who have to travel miles to the next town. The same applies to the inspection of trucks: every mile that is travelled costs money and time lost costs money. That agency has not been as responsive as I would have liked. The Customer Experience Division that will lead the organisation in ensuring that transport planning policy, investment and services are driven by customer needs. It will shape and position public transport as the most attractive option for the people of New South Wales by making it seamless and easy to use, and be the advocate for public transport users and road users in the operations of the integrated transport authority.

The bill also creates a Planning and Programs Division and a Transport Projects Division which will be accountable for the delivery of major public transport projects, including strategic procurement for rolling stock and fleet. These services must be delivered in a thoroughly professional way, which I am sure will work. Under Labor we had an organisation that did not work. I am delighted that a new Freight and Regional Development Division will ensure that New South Wales supports improved productivity, particularly in the regions. Under Labor investment in rail infrastructure was neglected, particularly the grain lines, which meant that more and more grain was transported by trucks.

Therefore, the cost has been shifted to local councils, who are unable to meet those maintenance and infrastructure needs. Hopefully, the creation of the Freight and Regional Development Division will address those problems in most regional areas where the transportation of goods and product has been difficult because of the Labor Government's inability to invest and to understand that every action it took had an impact, particularly on local councils. A policy and regulation division will be established to drive strategic policy making. That is another important measure and it will ensure that this bill achieves a great deal.

I will raise a couple of specific issues—timetabling and integration. I often raised with Ministers in the previous Government the problems experienced with timetabling, particularly in regional areas. A train would arrive in Wagga Wagga in the middle of the night and there would be no connecting service until three or four hours later. Alternative timetables proposed by the public providing continuity of service would not be considered. After much lobbying we were successful in changing the way in which CountryLink bus services were integrated with train services. The timetable for the service from Tumbarumba to Wagga Wagga meant that passengers would have to travel to Cootamundra and wait at the station, often while the conveniences were locked and in the middle of winter. As a result of lobbying by the local community the timetable was changed so that people could get to Wagga Wagga in time to do their shopping and so on and to return to their hometown using convenient connections to trains and buses. Those things are important to people and that is what this bill will deliver.

As members know, I come from a retail background and after having spent 23 years in retailing I believe I have an idea about what constitutes good customer service. I am proud that my career was built on selling goods and services. I would like to see an emphasis on customer service and people treating others the way they would like to be treated. Complaints have been made about the attitude of some Roads and Traffic Authority staff members who have missed the message that this Government is sending: We want improved customer service, and the customer to be number one and served in the way that we would like. There appears to be a culture within the authority that it makes the rules and that everyone else will abide by them. That culture is demonstrated by the experience of the Classic Motoring Club of Wagga Wagga. The club wrote to me about a change in the policy covering historic vehicles so that classic cars can be driven for longer periods.

The club proposed the adoption of a policy similar to that introduced in Victoria and South Australia. The owners of classic vehicles in New South Wales must join a club and the club must declare a day on which vehicles can be driven in an organised event. Vehicles can also be driven to a repairer or for servicing. Victoria has recently adopted a policy similar to that introduced in South Australia. South Australian classic vehicle owners can drive their vehicle for 45 or 90 days a year, but they must have log books and comply with certain regulations. When I approached the Roads and Traffic Authority about that proposal the response was that it appreciated the local car club's views but that the reform was not supported by the peak bodies and that no change would be made because it would create more paperwork, administrative effort and so on. I intend to have a discussion with the Minister about that.

As I said, we now have sympathetic Ministers who listen to the concerns that we raise. It would be great to have those kinds of vehicles utilised by enthusiasts and others on days other than those designated by car clubs. Yes, they must comply with the rules and regulations covering registration, fees and so on, and the club members understand that. However, members should consider the benefits that might flow from such a change. We now have seven-day trading and many people are required to work on weekends when most club events occur. Unless those involved take a day off work or make other arrangements they will not be able to participate in those events. A family that owns an older car would be able to use it during the week for a family picnic, to travel to an event or even on a holiday. A change in this policy would do a great deal for tourism in this State and in other States.

I hope that the new organisation will be sympathetic to and support such proposals. People have taken the time to consider an idea, to examine the policies implemented in other jurisdictions and to approach their local member. As a result of this new legislation I want responses that acknowledge the customer and do everything possible to improve the situation. The CountryLink timetable must also be addressed. The people of Brungle—a remote Aboriginal community on the outskirts of Tumut—need the local bus service rerouted to meet their needs. The service currently uses the Gocup Road, which has been referred to in this place and which was mentioned in the budget papers. The residents of Brungle are great people but they are extremely disadvantaged. They need to be able to access CountryLink bus services to travel to Gundagai, Sydney, Tumut and Wagga Wagga to catch connecting bus and train services or flights. I assume that this bill will lead to that request being expedited because the new entity will focus on dealing with such issues.

The proposal put by the Brungle residents is simply that the service use Brungle Road rather than Gocup Road, which is notorious. The Brungle Road route is only four kilometres longer than the Gocup Road route but, unlike the Gocup Road route, it will allow paying passengers to get on and off the bus, which would improve the bottom line. Ultimately, that is also an issue. I find that local staff know the system well and they are always happy to help, because they understand that running a service is about gaining customers and improving the customer experience. I hope that when I approach the Ministers I will get a positive response or that the department will look at this favourably.

As I said, such a change would meet all the New South Wales Government targets of improving services and access to transport for the disadvantaged. The change in route will lead to a major improvement at no cost, and hopefully will improve the bottom line. I will raise those issues with the two Ministers concerned. I take this opportunity to congratulate those Ministers on their work and their efforts to bring this bill before the Parliament and on their reaction to concerns raised by Government members while we were in opposition. Of course, we are able to deliver now that we are in government. I understand that many amendments were made to the bill in the upper House. I do not believe that those amending the bill really understood what they were doing.

I suppose in time the impact of those amendments on the integrity of this bill will be revealed. But the bulk of the bill will achieve better outcomes for the public, and that is our number one priority as the Liberal-Nationals Government. It is outcomes for the constituents that matter to us, not the machinations of the Ministers and the Labor Government before us. These are the kinds of things that they should have done and could have done, and I congratulate the Minister and the Government on achieving them.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [12.49 p.m.]: I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. This bill will introduce significant change to the administration of transport in this State. However, this change has been driven by the need to create a better transport system, one that maximises benefit for the community and the economy. The integrated transport authority, which the bill will create, is fundamental to delivering this outcome for the people of New South Wales. The bill, with the customer firmly at the centre of the transport task, will fundamentally change the way we approach public transport in New South Wales.

The intent is to create a team that will deliver changes that will affect people's lives in a positive way, to create a public transport system that we can all have pride in. The most important element in the name Transport for NSW is the word "for". It demonstrates the Government's focus on providing a service for the people of New South Wales. The bill ensures that the transport agency acts as one team, with every person across the transport portfolio playing an important role in shaping the results that are delivered for the customer. This bill is about ensuring shared ideas, shared solutions and shared outcomes for public transport for New South Wales.

The focus of Transport for NSW is the customer, whether a public transport user, motorist, pedestrian, farmer or importer. The bill will put the customer at the centre of everything the transport agencies do. The bill will provide a coordinated approach for public transport from a single issue such as ensuring train and bus timetables provide seamless connections for the customer to the delivery of an integrated plan for major multi-modal projects. When I refer to timetable connections I refer to the need for trains and buses to run on time. Under the Labor Government we had disasters when trains did not arrive on time and the bus connections were not coordinated. It is time for a bill that addresses the transport needs of the people of New South Wales.

Transport for New South Wales will be responsible for improving customer experience, planning, program administration, policy, regulation, transport services, infrastructure and freight. This will free up the operating agencies such as RailCorp and the newly formed Roads and Maritime Services to focus on providing safe, clean, reliable and efficient transport services to customers. The relationship between Transport for NSW and the operating agencies is a partnership. It will not be a case of the integrated authority making a decision in isolation. While decision-making for planning and policy will be centralised in Transport for NSW, the operating agencies will still be relied upon to provide expert advice to inform those decisions.

This Government wants to improve public transport so that people regard it as truly reliable, regular, clean and safe. This will mean that over time fewer people will feel the need to drive to work. Public transport will become the preferred option, not just for commuters but for the social and occasional user. The organisation created by this bill integrates not just the transport services but also the team of people across the transport portfolio. Transport for NSW and the bus, rail, ferry, and Roads and Maritime Services agencies will be a part of one team delivering services, delivering something that truly makes a difference for the people of New South Wales. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [12.57 p.m.]: I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. I am pleased that the Government has introduced this bill, which will introduce a significant change for the administration of transport in New South Wales and represents an opportunity to improve the administration of transport in this State. The bill fulfils another commitment by the Liberal-Nationals Coalition made in February 2008. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition knew then what we all know now, that to fix public transport, to fix roads, to fix the trains and to build new transport infrastructure we need to fix the system, to fix the department and to break down the barriers of interagency communication that exist in the administration of the entire transport sector.

This bill implements the announcement made on 15 July 2011 by the Minister for Roads and the Minister for Transport in respect of the most significant restructure of transport in the history of New South Wales. I am sure my colleagues will recall the exact moment that announcement was made, they will recall what they were doing and where they were, because that moment was so significant: it was like the moment when man first landed on the moon. The integrated transport authority, which this bill will create, is fundamental to delivering this outcome for the people of New South Wales. But the most important element in the name Transport for NSW is the word "for", because this word demonstrates that under this new Government transport services are run for the people, not to the people.

The bill explicitly sets out common objectives for the public transport agencies. These objectives are to put the customer first and to ensure that the transport system is designed around the needs and expectations of the customer, and to enable the transport system to support the economic development of the State, with a particular focus on improving the coordination of freight. The Government will undertake planning and investment to ensure that good planning informs investment strategies. The taxpayers' hard-earned money can never again be wasted on infrastructure projects such as Labor's proposed Rozelle metro—a project that cost a staggering half a billion dollars yet never delivered one single metre of new rail line. It is critical that all public transport agencies are working to the same objectives. Having these objectives enshrined in legislation is vital to achieving this outcome. Transport for NSW will be responsible for making one's trip as easy and as comfortable as possible. The intent is to create a public transport system that we can all have pride in.

The bill makes customers the focus. With the creation of Transport for NSW, transport agencies will be free to concentrate on delivering a quality service to customers. Under the bill, Transport for NSW will bring together the coordination, procurement, policy and non-service delivery planning functions currently performed by the Department of Transport, RailCorp, the Roads and Traffic Authority, the State Transit Authority, Sydney Ferries, the Maritime Authority of NSW, the Transport Construction Authority and the Country Rail Infrastructure Authority. Transport for NSW will allow the Government to move resources from administration to the front line, providing a more customer-centric approach to service delivery. Transport for NSW fulfils a key election promise made by the Liberal-Nationals Government, achieving in 16 weeks what Labor failed to do in 16 years.

In conclusion, the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 means real reform in the public transport sector. As New South Wales and its transport services grow, consolidation of functions in Transport for NSW will mean fewer people in the back office and more on the front line. The bill will abolish a dysfunctional structure, which includes duplication and poor communications, and replace it with a streamlined agency that plans and delivers for all transport modes. Staff in transport service agencies will be able to concentrate on the delivery of services on the ground to the people of New South Wales. Rather than operating in isolation, the bill will introduce an integrated system that will ensure that planning for our future transport systems will be strategic and multimodal. The bill will ensure that the focus of transport agencies is on giving the customer as seamless a journey as possible, irrespective of the mode they choose. This includes making sure that vital transport projects are delivered on time and on budget. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [1.01 p.m.]: I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. As other members have said, the bill will result in a significant change to the administration of transport in this State—a change that will provide better quality transport across New South Wales and maximise benefits for the community and the wider economy. I will take a few moments to reflect on how we got to this point. In the middle of last year I was lucky enough to be elected to this place, just a little before the arrival of many of my colleagues in March this year. Upon my arrival I was met with a flurry of rhetoric from the former Government about the lack of Coalition policy development. When this bill was introduced I was reminded that back in 2008—long before I decided to come to this place—a woman by the name of Gladys Berejiklian, who was then shadow Minister for Transport, had started policy development work around an integrated transport authority. It began with a discussion paper—

Ms Tania Mihailuk: It was started by Labor.

Mr STUART AYRES: That later became the Towards One Network policy document. I acknowledge the interjection by the member for Bankstown. The process was started by Labor. Those opposite developed something pretty decent around the time of the Olympic Games which proved that an integrated transport authority works and that ferries, buses, taxis, and road and rail services can be integrated for the benefit of New South Wales commuters. But what did they do with it? They threw it away. They turned their backs on New South Wales commuters. It took a shadow Minister like Gladys Berejiklian to pull together the Towards One Network policy document to get the State back on track. If one searches the words "integrated transport" on Google one finds document after document from transport user groups and infrastructure bodies calling for the development of an integrated transport authority. I also recall the use of the term "transport tsar".

All these things can be pulled together. The people of this State have been crying out for this type of legislation. They have been crying out for a government with the strength to release some of its departments and allow staff to return to their jobs and allow the government to form its own policy. I have paid tribute to the now Minister for Transport for her hard work on this policy. I also acknowledge the hardworking staff who worked with her in opposition and those who continue to work with her in implementing this policy. Members on both sides of this House will appreciate that the office of the Minister for Transport will continue to work to ensure that New South Wales is provided with good quality public transport.

Whether one catches a train, drives a car, moves freight, owns a boat, or hops on a bus or a ferry, Transport for NSW will be responsible for making that trip as easy and as comfortable as possible. Transport for NSW is about customer focus. Earlier in debate the member for Strathfield spoke about user convenience, and it made me think about when that term was last used. User convenience is the ability to walk out of one's door, find a bus stop located within a short distance and catch a bus that connects with a rail service, a light rail service or a ferry service. Those are the types of things that make our city work. Profound economic benefits flow from allowing people to access public transport. It reduces the number of cars on the roads. It frees up space for freight. Freight requires its own strategy, and the integrated transport authority will play a great role in improving the freight strategy of this State.

Transport for NSW will be a streamlined, integrated transport authority. It will ensure that the customer is central to its focus, planning and delivery of transport and infrastructure. It will better coordinate infrastructure services between transport modes, it will improve planning and delivery of major transport infrastructure projects and it will make the performance standards of public transport services more explicit and transparent. The public will hold the Government to account on how it delivers services in this State. It is critical for the Government to continue to work with its departments and service providers, whether public or private. Residents of western Sydney catch buses operated by private providers. Standards must be maintained and the Government must be extremely clear with the public about what those standards are. The Government also needs to listen to the views of the public, through customer surveys and community consultation, and that information must be received by Transport for NSW.

Under Transport for NSW commuters will benefit significantly and a clear improvement in front-line services will be seen. Rail links in the north-west and south-west of Sydney will service areas that have been neglected for far too long. Transport for NSW will also play a critical role in providing priority, direction and discussion for bodies such as Infrastructure NSW when planning future infrastructure investments. As a resident of western Sydney, and being extremely privileged to represent the electorate of Penrith, I recognise that western Sydney has the potential to be the area of greatest growth in New South Wales. The areas north and south of Penrith will carry the growth in this State and an integrated transport service to connect local people to other areas, such as the suburbs of Penrith, Parramatta and Campbelltown, will be critical to the development of the State.

The people of the electorate of Penrith enjoy a very happy relationship with our friends over the Great Dividing Range. When people travel from regional New South Wales, from Orange or Bathurst, to visit Nepean Hospital or Penrith Plaza they want to be able to access appropriate transport services. Whether bus or rail, those services are very important to how people from regional New South Wales access the Sydney metropolitan area.

Through the consolidation of the transport network in one integrated transport authority we will see some changes to the structure. New bodies will be created, and bodies we have seen in operation will fall away. One of those bodies is the Roads and Traffic Authority. At times the authority has come in for some criticism. I am sure that people who work for the authority are doing their utmost to improve the quality of road and traffic

services across the State. Transferring the staff of the Roads and Traffic Authority to the Roads and Maritime Services Division of Transport for NSW will be a welcome relief for them; they can get back to providing quality roads and services for road users, freight users and maritime services users. A number of divisions will be created in the organisational structure of Transport for NSW. One division will be customer experience. This reinforces the importance of focusing on the customer. This is an opportune time to note an amendment that was moved in the upper House.

I was astounded to see this proposal. The amendment proposed to remove the word "customer" from the bill and replace it with "transport user". That says a lot about the discussion of amendments to the bill in the upper House, particularly by Opposition members and the crossbenches. This legislation is about creating a better outcome for the customer—the public transport user as a customer. If we continue to treat customers as everyday citizens—if we think they will be happy with an unclean train, a bus that does not run on time or a ferry service that does not work because they do not have a choice; they cannot get in their cars because they do not have access to the right roads—we are failing to understand that people in New South Wales who engage with a service provided by the Government are the customers. The Government must treat the travelling public as customers, and it is taking that step with this integrated transport authority.

The divisions in Transport for NSW will continue to focus on areas of planning and programs—ensuring that transport services meet cost-effectively the current and future needs of customers, major projects are delivered on time and on budget, and freight services and facilities meet the needs of the State's economy, with a particular focus on regional New South Wales—and policy and regulation. I take this opportunity to talk about freight and regional development. I note that the member for Menai is in the chair. She will see significant freight investment in her electorate, which will have repercussions for what takes place locally. It is critical that we consider ways to share the burden of freight across the Sydney regions so that it does not simply fall on one or two particular areas.

In the Penrith region, on the outer ring of metropolitan western Sydney, there are strong opportunities to leverage out of the transport and freight network. I encourage the State Government to consider the Penrith region as a location for other transport and freight services. It makes good sense, given its proximity to regional New South Wales and its ability to take freight off metropolitan roads. Many of my colleagues in regional New South Wales recognise the importance of freight to the survival of their towns and cities. With freight expected to double on New South Wales roads and rail over the next 10 years, it is critical that we consider freight in any transport policy in this State. Once again, the development of an integrated transport authority will ensure that freight is a key component in any thinking about what takes place in this State.

Many of my colleagues have said that the previous Government simply did not live up to the standards governments need to set in this State and, hopefully, across the country. Under Labor, a litany of transport infrastructure projects were proposed and then fell away, were axed or did not go anywhere. I am sure that over the next few days as members opposite go through the budget they will claim that some measures were Labor's idea, that Labor did this or that first or said this or that first. The point is that it was Labor's idea: New South Wales has never been short of plans over the past 16 years but it has been short of action. We do not need any more announcements; we simply want to get on with the job. That is what the people of this great State expect us to do.

This bill is doing that: it is giving us the integrated transport authority we need. It will work with Infrastructure NSW to ensure that we prioritise the development of our infrastructure and it will ensure that projects that are announced are delivered, whether they be the North West Rail Link, the South West Rail Link, improvements to port facilities, intermodal facilities or all those things that will improve our services. Something as simple as making a bus timetable link with a rail timetable will make the lives of people in the electorates we represent just that little bit easier. It is that simple thing, with the integration of other services, that makes this bill so important to New South Wales.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.16 p.m.]: I support the Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The purpose of the bill is to establish a new integrated transport authority called Transport for NSW. At the heart of Transport for NSW will be ensuring that the needs and expectations of customers are at the core of the planning and delivery of transport services through the coordination of planning and policy across all types of transport. Focusing on improving public transport seems like common sense, but it is foreign to members opposite. Labor neglected the needs of commuters and failed to have a vision for transport. This bill will see a significant shift in that policy view and in the administration of transport in this State. These changes will promote beneficial alterations that will ensure that the community and the economy are better off. The introduction of this bill is instrumental in the Government's efforts to get the State back on track.

The budget gave a clear indication that this Government is about rebuilding this State. Infrastructure, health and transport are firmly at the centre of this commitment. This bill will fundamentally change the way we approach transport. It will create a team responsible for delivering positive changes in the field and create a transport system of which we can be proud. This bill is designed to make changes with the residents of New South Wales in mind. It is the residents whom we are elected to represent and their best interests should be at the heart of good policy decisions. That is why Transport for NSW has been created. It will ensure timely and effective transport for New South Wales. It means that the customer will be at the centre of every decision made, and it will ensure a coordinated approach to public transport.

A coordinated approach will see timetables become more efficient. It will allow greater continuity between the different modes of transport, including the delivery of integrated plans and major multimodal projects. More efficient timetables mean more reliable services, which will encourage more users, decreasing the dependence we currently have on our roads. For the residents of Wollondilly, in the past working in the city has generally meant one of two things: long drives, getting stuck in traffic and unpredictable arrival times; or catching the train, often standing while it navigates its way to the city, frequently with delays or breakdowns. During the election campaign the now Minister for Transport visited one of the major train stations servicing my electorate, Campbelltown station. There she announced that 16 new peak-hour express trains would operate to help transport the hardworking constituents from my electorate to their place of employment.

This announcement was well received, with many commuters expressing frustrations about the poor state of the service over the past few years. Another issue raised on that visit was the safety of commuters, who often travel long distances to and from the city and late at night on weekends. Another important attribute of the legislation is that Transport for NSW will be responsible for improving customer experience, with a particular focus on planning, program administration and infrastructure. This will allow operating agencies such as RailCorp and the newly formed Roads and Maritime Services Division to focus on providing safe, clean services.

Improving the safety and cleanliness of commuting will encourage people to choose rail transport as a priority option, not just as a necessity. These are the hallmarks of an effective public transport system—safe, clean, efficient. Labor speakers on this bill highlighted during debate the needs of their electorates and attempted to condemn the new Government after only 150 days in office. The budget, as indicated by the Treasurer, has record spends and we are getting on with the job. I find such behaviour from members opposite highly hypocritical. I remind them that they had 16 years to improve transport services in New South Wales and by their whinging and their whining they are only highlighting the incompetent Government they were.

Mr Paul Toole: They are very good at that.

Mr JAI ROWELL: They are very good at that. Would those opposite mind informing the residents of Wollondilly that they still believe the Macarthur commuter car park was built in the correct location? Perhaps they can offer comfort to residents who walk in the middle of the night for close to one kilometre from the station to the Labor-built car park without appropriate lighting. They could ask residents whether they enjoy making this potentially dangerous trek each day after commuting from the city. While they are at it they could inquire whether those same commuters believe it was sound decision-making. Or they could ask Eric Third, who lives in my electorate of Wollondilly, whether the wheelchair access he has to use at the local train station is sufficient? Ask him whether he believes we should not support this bill—a bill that will be so fundamental in fixing our State transport system.

Maybe Labor members should talk to Craig Curtis, another constituent who also uses a wheelchair. Craig wrote to me only last week about his frustration that Tahmoor train station does not have wheelchair access despite demands for it dating back a number of years. During the election campaign I took a trip with Eric and a number of wheelchair user groups to determine just how long it would take to travel to Campbelltown and back using only the stations with disabled access. It took well over two hours and highlighted for me the need for work to be done and the neglect that has resulted from many years of Labor rule. One of the great benefits of this bill is that it will streamline timetables like never before as the whole transport industry will be working together to create community and continuity.

In fact, while Labor members are at it they should take the time to ask all my constituents who commute to work whether they believe the rail system was satisfactory on Labor's watch. I say to Labor members that they had their chance in the past 16 years to fix these problems and they failed. They should spare us the loose rhetoric of their opposition to this great initiative and focus instead on the nostalgia of proposing

and then scrapping the South West and North West rail links time and again, and calculating how much money they wasted on those bungled projects. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is taking action to build critical infrastructure and it will deliver transport outcomes while rebuilding essential services to the level that the people of western Sydney and in particular the people of Wollondilly—which includes Campbelltown city and Wollondilly shire—deserve.

The people of Wollondilly voted for real change in March after 16 years of broken promises and failed projects by those opposite. On this side of the House we have wasted no time getting on with the job of making New South Wales number one again and delivering much-needed vital transport infrastructure projects. Some of the projects in the recent budget include the allocation of \$292 million to continue construction of the South West Rail Link—an announcement I was happy to make with the Premier; the member for Camden, Chris Patterson; and the member for Campbelltown, Bryan Doyle, only last week—\$152 million to buy and upgrade new train carriages, which are so desperately needed on our local rail network; and \$12 million for upgrades to Picton Road by installing median barriers along the worst accident-prone areas. I was very happy to inspect that area of road with the Minister for Roads and Ports, Duncan Gay. His commitment to our region continues.

Dr Geoff Lee: Good Minister.

Mr JAI ROWELL: He is a very good Minister. There are road improvements for sections of the Hume Highway, Appin Road and Picton Road; \$118 million to purchase 261 new buses, which I know the member for Parramatta is really looking forward to, for metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas; and \$110 million to start the rollout of the electronic ticketing system. This year our Government will invest more than \$348 million in western Sydney roads in the 2011-12 financial year to improve safety and reduce motorists frustration. Our investment demonstrates our commitment to improve the road network for the many motorists who travel through the region each and every day. I take this opportunity to outline some of those key road investments. They include planning work for the upgrade of the M5 between King Georges Road and Camden Valley Way, \$25 million to complete construction of the jointly funded F5 widening between Ingleburn and Campbelltown, and \$15 million to continue construction of the four-lane upgrade of Narellan Road.

We are serious about improving transport and infrastructure services, and any attempt to achieve this without establishing an integrated transport authority would simply repeat the mistakes of the past 16 years under Labor, when various transport agencies competed for resources based on their own vision and their particular mode's part in the transport task rather than working together as one team. I understand that planning for Transport for NSW is well and truly underway. I have been advised that work has already commenced on a structure for the new integrated authority, which will have six divisions. First, the customer experience division will ensure that customer transport needs, preferences and opinions are paramount in our decision-making, planning activities and operations.

It will develop a thorough understanding of the customer to drive evidence-based decision-making. The customer experience division will also lead the organisation in ensuring that transport planning, policy, investment and services are driven by customer needs; shape and position public transport as the most attractive option for the people of New South Wales by making it seamless and easy to use; and be the advocate for public transport users and for road users in the operation of the integrated authority. Furthermore, the customer experience division will have five other divisions. The planning and programs division will be responsible for identifying transport needs and producing integrated plans.

The transport projects division will be accountable for the delivery of major transport projects including strategic procurement for rolling stock and fleet. The freight and regional development division will ensure that New South Wales supports improved productivity, particularly in regional areas, with an effective and efficient freight transport system. The policy and regulation division will drive strategic policy for the Transport portfolio, which will develop and implement customer-focused policy solutions. The transport services division will plan and procure the best possible transport services for New South Wales and will manage the performance contacts with those agencies that work with it.

It is clear that this Government is committed to rebuilding our State and that transport and infrastructure are fundamental to this commitment. The recent budget handed down by our Treasurer, Mike Baird, contains record spends on infrastructure, with western Sydney and south-western Sydney the recipients of much-needed allocations. Before I conclude, I point out that this must be good legislation because my wife told me this morning that she is very happy that the Government is getting on with the job of improving public transport as she plans to use it to visit me from time to time during sitting weeks.

I make particular mention of my wife today because this week we celebrate our wedding anniversary. My wife is very excited that she will now be able to catch a train that connects with a bus service that is safe, reliable and efficient. As a husband and a father, I am excited about that as well, knowing she will be in safe hands. This Government is determined to right the wrongs of those opposite and govern for all of New South Wales. I commend this initiative and I commend this bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Dr Geoff Lee and set down as order of the day for a later hour.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.27 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING BILL 2011

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

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.18 p.m.]

PENSIONER PUBLIC HOUSING RENTS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I direct my question to the Premier. Does the Premier agree with comments made by the member for Dubbo and the member for Tweed that increasing rents for pensioners who are living in public housing is disgraceful and targets those who can least afford it?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Firstly, I must say that I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition is present in the Chamber because I am certain that *Hansard* shows that we had a deal: If the budget contained 80,000 public sector job cuts, as he claimed for weeks and weeks throughout the State it would, I would resign; and if the budget did not, he would resign. One has to say that a bloke who welches on his bets is not someone that electorates in Australia will trust. Secondly, I think it is disgraceful that a decision that should have been made by the former Labor Government has had to be made by a new Government. The fact is that the one-off pension increase granted by the Federal Government in May 2009 was meant to last until September 2010. What did Labor members do in September 2010? Did they make the requisite decision? No, they sought to do what they always do. It is disgraceful that the former Government made a decision on this, but as usual in September 2010 it decided to put off the decision until after the election campaign.

It is important to understand that this difficult decision could have been avoided if the Federal Government had been keen to pick up the shortfall with regard to the 25 per cent arrangement that had been in place under successive governments and that has applied when there has been successive indexation—for instance, if increases to pensions were to continue to apply. By the Federal Government not picking up the shortfall, it has put it onto States such as South Australia, Western Australia and New South Wales, all of whom have made the same decision. That means that we do not have access to money that might otherwise be available to build social housing. Yes, it is a tough decision. It is another one of those tough decisions left to the Government by those opposite, who refused to take tough decisions, who refused to do what was right in the public interest and who continued to pander to political interests. Regrettably it is one of those decisions that we have got on with.

STATE BUDGET

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: My question is addressed to the Premier. What has been the response from business and industry leaders to the State budget?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Smithfield for his question. I thank him also for the opportunity last Thursday, together with Superintendent Peter Lennon, to visit the Bossley Park shopping centre to talk to shopkeepers not only about how their businesses are going but also about the recent spate of drive-by shootings. As I have said several times this morning, with people on the one hand saying that this budget is too tough and people on the other hand saying that it is not tough enough, we know that we have got it just about right. We have started the economic change that this State has absolutely needed.

The Leader of the Opposition has dual positions on the budget. I think he supports a day of chaos tomorrow—I say "I think" because as with the carbon tax it seems to be something about which he will not

speak publicly—with a protest about job cuts and public service reforms. On the one hand the Leader of the Opposition supports a day of chaos that claims that this Government has been too tough in relation to public sector reforms and on the other hand commentators are saying that we should have pursued the 80,000 job cuts that the Leader of the Opposition so desperately wanted us to put into the budget.

We have delivered a budget that makes tough decisions: changes to stamp duty concessions; public service wage and job reforms; the long-term lease of Botany Bay; recouping the money squandered by the Leader of the Opposition when he was Minister for Energy in relation to the Solar Bonus Scheme; the introduction of mining law to offset the carbon tax rip-off from New South Wales; and pensioners' rentals. The Government will ensure that those savings, which will get the budget back into good shape, will deliver better public services to people across this State and enable us to invest in the infrastructure that provides those services. Infrastructure, for example, for the North West and South West rail links, for upgrades of the Pacific Highway and the Princes Highway, for new police stations, and for roads, hospitals and schools to which we have committed. It is no surprise that the response to the budget from industry and business groups has been positive. Infrastructure Partnerships Australia chief executive Brendan Lyon said:

The NSW Government has passed its first budget with flying colours because it begins a long process to get NSW back on track.

Business congratulates the Government on its first budget and looks forward to the ongoing reforms that are needed for NSW to catch up in areas like transport and health infrastructure.

The Urban Taskforce chief executive, Aaron Gadiel—who is known to members opposite—applauded the Government's changes to the First Home Owners Scheme. He said it was a sensible step that will help to boost New South Wales's supply of new housing and that the existing scheme had been poorly targeted for too long. He said, "This is good public policy." The Property Council of Australia agreed, saying that the Government's decision to target stamp duty concessions to new housing supply is a "smart choice". The Australian Medical Association said that in a tough budget Health had been given priority with a record investment in hospital infrastructure. As the Minister for Health said, the Health budget has received a 50 per cent increase. The Australian Industry Group said that the budget represents a positive step forward in the new beginning for New South Wales.

It said that the balance sheet remains strong and the quality investments in infrastructure are welcome. The Sydney Business Chamber said that the budget took the first steps towards restoring the reputation of Sydney as Australia's leading city in which to invest and to develop economic opportunities. Importantly, the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children applauded the record investment in disability services and said that it demonstrates that the New South Wales Government recognises the importance of early intervention in the first years of a child's life. Even the Teachers Federation welcomed the employment of the additional 200 teachers in this budget. It said that the \$40 million committed over four years to upgrade schools and the additional \$20 million for school maintenance were also positive measures.

I could go on with more and more plaudits, but I want to save the Leader of the Opposition any more embarrassment. A man who does not know whether he supports the day of chaos surely cannot have a position on these issues. The day of chaos tomorrow will remind us of 5,840 days of chaos over 16 years of Labor administration. Remarkably, the Leader of the Opposition is not prepared to be seen with his former union mates addressing the rally. The day of chaos will demonstrate more about the chaos in the office of the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition's ranks than anything else happening in this State. The key message from industry and business is clear: Finally New South Wales has a government that is getting on with the job of fixing the State's finances and investing in infrastructure.

STATE BUDGET

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney. Why has the Government cut almost \$200 million from the western Sydney roads program, axed three commuter car parks and dumped the \$245 million upgrade of Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals in its first budget?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: To paraphrase the Minister for Transport: wrong, wrong, wrong. I indicate that I do not need any notes to answer this question; I know the answer off by heart. This Government has delivered record funding to the west of this city, and it deserves that funding. I was out there only last week with the Minister for Roads at the M4 toll plaza, where for half the cost proposed by members opposite—

Mr John Robertson: That's not western Sydney. That is where it starts.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: So Auburn is not western Sydney. *Hansard* should note that the day of chaos has already started. This budget includes \$314 million for the North West Rail Link, which members opposite said they supported for 10 years but which they forgot to build. It also includes \$292 million for the South West Rail Link, which the Minister for Planning helped to secure last week. In four months he did what members opposite failed to do in four years; that is, to reach a deal for the former Army base at Ingleburn. The budget also contains \$348 million to be invested on western Sydney roads, and that includes planning work for the upgrade of the M5 between King Georges Road and Camden Valley Way. I ask members opposite: Is that western Sydney? It also includes \$100 million to continue upgrades to the Great Western Highway in the Blue Mountains at Lawson, between Woodford and Hazelbrook and Wentworth Falls East.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The budget includes \$25 million for the completion of construction of the jointly funded F5 widening project between Ingleburn and Campbelltown—once a Labor heartland and now represented by a Liberal member. It includes \$15 million to continue the construction of the four-lane upgrade of Camden Valley Way between Cobbitty Road and Narellan Road and \$16 million to start construction on the Erskine Park link road promised by every Labor Premier for seven years but delivered by this Government.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The Premier was going to answer off the top of his head, but he has been reading for the past two minutes—

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order is relevance. I refer to Standing Order 129. The Leader of the Opposition did not ask the Premier to give a dissertation on what he is doing. The question was very specific: Where is the \$200 million—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. I understand that the question was very specific, but the answer is entirely relevant to the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I learnt early in my time as Leader of the Opposition that I asked the questions and the Government answered them. This Government has put aside \$130 million for the Campbelltown-Macarthur hospital and \$125 million over four years for Blacktown hospital.

Mr John Robertson: You have bunged in only \$500,000 for—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I have with me the infrastructure document that was produced in conjunction with last year's budget. Where is there any mention in this document of Blacktown, Campbelltown or Mount Druitt hospitals? Where is the Parramatta arts precinct mentioned? It is Planet Keneally again and all those thought bubbles. The Leader of the Opposition will not make tough decisions and he will not support job cuts because the Labor Party believes we need as much middle management as possible. He will not agree with the Government's attempts to get the building industry moving again through changes to the First Home Owners Scheme nor will he support the Government's efforts to recoup the massive blow-out in the Solar Bonus Scheme. However, he apparently does support the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link, but the previous Government failed to build them.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: More than half the Premier's answer has been devoted to criticism of the Leader of the Opposition, who has clearly got under his skin.

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

Mr Michael Daley: I refer to Standing Order 73, which is clear.

The SPEAKER: Order! Has the Premier completed his answer?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: No, I have four seconds to go. The Opposition wants the Government to fix the hospital system but without incurring a budget deficit. We will not be able to fix overnight what members opposite spent 16 years ignoring, but we will fix it. [*Time expired.*]

STATE BUDGET

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I direct my question to the Treasurer. How will measures in the budget help to improve the State's fiscal position?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his interest in fiscally responsible decisions. Well done. The Government has made some tough decisions in the long-term interests of this State. They include a wages policy that the previous Government was not prepared to implement and reform of the public sector that it was not prepared to undertake. The budget also includes changes to the Health, Transport and Prisons portfolios. Those tough decisions have been made to get this State moving again. The Government stands by them and its other tough decision to offer 5,000 voluntary redundancies. That was not an easy decision, but it was made on the basis that the State's budget must be put back in order.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The previous Government left this Government with \$8 billion to find and it put the triple-A credit rating at risk. It knows that.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will make those savings and members opposite should not underestimate our determination in that regard. Unlike the Labor Government, this Government has made its decisions and it will stick to them. As the Premier said, we have done that so that we can get on with the job of rebuilding this State.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I was in the south west this morning with the Minister for Transport and local members. That area will receive \$2.5 billion for the North West Rail Link. The Minister for Health is happy to announce that there is a \$4.7 billion infrastructure program across the State, a 50 per cent increase. That is exactly what is needed by this community and every community across this State. We are proud to put more front-line services to work. We are proud there are 940 more nurses, 150 more police and 200 more teachers this year. That is what the O'Farrell Government is about—making decisions and getting on with the job.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As the Premier also outlined, the budget has been generally well received. I do not want to go through all the comments I have here but the one from the Institute of Chartered Accountants is a nice one, "Despite a budget deficit, New South Wales Treasurer Mike Baird has laid the foundations"—as has the O'Farrell Government—"for the State to return to its former state as the nation's economic powerhouse". Other comments are not so positive; not everyone is happy. Some have said we have gone too far; others, not far enough. Some people are so unhappy that they will take part in a day of chaos tomorrow. We ask them to reconsider their position in the interests of the community of New South Wales. We do not think they should disrupt the people of New South Wales with this action because we believe we are helping services in this State.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are putting front-line services in place. We are building the infrastructure.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are getting this State moving. The Gillard Government has not been so positive. Wayne Swan said, "If Mr O'Farrell wants to take this action then it will simply mean less money for infrastructure for places like New South Wales." That sounds like a threat to me. He is telling New South Wales he does not want to put the infrastructure we deserve in place. That is what he is saying, and Mr Albanese said something similar, "There will be repercussions for New South Wales as a result of the decision. If Commonwealth revenue is reduced then the Commonwealth reserves the right to respond." We will be standing

up for this State. We are very happy to stand up for New South Wales. We are happy to stand up to the billion dollars the Federal Government is trying to take away from us. But what is also interesting is that in the next 24 hours we can imagine what will be happening because the Leader of the Opposition has to deliver a speech.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He has to deliver a speech and he has to tell us, if he does not agree with any of our savings, what savings he does agree with. We will be watching closely. Is he going to fund that \$8 billion or is he going to squib it as the Labor Government did for 16 years?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will be watching. We have funded improved service and infrastructure; Labor squibbed it.

SCHOOLS CAPITAL FUNDING

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. In light of the Government's claim that this is an infrastructure budget, why will capital funding for schools be cut by over \$266 million in the next year alone?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Erin, here is the 50 bucks I owe you. I had a bet that members opposite would not be so stupid as to ask this question, particularly because they have just come out of government so they know what was in the previous budget and they know why there is a reduction in capital works spending in education. It is a recognition that much of the stimulus spending has finished. That is part of the reduction. But the other reason there is a significant reduction is that a couple of years ago the Labor Government thought it would be a great idea to take out a \$140 million loan to fund capital works in education. This was the Department of Education and Training taking out a loan, not Treasury taking out loans the way it normally does as part of budget finances. To my understanding it is the first time it has ever happened. This \$140 million loan taken out by the Department of Education and Training a couple of years ago has to be paid back. I think the members opposite were pretty confident that they were not going to have to pay it back.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Somebody else—another government—was going to have to pay it back. So two years ago the former Government borrowed \$140 million and—is anybody surprised?—all that spending was in the last two years prior to the election. It made the books look good and it made members opposite look good in the eyes of voters. Did it work? No, it did not. The former Government borrowed \$140 million, spent it over the two years prior to the last election and now we have to pay it back. As I am sure everybody understands one has to pay interest on a loan. This is why I had the \$50 bet.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. The question was very specific, about State contributions. We do not need a lecture about loans. The Liberal-Nationals have taken out almost \$4 billion more debt in one budget.

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

Mr Michael Daley: Net debt has risen by 40 per cent in one budget.

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

Mr Michael Daley: It just means—

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Doesn't he know it is rude to interrupt adults?

The SPEAKER: It was not a point of order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Let us keep going. When the Department of Education and Training takes out a loan it has to pay interest, which on \$140 million is close to \$10 million. I want people who have

maintenance problems in schools in their electorates to know that the interest we are now paying on that loan is coming from the maintenance budget for schools. So that is why I made the \$50 bet with Erin from my office that members opposite would not be so stupid as to ask that question. The member for Toongabbie was Premier when that announcement was made; the member for Marrickville was in Cabinet when it went to Cabinet. So they know about it. Did they think the new Government was not going to find out about it? That was the first time that has occurred within the Department of Education and Training.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The members opposite have front-loaded capital expenditure. That is why in the last couple of years they were able to make heroes of themselves. But responsible government is about repaying these kinds of loans and that is why we are seeing a dip in capital works expenditure. That is the precise answer to the member's question. What the previous Labor Government did is disgraceful and the Liberal-Nationals Government is being responsible in what it is doing with the education budget.

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How will the Government's budget help to deliver more teachers, better learning facilities and greater educational opportunities for communities across New South Wales?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for her question. I was getting a little carried away with my previous answer. It makes me very annoyed when we have to deal with the fall-out from the previous Government. The question gives me the opportunity to talk about the way this Government is handling education. The way we allocate funds in the budget, particularly new money, is to look at the deficiencies, in this case, within education, and what we can do to address them. One concerns early childhood. We recognise that the best thing that can happen to children is for them to have a high-quality experience in a high-quality early childhood education care facility. That is part of the reason we have shifted responsibility for early childhood from community services into education.

Yesterday's budget had an allocation of \$279 million for early childhood, including an additional \$58 million in Commonwealth funding invested into a critical part of the education continuum for young people in this State. That funding is very welcome. The Government recognises that to improve the performance of our students we need to get those first few years at school right. When children from kindergarten to year 2 are given the right foundation fewer children will fall behind and we will get better results in later years. Every high school teacher and every high school principal will tell us they want to see better performing children entering year 7. That is why the Government has committed 900 additional teachers—

[Interruption]

Those opposite never listen. They never listened to teachers or principals when they were in government. That is why there are only 20 of them left. I thought they would have some interest in this because many of those new teachers will be going to their electorates. It is all about investing in children from kindergarten to year 2. Those opposite will not listen. I will address my remarks to those on this side of the House. There will be 900 additional teachers to ensure that as many of those kids as possible are picked up from kindergarten to year 2. Ken Boston is chairing the ministerial task force. Ken is very well-known to members, particularly from his career as the former Director General of Education and Training. I note that Michelle Bruniges, the new director general, began today with the Department of Education and Communities. Michelle will be a fantastic director general. She has an impeccable educational background.

The Government is making that investment. The Government recognises that mental health problems, bullying and other issues are significantly affecting young people in our schools and we are piloting a project across 50 schools next year—we have actually brought it forward because it is such a good idea. It is supported by the Teachers Federation, principals and student support officers and will give support to those young people in our schools who are facing mental health problems or who are victims and perpetrators of bullying. School maintenance funding is up by 11 per cent—it would have been up by more than that if we did not have to pay off the interest on the \$140 million left by those opposite.

The Government's approach to education is to identify weaknesses. Our great education system in New South Wales is supported by fantastic teachers, in both government and non-government schools—despite

tomorrow's protest—who do so much work for our young people, and as a government it is our responsibility to support them as much as possible. It is the Government's responsibility to address the deficiencies in the system they tell us about. That is why the Government is putting money into early childhood and into the early years at primary school. That is why the Government is putting money into school counselling. That is why the Government is putting more money into vocational education and training and supported training particularly at vocational education and training schools. The Government is listening and responding in a positive way. I am very proud of the budget delivered yesterday, particularly the education budget funding.

ABORIGINAL PRESCHOOLS

Ms SONIA HORNER: My question is directed to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. What measures will the Minister put in place to ensure that the Government's newly introduced charge on parents with children at public preschools will not force Indigenous families to pull their children out of Aboriginal preschools at places such as Mungindi, Enngonia, Moama, Walgett and Wilcannia?

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: The question would have been better directed to the Minister for Education, who did an outstanding job in responding to the previous question, but I am happy to answer it because it is in my interest to promote the Government's balanced approach to responsible government and because the Minister for Education and I share a passion for improving Aboriginal outcomes. Early childhood education is a priority for the Government. The Government is committed to all children having access to quality early childhood education and care.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: From the beginning of term one next year, in line with community-based preschools—I am happy to answer the question but if members are not interested I will not continue—modest fees will be introduced at the 100 preschools operated by the Department of Education and Communities. This will ensure consistency across the early childhood education and care sector. Whether a child is Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, it is unfair and discourages equitable access when there are different fee structures at different preschools based on their ownership. Consistency can benefit all families in their decisions about accessing early childhood education. Opposition members know, but pretend not to by this question, that Aboriginal families—like all families—use a range of options for early childhood education. In addition to the department's 100 preschools, the early childhood sector in New South Wales is varied and includes approximately 3,450 early childhood education and care services, 780 being community-based local government preschools.

Nevertheless, in introducing beneficial consistency, the Government is very conscious of disadvantage levels among some families, including Aboriginal families. Therefore, the new fee structure will protect low income and disadvantaged families and, as Minister Piccoli has said, "the most needy families and parents doing it tough" will receive fee relief. I commend the Minister for balancing the need for financial responsibility, equity in early childhood education access and compassion for the vulnerable, especially those Aboriginal families who may be struggling. The Minister and I are both acutely aware of the benefits of early childhood education among Aboriginal children and are committed to further improving the current 40 per cent participation rate. That is one of the reasons for \$271 million being invested in support of the sector.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: Education will be a major focus of the Government's recently announced ministerial task force on Aboriginal affairs, which is unprecedented.

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

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: It includes seven Ministers, which is effectively a quarter of the Cabinet.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would have thought that all members would have been interested in this information. All members will come to order.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: It includes Aboriginal leaders and Aboriginal communities. In my knowledge of Australian political history, let alone the political history of New South Wales, this has never been done before. Aboriginal leaders will be at the table with Ministers and directors general. That is a partnership. The member for Marrickville should know a bit about partnerships.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: I do.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I do not think you do. You should have a look at your track record.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: It is better than yours, mate.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: The last time I checked I got a swing my way. The reality is that we have a ministerial task force with seven senior members of Cabinet—a quarter of the Cabinet—making decisions in partnership with Aboriginal communities. One of the terms of reference of that task force will be to reflect and act on the problems identified by the Auditor-General in the lamentable approach of those opposite to Two Ways Together. The Auditor-General sliced and diced the performance of those opposite over the past 16 years—particularly from 2003 in relation to Two Ways Together. That is one thing the Government is going to do under the terms of reference.

The second thing the Government is going to do under the terms of reference is to look at education. As Minister Piccoli said, education is the key to generational change. The Government understands that more than most. Those on this side of the House believe in the politics of aspiration. We do not believe in the politics of misery. That is why the Government is promoting education as a term of reference to improve the lives of the people of New South Wales. That is why task force members include the best health Minister, the best education Minister and a fantastic Treasurer, who will make a difference to the lives of the people of this State. [*Time expired.*]

Mr Nathan Rees: Stop crawling. Have a day off.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toongabbie might have a day off pretty soon.

RECIDIVISM

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: My question is addressed to the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice. How will measures in the budget help the Government to tackle reoffending rates?

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

Mr GREG SMITH: I am sure the member for Toongabbie will be happy to hear this. I thank the member for Clarence for his ongoing interest in criminal justice matters and the welfare of this State. This budget represents a major culture shift for law and order in New South Wales—one that Labor did not want. The Liberal-Nationals Government does not accept that the prison population will always grow. That is a defeatist attitude that says success on law and order is to be judged only by how many people we lock up. New South Wales has the worst reoffending pattern of any State in the country by some distance, with 43 per cent of offenders returning to jail within two years.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: It is a vicious cycle which only ends in more cost—and not only in financial terms—for the people of New South Wales.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: This Government does not accept that every person put in jail, or nabbed while on probation or parole, is a tick for the State Plan. Our State Plan is to bring recidivism in New South Wales below the national average within 10 years. That is why the headline investment for the portfolio of Attorney General and Justice is the \$46 million that is being invested in programs to reduce reoffending. This delivers on a key election commitment by the Government. We want to give people a chance to contribute to society when they get out. If they do not want to take that chance that is their choice. The 2011-12 budget provides for the

creation of a new Drug Court in Sydney, specialist drug rehabilitation correctional facilities, and education and training programs for inmates. There is funding to reduce the State's juvenile remand population, with more than \$11 million set aside over four years for programs that will assist young people with their bail applications and help them meet bail conditions. We will not simply lock them up.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: A significant number of young people are held in custody simply because they have no accommodation or support in the community to help them comply with bail conditions.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: All that holding them in custody is doing is introducing them to the university of crime, the prison system. Under the previous Government many young people were stuck in jail for offences that did not even carry jail sentences. But we also want to keep people out of jail. More than \$2 million has been set aside for a trial of alternative dispute resolution procedures in child protection matters at Bidura Children's Court. Juvenile Justice will increase the number of court intake and bail support staff across the State, helping young people to stay out of trouble. We are encouraging mentoring programs that will give people a job when they get out.

We will also keep an eye on the bottom line—something that members opposite failed so often to do. It will allow us to engage in a court building program, with new facilities planned for Coffs Harbour and Armidale. Yesterday the Treasurer announced that three jails—Parramatta, Berrima and Kirkconnell—would close because of an unprecedented drop in prisoner numbers. In June last year there were 10,400 inmates; however, at the end of August that number had fallen to 9,847 inmates. Yet there are 11,224 beds in the system. That means there is spare capacity of about 12 per cent. And with another 80 beds at Parklea and 250 at Cessnock, there are even more spare beds. Unlike the prophets of doom opposite, we do not expect it to be inevitable that the prison population will always rise. Crime rates are actually falling due to the good work of our police.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: But costs must be brought under control. For example, in the 2010-11 financial year there was a shortfall of \$113 million in savings and efficiencies for Correctives Services—that is right, \$113 million—and the Leader of the Opposition was partly responsible for that. There were no savings from the Way Forward reforms, which the Leader of the Opposition said in 2009 would be about "making sure we're getting value for money for taxpayers in New South Wales". In February 2009 when he was asked about the privatisation of Parklea he said:

We're running an argument here about how we get maximum efficiency, what we can do about benchmarking our jails against privately owned jails.

This man had argued against privatisation when he was the head of Unions NSW. The closure of the three prisons will occur in a staged way by December this year. It will save the State Government an estimated \$26 million a year. All inmates will be relocated to safer, more modern facilities by December. Most of the programs which help communities will survive and even expand. We will clean up the mess left behind by Labor. *[Time expired.]*

STATE BUDGET AND REGIONAL AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services. Will the Minister advise the House whether there are any proposed changes to or reductions in the 30 existing regional and business development programs as a result of the budget?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for his question. It is good to get a serious question on a policy item.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Let's have a serious answer.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Marrickville is becoming more shrill with each passing day. Yesterday's budget confirms that regional development is front and centre of the Liberal-Nationals Government's agenda. With this in mind the Government has moved to simplify and condense the vast array of programs set up by the former Government.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The sheer number of programs led to confusion for small businesses and potential investors as to which funds they could access, which program was applicable to them and the assistance the Government could offer them. We have reduced the complex and confusing array of more than 30 different programs to a smaller number of small business programs and only two investment attraction programs.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Members opposite are not interested in the answer to this question but the member for Northern Tablelands is interested. As I said, there will be just two investment attraction programs: the State Investment Attraction Scheme and the Regional Industries Investment Fund. We want the focus to be more on solving a business problem than simply administering programs. That is why we are cutting red tape, slashing through the bureaucracy and providing solutions, rather than putting up barriers, to business as we rebuild the New South Wales economy. More than \$77 million has been committed to the State Investment Attraction Scheme, aimed at attracting new jobs and investment to our State and expanding existing businesses and industry. The scheme will further leverage our Jobs Action Plan, which encourages employers to create jobs in and families to move to regional centres such as Armidale in the Northern Tablelands electorate.

The State Investment Attraction Scheme will specifically target investment projects that meet certain criteria, such as projects that are considering alternative geographical locations outside New South Wales that will create significant jobs or will benefit our local industries by promoting clustering, filling any gaps in capabilities, providing access to international supply chains or linking research and development. More than \$53 million has been set aside for the Regional Industries Investment Fund, which brings together the previously diverse funds available for regional areas of New South Wales. Assistance will be made available for projects in all regional areas, including the Hunter and Illawarra regions.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Labor members should not talk, because the old Illawarra Advantage Fund was completely expended by the former Labor Government. Under Labor's general approach to finance the cookie jar was empty.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Illawarra would have been let down because there was no money left unless we rolled these programs together.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: As a result of these changes the Illawarra will again have access to assistance. Beyond that, we have come up with an extra \$5 million for the Illawarra to put together with the Federal commitment to provide a new program of \$30 million following the downsizing of the steel industry in that region. As I said, these program changes are designed to simplify the administration and produce flexibility so that regions that had previously expended their amount from the discrete bucket of money can qualify for more assistance if it is justified. This complements the other measures outlined in the budget yesterday, which included the Regional Kickstart Program, the regional relocation grants, the Jobs Action Plan money, 40,000 payroll tax rebates in our first term of office for regional businesses, and the 30 per cent share of the Restart NSW Fund, which is a big additional infrastructure fund. I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his question. This Government has put regional New South Wales front and centre of its plans to rebuild this State.

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

STATE BUDGET AND MENTAL HEALTH AND DRUG AND ALCOHOL SERVICES

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales. How does the budget help to deliver on the Government's commitment to improve mental health and drug and alcohol services for our communities?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I thank the member for Hornsby for his commitment to improving mental health and drug and alcohol services in his electorate and in particular for addressing the all too often unspoken tragedy of suicide. It gives me great pleasure to say that in the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals the people of New South Wales now have a Government with a clear vision to improve the lives of those that have been touched by a mental illness. We were elected in March with a strong mandate to make the delivery of quality mental health services a high priority. This was in stark contrast to those opposite, whose approach to mental health lacks strategy, focus and commitment. When it came to mental health the previous Labor Government concerned itself with crisis management and the media cycle and ignored the huge flaws in the system.

Over 16 years Labor consistently failed the people of New South Wales. Let me be clear: the failings of those opposite have left our mental health system bordering on a very critical position. For the people of New South Wales this is no longer the case. In the 2011-2012 budget the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has delivered the largest increase in funding for mental health in the State's history. We will spend \$1.34 billion on mental health services in 2011-2012, which is a massive increase of \$109 million on the figure for last year. We are meeting our key election commitment to give mental health the focus it deserves. I am proud that after years of watching Labor pillage the mental health budget, misdirect funds and ignore waste and mismanagement we have been able to deliver on our promise to the people of New South Wales. I am proud that over the coming year we will deliver more money to mental health services than any other New South Wales government before us. Our record investment highlights this Government's commitment to improving the lives of those who have been touched by mental illness.

This is a long-held commitment of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition. For years in opposition we worked with key stakeholders to identify problems in the mental health system—the commitment to acute services and the support for people in our communities at the expense of a recovery base model. That is why the first thing we did was to make a commitment to set up a mental health commission. Over the past few months we have been working hard with the task force to ensure that we set up a commission that New South Wales deserves. With yesterday's announcements we have further demonstrated our commitment to improving outcomes for consumers, their families and carers across New South Wales. This includes increasing funding for Lifeline to continue its lifesaving telephone and counselling services; more money for child and adolescent services, for research and for emergency responsiveness in regional New South Wales; and mental health units at Nepean, Hornsby, Prince of Wales and Sydney Children's hospitals.

I will outline some drug and alcohol announcements that were made recently and our commitment to helping people with drug and alcohol addictions return to living meaningful lives in our communities. Government action and services alone cannot meet the challenges posed by illicit drug use. We must better harness communities to help themselves and to work with the strengths of the non-government groups already working in drug treatment and abstinence. In yesterday's budget this Government demonstrated its commitment to this. We have committed an extra \$10 million over four years to drug and alcohol rehabilitation services and programs to help thousands more people end their addiction.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: I ask you to direct the member for Maroubra and the member for Heffron to pay attention to what is going on. This is an important issue and they are ignoring the Minister's answer.

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

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Put her on the front bench. It would be easier.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Make her a leader.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am disappointed with the behaviour of all members during this answer. Members will come to order.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: As I said, this Government has committed an extra \$10 million over four years for drug and alcohol rehabilitation services and programs to help thousands more people end their addiction. We are determined to help drug rehabilitation services provide more programs to people who want help in ridding themselves of their addiction. This funding will provide faster help for thousands of people seeking treatment who have to be turned away because of the shortage of rehabilitation resources. It will ease

the burden on hospital emergency departments and acute care beds which have to cater for nearly 40,000 cases each year because there is nowhere else for them to get treatment. We have also committed funds to improve services for people with opioid dependence.

Mr MATT KEAN: I seek an extension of time for the Minister to conclude his answer.

The SPEAKER: The Minister has an extra two minutes to conclude his answer.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: We have also committed funds to improve services for people with opioid dependence and for involuntary treatment to help dependent people withdraw from their drug or alcohol addiction. Too many people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems find their way into the criminal justice system. This State has half the country's prisoners but only a third of the population. This is a problem that the former Labor Government ignored for far too long. All that the former Labor Government did was to send more people into our prisons. It locked up more people with mental health and drug and alcohol problems and lost focus in attempting to break the cycle. It is a privilege to work with the Attorney General and to reinforce the fact we will not go into a Dutch auction and lock up more people in this State who need help. Members will see far a more focused strategy by this Government in its provision of services to the community.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: As a Government we are committed to breaking that cycle, to supporting people to improve their health, to end their addictions, to return to work, to re-engage with their community and to give back. In this budget we have made some hard decisions but I am proud that this Government has recognised the importance of delivering quality mental health and drug and alcohol services for this State. Improving these services will help to keep people out of our costly acute health services, out of prisons, help them back into our communities, and in that way we will build value.

Question time concluded at 3.16 p.m.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Reference

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [3.16 p.m.]: In accordance with Standing Order 299 (1) I inform the House that the Public Accounts Committee has resolved to conduct the following two inquiries:

- (1) follow up on the Performance Audits of the Auditor-General from October 2009 to September 2010; and
- (2) follow up on the Auditor-General's 2010 Financial Audit Reports of 2010.

The full details of these inquiries are available on the committee's home page.

PETITIONS

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

Alcohol and Drug Services

Petition requesting increased funding for, and expansion of, inner-city alcohol and drug services, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Pet Shops

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

Companion Animals Travel

Petition requesting that companion animals be allowed to travel on all public transport, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**Commonwealth Funding**

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [3.17 p.m.]: My motion, which should be accorded priority, is in the following terms:

That this House supports the efforts of the New South Wales Government to get its fair share of Commonwealth funding.

This motion deserves priority because the people of New South Wales deserve a better deal from the Federal Government. New South Wales has been sluggish excessively by a crippled Federal Government more focused on its own political problems than it is on the wellbeing of the largest State in the Commonwealth. We have been short-changed by this Federal Government because political expediency has taken priority over good policy. We have not received our fair share of Federal project funding because the previous State Labor Government's applications for Federal funding were too inept, and the Federal Government wrote them off as a boil that needed lancing.

This motion deserves priority because this year New South Wales will receive \$857million less GST back from the Federal Government than we generated. This is money that could be spent on hospitals, schools, roads or police to provide the services and infrastructure for which the people of New South Wales voted on 26 March. Over the past four years the Council of Australian Governments has been nothing more than a photo opportunity for terminal State Labor Premiers with two self-destructing Prime Ministers. The efforts by the O'Farrell Government to ensure New South Wales receives a better deal stand in stark contrast to those talkfests and must be supported. What will the Leader of the Opposition do to convince his Federal colleagues? Will he stand up to his political masters, or will he plead the fifth as he has done with the carbon tax? Will he stand up to Wayne Swan? Will he stand up to Julia Gillard?

This motion deserves priority because for the past four years the Federal Government has underfunded vital infrastructure in New South Wales. In the first round of Infrastructure Australia funding, Sydney received only 2 per cent of Federal funding despite having 20 per cent of the Australian population. Nobody in this Chamber would claim that improved infrastructure is not sorely needed in this city. The former State Government failed the people of New South Wales with the dreadful quality of its submissions. Despite the desperate need for investment it simply could not present a competent case to Infrastructure Australia. The combination of an incompetent State Government and a dismissive Federal Government meant that the people of New South Wales were let down again.

This motion deserves priority because the policies pursued by the crippled Federal Government will damage the New South Wales budget and rob New South Wales taxpayers. As part of their dowry to the Greens and Independents, the Federal Government is determined to means test the private health insurance rebate. This will disproportionately impact upon the people of New South Wales and increase the burden on public hospitals. Over four years this will result in New South Wales residents contributing an extra \$912 million to the Federal Government. Will the Leader of the Opposition stand up for the taxpayers of New South Wales and oppose this penalty, or will he bow to his political masters?

This motion deserves priority because the Federal Government's carbon tax will disproportionately affect the people of New South Wales. That tax will have a \$1 billion impact on our State's finances. This dead hand on our economy will reduce dividends from electricity retailers, increase electricity prices to Government and consumers and reduce payroll tax receipts. More importantly, it will affect families across New South Wales, most particularly in the Hunter and Illawarra. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government opposes this ideological madness because it will damage New South Wales for absolutely no environmental gain. Where does the Leader of the Opposition stand on this tax? Will he show some courage and declare his position, or will he continue to maintain the great silence? The people of New South Wales deserve an answer.

This motion deserves priority because the compensation package for the carbon tax will do little to defray the economic vandalism it will cause our State. New South Wales will receive next to no compensation for the reduction in value of our remaining electricity assets, yet in Victoria it is a different story. Victoria will receive some \$2.3 billion in assistance, of which \$800 million will go to the French Government, which is a shareholder. That means there will be \$800 million heading towards the Eiffel Tower and nothing towards Governor Macquarie Tower. This motion deserves priority because on 26 March the people of New South

Wales elected a Liberal-Nationals Government not only to repair a State that has been damaged by 16 years of neglect but also to improve the lives of the residents of New South Wales. This motion deserves priority and I commend it to the House.

Business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Consideration of Motions to be Accorded Priority

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.22 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the consideration of both notices of motions accorded priority at this sitting.

The Government has taken note of both motions seeking to be accorded priority. Bearing in mind that the Government has been industriously working with Senator Kim Carr of the Federal Labor Government to try to address issues of the State Liberal and Nationals Government in regard to Illawarra employment projects, we agree to both motions being debated.

The SPEAKER: How very generous. Thank you.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Yes, it is. I indicate that we are a very reasonable Government and, when it comes to making sure that the people of the Illawarra have their issues addressed, we intend to allow that and to facilitate that process by enabling the member for Wollongong formally to move her motion in addition to the motion of which notice has been given by the member for Charlestown.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Budget Debate

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.23 p.m.]: I move:

That on Thursday 8 September 2011 standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) the interruption of the business before the House at 10.00 a.m. to permit the Leader of the Opposition to speak on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bill;
- (2) following the speech of the Leader of the Opposition on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bill, the passage through all remaining stages of the bills, with the question "That these bills be agreed to in principle" being put forthwith, without consideration in detail;
- (3) a member, immediately following the passage of the Appropriation Bill and cognate bill, to move the motion "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for 2011-2012"; and
- (4) after the member has moved "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for 2011-2012", the debate to be adjourned without motion moved, and the resumption of the debate set down as an order of the day for a later time.

By consultation, discussion and arrangement with the Opposition, and to facilitate the Leader of the Opposition being able to present his address in response to the Budget Speech, the Government agrees to facilitate the Leader of the Opposition making his address at 10.00 a.m. tomorrow.

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

Motion agreed to.

COMMONWEALTH FUNDING**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [3.27 p.m.]: I move:

That this House supports the efforts of the New South Wales Government to get its fair share of Commonwealth funding.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: The people of New South Wales deserve a better deal from the Federal Government. On 26 March this year the people of New South Wales voted for a Government that would represent their interests at home and advocate for their interests in Canberra. The people of New South Wales recognise that we are facing a crippled Federal Government that is completely focused on keeping its marriage to The Greens and Independents alive. If that means its political interests take priority over the wellbeing of the largest State in the Commonwealth, the Federal Government's actions have shown that this is a sacrifice it is prepared to make. We have been short-changed by this Federal Government because political expediency has taken priority over good policy.

Treasury estimates show that this year New South Wales will receive \$857 million less GST back from the Federal Government than we generate. This is money that could be spent on hospitals, schools, roads or police—providing the services and infrastructure that the people of New South Wales voted for on 26 March 2011. New South Wales deserves a more equitable share of GST revenue to help this Government fix this State. Under Labor so-called fights with the Federal Government were often stage-managed affairs that resembled a World Wrestling Federation bout. While this might conjure some interesting mental images it did not result in substantially better outcomes for New South Wales.

Over the past four years the Council of Australian Governments has been nothing more than a photo opportunity. Labor Premiers, in the dying days of their administrations, would line up beside their glorious Federal leaders to attempt to bask in some perceived reflected glory. We in New South Wales need less sycophancy and more advocacy. We need to support the efforts by this new State Government to properly represent our State's interests in Canberra. For the past four years the Federal Government has underfunded vital infrastructure in New South Wales. In the first round of Infrastructure Australia funding Sydney received only 2 per cent of Federal funding despite having 20 per cent of Australia's population. The Federal Government has demonstrated that political advantage is a key funding prerequisite and, as a consequence, we need to support the advocacy of the New South Wales Government to convince it that those two concepts of merit and need should be more critical in its decision making.

We all know that New South Wales is in dire need of major infrastructure investment and the Federal Government has a major role to play. We need to support the efforts of the O'Farrell Government in negotiating with the Federal Government to ensure a better deal. The poor quality of the submissions to Infrastructure Australia by the previous State Government was the stuff of legends. Despite the desperate need for investment we simply could not present a competent case to Infrastructure Australia. The combination of an incompetent State Government and a dismissive Federal Government meant that the people of New South Wales were let down again. The policies pursued by this crippled Federal Government will damage the New South Wales budget and rob New South Wales taxpayers.

As part of its dowry to the Greens and Independents, the Federal Government is determined to means test the private health insurance rebate. This will disproportionately impact the people of New South Wales and increase the burden on our public hospitals. Over four years this will result in New South Wales residents contributing an extra \$912 million to the Federal Government. Our contribution will be 17 per cent more per capita than that of Victoria and 14 per cent more than that of Queensland residents. New South Wales is short changed at every turn. In addition, the taxpayers of New South Wales will make a greater contribution to the Queensland flood levy than any other State. This has been a dreadful disaster for Queensland and no-one begrudges helping our friends in the north. However, the Federal Government ignores the fact that the cost of living is higher in New South Wales than in other parts of the country.

New South Wales families are faced with the perfect storm of higher costs and broken infrastructure. Although we earn more in New South Wales, it costs more to live in New South Wales. The average amount

paid by each person in New South Wales to this levy will be \$335, almost \$50 more than the national average. The Federal Government's carbon tax will disproportionately affect the people of New South Wales and have a \$1 billion impact on our State's finances. This dead hand of this tax on our economy will reduce dividends from electricity retailers, increase electricity prices and reduce payroll tax receipts. The Federal Government refuses to release modelling to show how each individual region will be affected by this regressive tax. The Federal Government likes to refer to national averages to describe the effect of this tax on the economy. I note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Wollongong. Her region, like my region, will be severely affected by this tax.

What may be good for a stockbroker from Double Bay would be a disaster for a sheet metal worker from Warners Bay. What may be good for a merchant banker from Darling Point would be a disaster for an aluminium worker from Speers Point. The same analogies apply in the Illawarra. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government opposes this ideological tax because it will damage New South Wales for no environmental gain. The compensation package for the carbon tax will do little to defray the economic vandalism it will cause in our State. In New South Wales we receive next to no compensation for the reduction in value of our remaining electricity assets, yet in Victoria, the Prime Minister's home State, it is a different story. Victoria will receive some \$2.3 billion in assistance of which \$800 million will then go to the French Government as a shareholder.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wollongong will have an opportunity to debate on her motion.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: On 26 March this year the people of New South Wales elected a Liberal-Nationals Government not only to repair a State damaged by 16 years of State Government neglect but also to stand up to a Federal Government that is entirely focused on its own political survival and that is not delivering policies that will improve the lives of residents in New South Wales. We need to support the O'Farrell Government in getting its fair share of Commonwealth funding. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.34 p.m.]: I move:

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

"this House:

- (1) notes the effort of the New South Wales Government to blame the Commonwealth Government for its funding shortfalls; and
- (2) notes that the NSW Government has:
 - (a) blamed:
 - (i) a non-existent budget black hole
 - (ii) the Federal Government, and
 - (iii) the global economic downturn
 in order to slash jobs and services in New South Wales and plunge the State into a debt binge; and
 - (b) managed to turn a \$1.3 billion surplus into a \$718 million deficit, all by itself in its first budget.

The member for Charlestown is a good bloke but the completely dispassionate delivery of that offering shows that he does not believe the drivel that was served up by his unfortunate speechwriter who wrote that poor concoction. In relation to Federal-State relations the speechwriter shows that members of this Government are the most vacuous hypocrites in politics. The rip-off of New South Wales in relation to Commonwealth-State funding was in fact replete for a decade. During the Howard Government years, for example, in relation to Pacific Highway funding, John Howard and Peter Costello presided over a very fortunate economy and did some good things; I have no doubt about that.

Mr Gareth Ward: Why don't you name them?

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I will name them. The Federal Liberal Government knew how to amass surpluses approaching \$20 billion, unlike members of the New South Wales Government who have no idea. The Federal Liberal Government, in its 10 years in office, allocated \$1.8 billion for the Pacific Highway and the Labor Government in this State, which has an economy one-eighth the size of the Federal economy, allocated

\$2 billion. The GST rip-off was not \$135 million, it was \$3 billion. Under the Nation Building Program that was introduced by John Howard, the national infrastructure project at Port Botany received \$1.1 billion that was funded entirely by State Labor with not a cent from John Howard. Members of the New South Wales Government did not call, fax or email John Howard and support New South Wales. All their bleating hypocrisy is not supported by their efforts when they were in opposition and when John Howard was in government.

Let me contrast the efforts of John Howard with the efforts of Federal Labor when it was elected in 2007. Under the Nation Building Agreement presided over by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Anthony Albanese and carried by Prime Minister Gillard, the \$3.1 billion that was allocated in three years in one budget for the Pacific Highway contrasts with the \$1.8 billion that was allocated over a decade under John Howard. Out of the goodness of his heart Anthony Albanese topped that up with a non-tied grant of \$618 million for the Kempsey bypass. That was a gift to the State Government in an electorate held by The Nationals that did not have to be matched dollar for dollar. Under the Nation Building Agreement \$1.4 billion was allocated for only one road—the Hunter Expressway.

Over a period of 10 years John Howard, the hero of members of this Government, allocated \$1.8 billion for a road that runs along the coast of New South Wales and right through the electorates of The Nationals. Under Gillard, Rudd and Albanese \$1.4 billion was allocated in one budget for the Hunter Expressway. Members opposite should not talk to me about Commonwealth-State funding. In addition to that we had a stimulus program that saw New South Wales \$7 billion better off. That included \$1.5 billion for non-government schools. Government members should not talk to me about Commonwealth Government funding for New South Wales. They are vacuous in the extreme. The Premier said that he is a civilised man and a statesman. He is nothing of the sort.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: Reflections on other members of this House must be made by substantive motion and not in the tawdry way we just heard from the member for Maroubra.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I withdraw. The Premier is an undoubted statesman and he is not a political apparatchik. Yesterday's budget was an attempt to blame the Commonwealth Government for the effects of a carbon tax. I refer the House to an article by Professor John Quiggin, an Australian Research Council Federation Fellow in Economics and Political Science at the University of Queensland. He refers to the difference between the Federal Government's and the State Government's interpretation of published modelling on the carbon tax. He states:

On the face of it, the Commonwealth and NSW Treasuries seem to have very different economic models, producing sharply different results. But a closer look reveals a different, and more surprising, story...

How can this be? The answer is that the NSW government engaged in an exercise in misleading advertising that would make even the most shonky of infomercial vendors blush...

The scariest numbers in the O'Farrell press release are those relating to the "slashing" of jobs, notably in the Hunter and Illawarra regions. The press release implied that thousands of workers will lose their jobs as a result of the carbon price. The modelling on which it is based says nothing of the kind...

The most common dishonest use is to report only the bad news about industries that will grow more slowly, and ignore the good news ...

The reality is that the carbon price is a modest reform, about one quarter the size of the GST... The impact will be undetectable against a background of substantial volatility around a long-run growth trend.

Members opposite should not talk to me about Commonwealth-State funding or statistics and a mining tax based on the carbon tax. It is a bunch of vacuous bunkum. [*Time expired.*]

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [3.41 p.m.]: That contribution by the shadow Treasurer is the reason that New South Wales employers and taxpayers are fearful whenever the words "Labor" and "Treasury" are used in the same sentence. By contrast, yesterday the Coalition provided a case study on good government and budgets for the future. I refer the shadow Treasurer to the former Labor Treasurer's statement of 12 May 2009, made just after the Federal budget was handed down. Then Treasurer Eric Roozendaal stated:

NSW now expects to receive about \$4.8 billion in GST...

The former Treasurer clearly stated that New South Wales would receive nearly \$5 billion less in GST revenue. If that does not reflect the need for this Government to step up its campaign to get a fair share of

Commonwealth funding I do not know what does. The shadow Treasurer might recall that in May 2009 in my previous capacity he and I were in discussions about how to improve infrastructure spending in this State.

Mr Michael Daley: Don't you betray any confidences.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: I will certainly not breach any confidences because that meeting was attended by other people who I am sure would be happy to confirm what was said. Why were the shadow Treasurer and I discussing the need to improve financing for infrastructure in New South Wales? It was because—

Mr Michael Daley: It was because the banks were not lending any money and you know that.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: They were not lending it for the former Government's electricity privatisation strategy because they knew it could not do it properly. We were talking about the need to get more money because, as the shadow Treasurer knows and as the former Treasurer highlighted on 12 May 2009, this State would be getting less in GST revenue from the Federal Government. I refer the House to another statement from the former Treasurer made on 8 February 2010. He was boasting about the funding guarantee, but it is not worth the paper it is written on because of the poor custodianship of public money displayed by Canberra.

Unfortunately, the long-suffering people of New South Wales have had to bear the burden of that sloppy custodianship and that is evident from the fact that we have been short-changed by nearly \$1 billion in GST receipts. In addition, Infrastructure Australia has made more promises than a future bride at her engagement party. We have not seen one ounce of dirt moved or one pallet of concrete laid despite the promises that were made. As the member for Charlestown said, the Leader of the Opposition has shirked his responsibility as a member of this Parliament by failing to stand up to the Federal Labor Government. The bad news does not end there because the people of New South Wales are threatened by Canberra's toxic addiction to the carbon tax and to gaming revenue with its punitive attack on the club industry.

I am delighted to report that the O'Farrell Government has declared war on the financial terrorism of the Gillard Labor regime. Unlike the previous Government, this Government will campaign actively using all means possible to ensure that this State gets its fair share of Commonwealth funding. Never again should New South Wales be used as an automatic teller machine to subsidise services in other States. If Mr Swan thinks he is some sort of modern version of Robin Hood, New South Wales has news for him. Yesterday's budget has proven that we will demand our fair share and his response this morning has left him looking more like the Sheriff of Nottingham. I commend this motion to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.46 p.m.]: I support the member for Maroubra's amendment to the motion accorded priority. Once again Government members have whinged about the Federal Government and once again it has fallen to the Opposition to amend a motion and bring the Government's attention back to State issues. This motion should be amended because only one day after its long-awaited budget the Government wants to talk about something else. This motion should be amended because once again the O'Farrell Government has chosen to play the blame game rather than to admit that it has made mistakes.

This Government has handed down its first budget with a projected deficit. That is not the Federal Government's fault, nor is it a result of the now discredited black hole, which I note members opposite are no longer mentioning. The budget deficit is the result of the O'Farrell Government's policies. Rather than take ownership of the issue, the Government has resorted to blaming external forces. Like a wayward teenager who will not grow up, this Government is incapable of shrugging off the mantel of opposition; members opposite cannot seem to grasp that they are no longer in opposition. This is the Government's budget and it should own it and deliver on it.

Perhaps I should say "or not deliver", particularly for western Sydney. Members from western Sydney should hang their heads in shame because this budget will cut \$365 million of funding from western Sydney—\$200 million from roads alone. It is interesting that \$314 million has been allocated for the North West Rail Link but the Liberal-Nationals have taken away \$200 million from roads, and members opposite know it. The people of the north-west have been told that they will get their rail link because the Government has taken money away from roads. The Premier has told us that this is the party for western Sydney, despite the fact that not one of his Ministers actually lives in western Sydney, although I am sure the member for Penrith is waiting quite eagerly to get into the ministry. This budget does not fit with that statement.

As I said, \$365 million will be cut from western Sydney—from housing to infrastructure. The budget has an assortment of hidden nasties within it, which are only now starting to come to light. The budget has cut

the First Home Buyers Scheme, making it harder for people throughout the State, including people in Penrith and western Sydney, to purchase their first home. This Government has delivered a kick in the teeth to the hardworking families that save year in, year out, to purchase their first home. And what is this Government telling them? They will have to buy off the plan—they will have to buy off the big end of business and support the developers those opposite are keen to support.

This budget targets the most vulnerable people in our community, adopting the Liberal principle of blatant populism that Tony Abbott has adopted so successfully. Children cannot vote so the Liberal-Nationals have decided to cut \$266 million from capital works for New South Wales public schools. It is an absolute shame. The Government continues to demonstrate utter contempt for public schools and public education. After the Minister for Education announced a backlog, what did he do? He chose to cut \$266 million from capital works. The Government has also chosen to attack pensioners by raising public housing rent for pensioners by \$10 a week. They are dealing with a rise in electricity prices and a rise in water prices. What does the Government do? It hits them where it hurts; it hit them with a rent rise as well. The Government is not just hurting the elderly, pensioners and the vulnerable, it is also hurting young families by charging a minimum of \$6,000 each year for public preschools—\$30 a day for each child to attend preschool. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [3.51 p.m.], in reply: I thank a number of members for their contribution today. The member for Maroubra attempted to deflect the argument away from the Federal Government's failings. The amendment was designed to move attention from the fact that they are being driven by politics rather than policies. I draw the attention of the member for Maroubra to a few facts about the Hunter expressway. This project was made shovel-ready by the Howard Government—it was an election commitment leading up to the 2007 election. It was also an election commitment of the Australia Labor Party leading up to the 2007 election to match the promises of the then Liberal Government.

It was an election commitment on 24 November 2011 when Labor won but on Monday 26 November the Federal member for the Hunter, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon, informed the Newcastle *Herald* that the project had suddenly disappeared down the queue. It was only in the shadows of the global financial crisis, when the Federal Government fired every piece of ammunition it had in the holster and left nothing for a rainy day, that the project suddenly became funded. It is a good project for the Hunter but it has been used as a political football. The member for Maroubra also made implications about "dishonest numbers" in relation to carbon tax modelling.

I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Federal Treasurer, Wayne Swan, refuses to release regional modelling to show the impact on a region such as the Hunter or the Illawarra. He likes to talk about averages. It is like the story of the man with his head in the oven and his feet in the freezer—on average, he is comfortable. The member for Baulkham Hills also gave us some insight into the lack of fiscal rectitude by Federal Labor and clearly demonstrated the fact that it tried to cast New South Wales adrift. The member for Bankstown, in supporting the amendment, also attempted to deflect responsibility from their Federal counterparts and came up with the immortal line that Labor is the party for western Sydney. I paraphrase the member for Heffron: on 26 March western Sydney did not leave the ALP; the ALP left western Sydney.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): The member for Bankstown has already had her opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: On 26 March this year, the O'Farrell Government was elected with a mandate to repair New South Wales. The budget delivered yesterday is a major component in this task but our task has not been made easier by the policies of the Federal Government. This year we will have an \$850 million differential between the GST that we hand over and the GST that we get back. We will lose \$912 million to the private health insurance rebate. We will make a disproportionate contribution to the Federal coffers. People in New South Wales earn more but it costs more to live here. We will also make a disproportionate contribution to the Queensland flood levy.

We do not deny the need for the levy, but New South Wales will make a disproportionate contribution—some \$50 per person more than the national average. We also talked about the fact that Infrastructure Australia ignored some of the more creative submissions that it received from the previous State Labor Government. Again, despite being 20 per cent of the population of Australia, Sydney received only 2 per cent of the funding. Finally, the pièce de résistance, the carbon tax, will have a \$1 billion hit on State coffers. The classic example is Victoria, with the loss of its electricity generators, which receive \$2.3 billion in compensation; New South Wales will receive next to nothing.

Mr Richard Amery: You don't put animals through this much pain, do you?

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Mount Druitt. As part of general practice, geriatrics is an area in which I have some expertise and I am happy to share it with him later on. I commend the motion to the House. This is an important issue and I also look forward to debating the motion of the member for Wollongong.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 64

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Provest
Mr Annesley	Ms Gibbons	Mr Roberts
Mr Aplin	Ms Goward	Mr Rohan
Mr Barilaro	Mr Hartcher	Mr Rowell
Mr Bassett	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Sage
Mr Baumann	Mr Holstein	Mr Sidoti
Ms Berejiklian	Mr Humphries	Mrs Skinner
Mr Brookes	Mr Issa	Mr Smith
Mr Cansdell	Mr Kean	Mr Souris
Mr Casuscelli	Dr Lee	Mr Speakman
Mr Conolly	Ms Moore	Mr Spence
Mr Constance	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr Stokes
Mr Cornwell	Mr O'Dea	Mr Torbay
Mr Coure	Mr O'Farrell	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	
Mr Evans	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Flowers	Mr Piccoli	Mr Maguire
Mr Fraser	Mr Piper	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 19

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

Pair

Mr Bromhead

Mr Furolo

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

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

Motion agreed to.

Business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

TEACHERS INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Ministerial Statement

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI (Murrumbidgee—Minister for Education) [4.08 p.m.], by leave: On Friday 2 September 2011 the Department of Education and Communities filed a dispute notification against the NSW Teachers Federation, seeking the assistance of the Industrial Relations Commission in an effort to avoid disruption to students and parents. On Tuesday 6 September Justice Marks noted that the action of the NSW Teachers Federation formed part of a wider action taken by Unions NSW and all public sector unions to oppose recent changes to industrial relations legislation, but he did not take the opportunity to make a recommendation. Given the impact of the strike on students, the department continued to take legal steps in the commission and a further hearing was held this morning. Today the Industrial Relations Commission ordered that the New South Wales Teachers Federation, its officers, employees and members cease and refrain from authorising, organising, supporting, encouraging or inciting industrial action, including a 24-hour strike proposed to take place commencing on 7 September 2011.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is already on three calls to order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The New South Wales Teachers Federation and its officers are also directed to take all reasonable steps to ensure that employees and members of the New South Wales Teachers Federation comply with the orders. They must notify their members of the orders by posting the orders on their website no later than 6.00 p.m. today. This strike is a massive inconvenience for parents and not in the interests of students, who will miss a day of school. Information for parents will be made available on the Department of Education and Communities website. At this late hour I urge parents to contact their schools first thing in the morning to ascertain what support will be available at their schools tomorrow. On the very day when the Teachers Federation and other unions are purportedly defending the Industrial Relations Commission the federation and the unions will be defying the Industrial Relations Commission.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [4.11 p.m.]: No doubt industrial action by teachers causes enormous disruption to parents and students. We all understand that. Many of us have children in the public school system, so we feel it as individuals, and we understand the impact it has on the State. I note that at a quarter past four on the day before the industrial action is due to take place the Minister has chosen to report to the Parliament what action is being taken, and that it has taken less than six months for the Coalition Government to lose control of our schools. I note also that it is the very action of this Coalition Government, in gutting the Industrial Relations Commission and seeking to cap teachers' wages so that the real wages of teachers will decline, that has led to teachers and other public servants taking the action they have indicated they will take.

At the time we warned the Government that its action would result in chaos in New South Wales and disadvantage parents, teachers and schools, and that is precisely what has happened. I note also the irony in the Government appealing to the Industrial Relations Commission to resolve the matter that it caused by its action in gutting the Industrial Relations Commission. I clearly place on the record that I hope parents and students are not disadvantaged by industrial action tomorrow. [*Time expired.*]

ILLAWARRA EMPLOYMENT

Motion Accorded Priority

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [4.14 p.m.]: I move:

That this House calls on all levels of government to recognise the urgent need to deliver employment—creating projects in the Illawarra.

It is clear to most members of this Parliament that the Illawarra desperately needs government assistance. The Illawarra desperately needs assistance not only from this Government but also local and Federal governments. Frankly, the Illawarra and our communities deserve much better treatment from the New South Wales Government than they received in the budget. The Premier failed the people of the Illawarra with the budget yesterday. The Premier and the so-called Minister for the Illawarra, Greg Pearce, have cut hundreds of millions of dollars for jobs, transport and development in our region.

First and foremost, the removal of the Illawarra Advantage Fund is an absolute disgrace. The local members as a united voice should be expressing their absolute abhorrence at the removal of a fund that was designed to assist businesses to relocate and to expand and create additional jobs. To lose that fund, to lose more than \$10 million in assistance to create jobs at a time when so many jobs are being lost, and to have silence on that issue from certain members, is nothing short of disgraceful. As the member for Kiama recently said in this House, "The quake has occurred; now we await the tsunami".

Mr Gareth Ward: That was in the Mercury, if you had read it.

Ms NOREEN HAY: It may well have been in the *Illawarra Mercury*. So much of what is contained in the *Illawarra Mercury* is interaction between certain members and the newspaper. Nonetheless, there is no question about the capacity of the people of the Illawarra to fight, but they need help and they need it now. It is all very well for the member for Heathcote and the member for Kiama to make light of this issue but people are suffering serious consequences from the lack of attention to the Illawarra in yesterday's budget. In my view, yesterday was a lost opportunity for the Government to inject serious funds to help stimulate and create jobs in the Illawarra. But that did not happen. The Government did not do that, and members opposite are flippant about it today. Just days after the Premier visited the University of Wollongong Innovation Campus in the Wollongong electorate and pledged to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of the Illawarra the Treasurer not only ignored our area but also removed the very fund designed to assist businesses to relocate and/or expand, creating additional jobs. Further, there is a threat to jobs at Port Kembla, with reduced iron ore imports and steel exports.

Mr Gareth Ward: You haven't read the budget.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I am fully aware of the money allocated for the port, most of which was committed by the former Labor Government. I am talking about the effect of the BlueScope decision on ships in and out of Port Kembla. It has also been suggested that this could lead to the loss of a further 200 jobs. There will be reduced opportunities for graduates from the University of Wollongong and reduced apprenticeships and traineeships. This is just the beginning, with an expected flow-on to other areas such as contractors, suppliers and the like. As has been said previously in this place, unfortunately we can expect to see another wave of job losses in coming months.

This is why our community so desperately needs support now and they need to see the bipartisan support that was pledged in this place as a result of the BlueScope announcement. Whilst I say that, I also recognise that the Federal and local governments have a role to play in this and I call on all of them to work together. I believe we should take the lead here though. As representatives elected to the State Parliament we have a responsibility to act and I believe that one of the things we could do, as I have stated before, is to relocate a government department such as Finance and Services or inject serious funds to stimulate and require job creation. We cannot just sit and wait for a tsunami.

I moved an amendment calling on the Government to match the Federal Government's \$20 million contribution to the Illawarra Innovation and Investment Fund in this place as I believed that the \$30 million package was negotiated prior to the BlueScope announcement, which was far worse than had been anticipated. However, the Government did not support that amendment. I remind members that the reduction in public service employment is likely to affect those in the Illawarra, as no doubt will the closure of Berrima Gaol with 350 jobs going from Correctional Services and the flow-ons from that decision. Also the Qantas announcement will have its effect on our community and so on.

Doing nothing is not an option. We must act and we must act now to help those identified and those yet to be identified. I call on the Government to reinstate the Illawarra Advantage Fund as, to date, the Government's alternative is to offer relocation amounts of \$7,000 for people to move out of Wollongong and into Shellharbour. The people of the Illawarra are reeling from the cut of a thousand BlueScope Steel jobs in recent weeks and instead of using this budget to invest in jobs and job creating programs Barry O'Farrell has ripped the Illawarra Advantage Fund out of the Illawarra. The Illawarra Advantage Fund has invested in 143 projects. The Illawarra Advantage Fund is missing from the budget papers, prompting fears it has been axed altogether. The fund has generated more than 3,500 jobs to date. In addition, 5,000 public service workers are set to face the sack. How many of them will be from the Illawarra region? This is unacceptable. We need jobs, not cuts in the budget. [*Time expired.*]

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [4.21 p.m.]: I have to say I was very disappointed with that performance from the member for Wollongong because I thought after her time in this place she would know

better than to consistently talk down the Illawarra, which is what Labor members do—no new plans, nothing. After the election it is almost as if they sat on their collective backsides and thought that someone had taken it from them. They talk about the past but the more they talk about the past the more they proclaim their embarrassment about the present and show they have nothing to say about the future. What possible plans do we have from these people that sit opposite? Absolute harping and carping, whinging but no constructive comments particularly from those Illawarra members who sit opposite.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Kiama to order. Members will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr GARETH WARD: I thank the member for Maroubra for his advice and directions. We heard about the Illawarra Regional Innovation Fund from the member for Wollongong. She said she moved an amendment but the Government did not support it.

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

Mr GARETH WARD: But when it came time for the vote there was no call for a division; Opposition members sat in absolute silence, which is reflective of what they did for the Illawarra during their time in government. If they actually talked to the—

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

Mr GARETH WARD: It's funny you should mention the member for Newcastle, because Newcastle has innovated and has diversified and is an example of what we need to do in the Illawarra. Up until this point I thought there was some sort of bipartisan support, but clearly that has been shredded by the member for Wollongong by her actions in this place today. Let us get back to the Innovation Fund, which the member for Wollongong raised. If their Federal colleagues actually wanted to talk to them, if they wanted to have a conversation she would—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong has made her contribution. She will have an opportunity to reply.

Mr GARETH WARD: Clearly, the member for Wollongong did not read her own speech notes, because she mentioned the Illawarra innovation fund, which was established with the Federal Government in partnership. She referred to it in her speech. In relation to the amendment moved by the member for Wollongong in relation to the discussion about BlueScope, if she had spoken to her Federal colleagues she would realise that we were aware of what was happening at BlueScope and in a bipartisan approach got together with the Federal Government to do what we could to work with the Federal Government. The call by the Opposition for a doubling of that fund from the State clearly shows that it is not even conversing with its Federal colleagues about what we are doing to help the Illawarra.

If they had read the budget papers they would be aware of the State industrial attraction scheme, as well as the regional industries investment fund, which is designed to bring jobs to regional New South Wales. Clearly, those parts of the budget have escaped those opposite. They have not looked at the Jobs Action Plan, which this Government has already invested in to cut payroll tax, to ensure we reduce taxes and encourage people to regional areas such as Kiama and Shellharbour and other areas of the South Coast. This is important for local business and important to generate jobs. The member for Wollongong talked about employment. Let us talk about unemployment, because in the last recorded statistics from the Illawarra regional information service unemployment rose to 7.7 per cent when Labor was in government. Labor left an industrial graveyard in the Illawarra because it did not know how to support jobs or attract investment.

The 2011-12 budget is focused on improving services and providing essential infrastructure required for the Illawarra region to grow. These include \$542.4 million in recurrent funding for local schools; \$146.8 million for improved services to people with disabilities, their families and carers and older people; \$103 million will be invested in Illawarra roads with \$36 million for major road infrastructure projects; \$36 million to maintain the existing road networks; \$14 million for traffic management work and \$17 million for regional road safety initiatives; \$106.2 million for disability services, including \$5 million in new growth funding; and \$56 million has been allocated statewide to maintain 21 acute care beds in Wollongong Hospital, something I think we can all agree about.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Over 60—I announced them last year.

Mr GARETH WARD: Well, we got to do it this year. We have provided \$40.6 million for home and community care programs, including \$2.5 million in new growth funding; \$5.7 for 82 more nurses in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven local health district; \$16.5 million of works in progress; and an additional \$4 million to plan Illawarra hospital works and commence car parking expansion at Shoalhaven District Hospital. Those things will generate jobs and investment. In particular the health infrastructure that is proposed by this Government is exciting, and that is something we can agree on as being good for the Illawarra and good for our local people. Indeed, the cancer care centre at Shoalhaven is something that I wish my mother had access to when she was in need of her treatment. Those centres will generate jobs and encourage people to come to our district if we have got the infrastructure, particularly health infrastructure in place.

The amount of 16.5 million has been allocated for works in progress for the Illawarra and Shoalhaven Regional Cancer Care Centre, which I mentioned earlier; \$18.6 million for public and community housing in the Illawarra; \$10.5 million for train stabling at Wollongong to accommodate additional outer suburban trains; and \$1.5 million for community transport in Wollongong and Shellharbour as well. In addition, the Government has committed \$500 million to the Princes Highway over this term, with real work to commence next year. The previous Government talked about investment in roads and infrastructure but very rarely delivered. I would hope that this is a debate we could enter into in a bipartisan fashion as we did last week and not see the debate continue to descend into what we saw it descend into with the member for Wollongong.

[Business interrupted.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I recognise the presence in the Speaker's Gallery of Mr Don Stein, AM, who is a life member of the Civil Contractors Federation, and who is a special guest this afternoon of the member for Baulkham Hills.

ILLAWARRA EMPLOYMENT

Motion Accorded Priority

[Business resumed.]

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [4.30 p.m.]: This morning something very interesting happened on our wonderful ABC Illawarra radio station 97.3. The invisible Minister for the Illawarra was on the program. He is known as the invisible Minister because nobody is quite sure what he does, but apparently he does the odd thing or two. A few of us in the Illawarra are beginning a campaign to lobby the Premier for the member for Heathcote or the member for Kiama to take over from the current Minister for the Illawarra, the Hon. Greg Pearce, because he is so embarrassing. One would expect that straight after delivery of the budget the Minister for the Illawarra would have snippets of information or a script and that his press secretary would have prepped him for the interview, but when asked about the \$80-odd million for Wollongong Hospital, his response was, "No, no. That is contingent on Federal money." The interviewer said, "No, you allocated that in your budget—that's your money." The Minister for the Illawarra said, "Oh, no, no. I think that one's contingent on Federal money."

The Minister was asked about the most significant health portfolio investment in the Illawarra, but he was not sure where the funding was coming from. But it gets worse. A couple of months ago the Government said, "We want to try to attract people to the regions." The big exception to that was the Illawarra. We introduced a \$7,000 get-across-the-bridge grant, but currently real estate agents in Wollongong are advertising to encourage people to move out of Wollongong, across Windang Bridge and into another local government area. That is a fantastic and unbelievable economic policy at a time when efforts are being made to stimulate the Wollongong economy. But there is more. This morning Minister Pearce was asked, "Why did you do that about the boundaries?" He said, "Oh, no, they're not our boundaries. They're Federal Government boundaries." The interviewer said, "No, Minister. That was your announcement a couple of months ago." The Minister said, "Aren't you talking about the Federal Government boundaries? I think this is a different program."

If the Hon. Greg Pearce purports to be the Minister for the Illawarra his press secretary should clue him up, or other Government representatives in the Illawarra should take over from him. This morning he was

simply embarrassing. People who phoned my electorate office were laughing. One of the friends of the member for Kiama from the Property Council—an organisation that is not normally aligned to the Labor side of politics—phoned me and said, "We were hoping for so much, and got so little." The Hon. Greg Pearce has taken on notice every question directed to him as the Minister for the Illawarra. He is a Minister for the Illawarra who does not have a clue where the Illawarra is. My advice is that the member for Heathcote and the member for Kiama should lobby the Premier to take over as Minister for the Illawarra—and do it quickly—because at least they know where the Illawarra is. The current Minister has no idea about the concerns of people who live in the Illawarra, no idea about the people of the Illawarra, and does not have a clue where the Illawarra is.

A genuine Minister for the Illawarra would not sit in Cabinet and draw a line through the Illawarra Advantage Fund at a time when the Illawarra community, as the member for Wollongong stated, is suffering. He would not put a line through Bulli Hospital when 12 months ago the Minister for Health stated in the *Illawarra Mercury*—wait for it—"We want to make Bulli Hospital a key health infrastructure facility again." What an absolute disgrace. If the Minister for the Illawarra had any idea at all of concerns in the Illawarra, he would not put a line through its important programs. But there is even more. The mate of the member for Kiama, John Dorahy—who also is known as Joe Cool—received 23 per cent of the vote in the recent local government elections.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: Reference to my mates should be made through the Chair.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind members to direct their comments through the Chair.

Mr RYAN PARK: This is priceless. Six months ago that strong footballer, John Dorahy, was running around with Barry O'Farrell near Fig Tree and said, "We will deliver \$2.5 million for Football South Coast to develop Lysaght Oval." That is what he said then. But now he is the ward councillor and the Coalition is in government and yesterday's budget allocated not a brass razoo to the project. That is a disgrace. Get a new Minister for the Illawarra and do it will quickly. [*Time expired.*]

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [4.35 p.m.]: What a performance by the member for Keira. I must say it is a bit rich for him to be picking on the Coalition's Minister for the Illawarra. What about Labor's former Minister for the Illawarra, who needed a TomTom to find the region?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wollongong will have an opportunity to speak in reply.

Mr LEE EVANS: The Premier and the Prime Minister have agreed on a rescue package of \$30 million for the Illawarra consequent upon the closure of the BlueScope Steel factory. That reminds me that bipartisanship is a term frequently mentioned. My colleague the member for Kiama and I were invited by the Minister for the Illawarra to attend the announcement by the Prime Minister of the \$30 million package, but we were barred at the door and were not allowed to enter. I ask the member for Wollongong, the member for Keira and the member for Shellharbour whether they were invited to the Prime Minister's announcement of the \$30 million package.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Opposition members who wish to engage in conversation should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr LEE EVANS: Bipartisanship? Labor's own side does not want members of Parliament who represent the Illawarra attending announcements concerning the Illawarra. The Minister for the Illawarra was invited, but the member for Kiama and I were not allowed to enter. But Labor members did not even know about the event. What a fantastic endorsement for members who represent the Illawarra. We must bring a bit of sense back to debate on the Illawarra. We have a very serious problem in the region and we should not be flippant. As parliamentary representatives of the people of the Illawarra we should begin thinking about ways in which we can help them. Recently, in the company of the member for Wollongong, I visited Port Kembla, which is where 4,000 jobs may become available in 2013-14.

Employees who have been made redundant by BlueScope Steel will have to be retrained, but Port Kembla offers fantastic opportunities. Recently I visited Lucas Heights, which has 20 positions available for people who have been made redundant by BlueScope Steel. Perhaps 20 jobs is not much when 800 people are looking for work but at least it is a start. We must start thinking outside the square. Who originally proposed that

there should be a Minister for the Illawarra? All I can hear from the Opposition bench is crickets. A former Liberal leader, John Brogden, first suggested the Illawarra portfolio during the 2003 State election, and it was later picked up by Labor, which is fantastic. It was an original idea of the Liberal Party.

Mr Ryan Park: You or Gareth should put your hand up in caucus next time.

Mr LEE EVANS: We do not do caucus. The people of the Illawarra recognise that the way forward is what happened in recent local government elections.

Those who worked on election day realised that the mood was definitely changing in the Illawarra—something for which I do not blame members of the Opposition or the Government. The people of the Illawarra realised that there was light at the end of the tunnel and it was not necessarily a locomotive coming straight at them. This Government has a comprehensive plan to support them in their time of need. We need to increase jobs and opportunities for people in the Illawarra as opposed to arguing with members across this Chamber. In my electorate in the Illawarra jobs have been offered to BlueScope Steel employees in coalmining. Those workers should recognise that this Government is looking after them and they deserve to be supported by all members of Parliament. I thank members of the Opposition for their bipartisan approach and I look forward to working with them.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [4.40 p.m.], by leave: I support the motion moved by the member for Wollongong. Government members have a hide to pat themselves on the back after what they have done to public sector workers. This Government is good at slashing jobs, attacking unions and cutting employment conditions for the working people of New South Wales. We all know from debates in this place that between 800 and 1,000 jobs will go from BlueScope Steel. One would have thought that this Government would have recognised the urgent need to deliver employment in the Illawarra but it has not. As the Shellharbour electorate has the highest level of youth unemployment in New South Wales I would have thought that the Government would have had some plan for it in its budget. The 2011-2012 budget contained nothing for the people of the Illawarra, Shellharbour and Kiama.

To add insult to this already struggling region the Government decided to cap the wages of public sector workers at 2.5 per cent, remove their conditions of employment and, going straight for the jugular, remove the right of those workers to access the independent umpire in relation to any broad-ranging dispute, for example, unfair dismissal, underpayment of wages, classification structures, carers leave, sick leave, work-life balance clauses and much more. Any reading of the budget papers reveals that this Government has delivered nothing for the creation of projects in the Illawarra. This budget targets the most vulnerable people in the Illawarra.

As the member for Wollongong and the member for Kiama said earlier, this Government has broken its promises. However, tomorrow the workers of New South Wales, through their protest, will send a clear message to the Premier and his Government. Government members are referring to tomorrow as a day of chaos, which it may well be, but its decisions have impacted on the lives of working families in the Illawarra and on the people of New South Wales. Members would be aware that the Illawarra has one of the highest unemployment rates in New South Wales, but the Minister for Education is going out of his way to stop teachers from exercising their democratic right to protest. The Government is attacking unions, workers and the most vulnerable people in our community.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I remind the member for Shellharbour that she must be relevant to the motion about the Illawarra and not refer to action taken today in the Industrial Relations Commission.

Ms Noreen Hay: It is not a point of order.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It is not for the member for Wollongong to rule on a point of order. The member for Shellharbour will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON: This year the Illawarra region and its surrounding communities have been hit hard by several factors. As I said earlier, BlueScope's recent announcement is a blow for the people of the Illawarra. At least 800 permanent jobs have been cut and a blast furnace has been shut down at the 760-hectare facility. This is a devastating outcome for workers and their families who now fear the loss of a secure income stream. These cutbacks reflect the dark side of Australia's resources boom and signal that the nation's manufacturing industry is facing its worst crisis since the Great Depression.

I, together with my fellow Illawarra members of Parliament, recognise that the steel industry is facing many challenges at present with a high dollar, changing demand and stiff international competition. But there is simply no getting away from the very real human and economic costs of BlueScope's decision on the people of the Illawarra and beyond. We cannot change what has happened—pressures on manufacturing are real. However, we must protect local workers in our region who have been affected by these challenges, many of whom will feel the pinch further down the line if we do not intervene and act now. *[Time expired.]*

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [4.45 p.m.], by leave: I contribute to debate on this motion because of an earlier request from the Manager of Opposition Business to allow additional speakers from the opposition benches. The Government allowed this debate to occur without a vote because it recognised the need to support the people in Wollongong and to create employment opportunities in the Illawarra. The member for Kiama and I are disappointed that members of the Opposition have not suggested one new initiative in this debate to address unemployment in the Illawarra. I note that the member for Shellharbour referred to the high unemployment rate in the Shellharbour region. Why does it have such a high rate of unemployment? Who has been in government for 16 years in this State? Who represented her area?

This Government is making decisions for the people of Wollongong. A few days ago when the loss of jobs at BlueScope Steel was announced the Premier committed \$10 million, at the request of the Federal Government, and said that the State Government would support the people of Wollongong as needed. The Government remains steadfast in its commitment. However, the Leader of the House, the member for Kiama, the member for Heathcote and I expected Opposition members to put forward some proposals that could be used to deliver the sorts of outcomes that we want to achieve. Last Saturday when I attended the Wollongong local government elections I saw the member for Wollongong. The Liberal council was successful and was subsequently elected. I met many people from that area who tended to call me Daryl from Dapto.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Daryl from Dapto was a good greyhound.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: When I handed out how-to-vote cards I met many people who had lined up to express concern about the carbon tax. Those are the sorts of opportunities of which members should avail themselves as they will hear from those who live in these areas. They told me that they knew the State Government had to make some hard decisions. The decisions that this Government made in its 2011-2012 budget will deliver jobs in the Illawarra. It will create opportunities and money will be spent on roads and highways. How much?

Mr Gareth Ward: It is \$500 million over four years.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: That will create jobs in the Illawarra. There will be more nurses and more teachers. All of those initiatives create jobs for people at the coalface. In addition, this Government has joined the Federal Government in supporting the people of Wollongong. The Premier put \$10 million on the table, asked the Federal Government to contribute \$20 million and said that he would look at further initiatives. Not one member opposite who contributed to this debate has suggested one sensible initiative that will produce one job for the people of that region. That is why there is such a high unemployment rate.

Despite the fact that members opposite have failed their constituents and have not suggested any initiatives, they have the hide to ask that the debate be extended. It is no wonder the people of the Illawarra and Wollongong rejected Labor at the election. For too long they have got away with doing nothing other than chattering on and failing to deliver for the people of that region. I commend the member for Kiama for the way he presented initiatives during this debate. I also congratulate the member for Heathcote on his contribution. The next time members request an extension of time for debate and they carry on like this it will not be agreed to. *[Time expired.]*

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I do not want to single anyone out, but I draw members' attention to the contribution made by the member for Wagga Wagga. He did not raise his voice but he attracted the attention of members on both sides of the House.

Ms Noreen Hay: I never raise my voice.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wollongong will come to order. The member for Wollongong never listens to members when they are trying to make a point. If members make their contributions in a moderate fashion everyone listens.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [4.50 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions to this debate made by the members for Kiama, for Keira, for Heathcote and for Shellharbour. I can do little other than agree with the member for Wagga Wagga that he was in Dapto and, no, the dog did not win. It is true to say that the Liberal Party was successful in having one councillor elected in ward three—that was one out of four. If only we could cheer for that kind of victory. I obviously count differently from the member for Wagga Wagga. Given that the Liberal Party has never run a candidate in that ward previously I am not surprised that one of its candidates was elected. The member for Kiama said that members knew about the job losses before BlueScope's announcement. I did not know and I foolishly believed that the announcement was news to everyone. It is unfortunate that no member opposite saw fit to inform me as the local member of what was about to happen.

I am very disappointed that the member for Wagga Wagga said that members on this side of the House failed to put forward any proposals. I suggested that the Government relocate an agency such as the Department of Finances and Services or some other agency and thereby create employment opportunities and that it retrain some of the blue-collar workers. I take on board what the member for Heathcote said about retraining, but blast furnace workers would probably not be successful in obtaining those jobs. Members have spoken at length today about health investment. Everything that this Government has announced in the Health portfolio is a re-announcement of the Labor Government's policies over the past couple of years.

I announced the provision of 21 acute beds at Wollongong Hospital in 2010. The truth is that this Government has ripped off the people of the Illawarra. The Hon. Greg Pearce does not know where we are and that is probably why he never visits. If the member for Kiama intends to continue promoting Newcastle perhaps he should stand for election in that electorate. The people of the Illawarra are quite strange in that they think their representative should represent them. I know that is a bizarre concept for members opposite, but the member for Kiama should give it a go. He might enjoy it.

These measures are in addition to other funding cuts, including a \$50 million budget reduction in transport services and infrastructure projects in the Illawarra. Last year the Labor Government invested \$61 million in Illawarra-specific transport initiatives. That was in addition to wider funding for transport initiatives in the region. This year the O'Farrell Government has cut funding to just \$12 million and has initiated not one new transport project in the region. Wollongong pensioners will also be hit hard by the O'Farrell Government, with a \$10 weekly increase in social housing rents in response to their hard fought for \$30 pension increase. The Premier is ripping off our pensioners, including ex-servicemen, ex-servicewomen and war widows, to pay for his election promises, which are sending the budget into the red.

Illawarra first home buyers will miss out on stamp duty concessions worth tens of thousands of dollars. That means young first home buyers will need to find an average of between \$10,000 and \$20,000 extra before they can buy a home. I invite members opposite to tell me which young couples in their electorates can afford that. Foster carers will also have their allowances cut by more than \$212 a fortnight when their child turns 16. Illawarra carers who adopt children and young people in out-of-home care will have their allowances reduced. Why do members opposite hate preschools? They are increasing fees for government preschools, which will force mothers to stay at home because they cannot afford them. It is also an attack on the women working in those facilities because the demand for their services will decline. Members opposite should be ashamed of themselves.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I think the member for Wollongong is reading from the *Book of Revelation* and not her speech notes. Madam Acting-Speaker, please draw her back to the leave of the motion.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Why do you hate the *Book of Revelation*? [Time expired.]

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

Motion agreed to.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

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

COURTS AND OTHER LEGISLATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2011**Agreement in Principle****Debate resumed from 26 August 2011.**

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.58 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Courts and Other Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2011. The Opposition does not oppose this bill. The bill's objects are to amend the Civil Procedure Act 2005 to defer the application of part 2A of that Act; to amend the Guardianship Act 1987 to allow for the delegation by the Attorney General of his power to approve a place in which a person may be placed in the care of the director general under that Act; to amend the Land and Environment Court Act to confirm that certain applications by Aboriginal land councils are within class 3 of the Land and Environment Court's jurisdiction; and to limit the types of compensation in respect of which a victims offences levy should be paid.

The most substantive public policy issue in this bill is the deferral of part 2A of the Civil Procedure Act. The part was introduced by the Courts and Crimes Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2010. It was introduced into the other place by then Attorney General Hatzistergos on 24 November 2010. It was not opposed by the then Opposition and, as I read *Hansard*, elicited very little discussion on the part of Opposition members. It was an innovative scheme with much, in my view, to recommend it. The aim of the legislation was to encourage people whenever possible to resolve disputes outside the court system while ensuring that access to the courts remained. This is clearly of benefit to the State. The community generally benefits if court resources are used only for cases where resolution is not possible.

As well as benefiting the State by minimising the public resources used on the courts, it clearly has benefits to the parties involved. Parties were required to take reasonable steps to resolve civil disputes, or at least to narrow the issues before commencing court proceedings. The then Attorney General, when introducing the legislation, referred to the Government's alternative dispute resolution blueprint which was released in 2009 and he referred also to stakeholder submissions. There was a consultative committee consisting of senior representatives of the Supreme Court, the District Court and the Local Court, as well as representatives of the Bar Association, the Law Society and Legal Aid New South Wales, together with other representative groups.

Schedule 1 to the Act provides that part 2A of the Civil Procedure Act applies only to proceedings commenced 18 months after the bill before the House comes into effect, or such earlier date as may be proclaimed, which means that its implementation will be deferred by up to 18 months. The Attorney General, in introducing the bill, indicated that there were concerns about the practical implementation of the scheme. The Attorney General pointed out that similar procedures in the Federal legislation came into effect on 1 August 2011. A delay of 12 to 18 months is said to be appropriate to evaluate how it is implemented and to test whether the concerns that have been raised are realised in practice. The Attorney General noted that the postponement was supported by the Chief Justice, the Chief Judge of the District Court, the Chief Magistrate, the Law Society and the Bar Association. The Bar Association told me that it does not oppose a postponement.

The Opposition is very supportive of the previous Government's initiatives on the early resolution of civil disputes. We will not oppose this aspect of the bill, however, because of what I understand to be the Government's position. As I understand his position the Attorney General says that the Government still supports the principle enshrined in part 2A and sees merit in encouraging parties to resolve their disputes. The legislative method used here is postponement, not revocation, which is consistent with what I understand to be the Government's position. Granted that position is postponement rather than revocation, the Opposition will not oppose that portion of the bill.

The second proposal in this bill relates to one of the powers given by statute to the Attorney General and his power to delegate it. Responsibility for the Guardianship Act has recently been transferred from the Minister for Disability Services to the Attorney General. Prior to that transfer, the Minister for Disability Services had a power under section 13 of the Guardianship Act to approve a place in which a person could be placed in the care of the director general, at present the Director General of the Department of Family and Community Services. These premises were used for the placement of people removed from premises by order of the Guardianship Act, or removed under section 12 of the Act by the police. The Minister for Disability Services was able to delegate his power of approval to officers of what is now Ageing, Disability and Home Care. This delegation occurred under the Community Welfare Act. No such provision relates to the delegation of what are now the Attorney General's powers in this regard.

This legislation fills that gap and I consider it to be a sensible amendment. I note in passing that the Attorney said his urgent approval of premises under section 13 had recently been sought prior to Guardianship Tribunal hearings. I assume that relates to matters associated with the Grand Western Lodge. The third category of changes relates to appeals over land claims by Aboriginal land councils to the Land and Environment Court. These are applications pursuant to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Such proceedings are of great importance for the land rights legislation and have in recent years generated High Court litigation in the Wagga Wagga case. The importance of the regime established by the 1983 legislation was emphasised by Justice Kirby in that case when he described the scheme as "almost revolutionary". Certainly, as recently elected New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council Chair, Councillor Ryan, amongst others, has noted, this is the best land rights model in Australia.

It certainly delivers more real benefits than Mabo and native title to Aboriginal people. This amendment seems to put in statutory form what everyone assumed to be the case, but it is no less important for that. It clarifies that such claims by land councils—whether it be the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council or local Aboriginal land councils—against determinations about land claims are to be heard in class 3 of the Land and Environment Court jurisdiction. This is the current procedure but not expressly referred to in the legislation. This amendment resolves that and makes express in the Land and Environment Court what has to date been assumed. I sought advice in this respect from the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, Mr Stephen Wright, who wrote to me and said:

The proposal in relation to the amendment to section 19 of the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 No. 204 is entirely unobjectionable and is a welcome amendment, removing a lingering uncertainty about which Class in the Land and Environment Court is the appropriate jurisdiction for land claim appeals pursuant to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983.

It has always been considered that Class 3 is the appropriate jurisdiction, the proposed amendment confirms this.

I understand that this amendment was suggested by the Chief Justice of the Land and Environment Court in the interests of the proper administration of justice.

The last element of this bill is an amendment to the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act. This follows from amendments made by the Courts and Crimes Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2010. That 2010 legislation introduced a number of changes. Most significantly, for present purposes, that legislation extended the victims compensation levy to all offences. Prior to that, the position was that the levy was payable by people convicted of offences punishable by imprisonment, dealt with by particular courts. The levy was \$148 if the first offence was indictable and \$64 otherwise. The 2010 legislation extended the levy to all offences. It was estimated that this would yield an additional \$2.91 million per annum to the Victims Compensation Fund. There was discussion at that time of the financial pressures on the scheme.

Several weeks ago in this place, the Attorney announced a review of victims compensation that sounded as though he was planning to gut the scheme because of its cost. In that context, removing the obligation to pay the levy for some offences is curious. This legislation winds back the 2010 legislation and will reduce the income flowing to the fund. In the light of the Attorney's comments last week, it is ironic. The Opposition does not oppose this measure, but I do not see how it is consistent with the Attorney's comments about the escalation in the cost of the scheme. The current levy is \$67 for summary offences and \$153 for indictable offences. This amendment removes the obligation to pay the levy from those matters dealt with under section 10 (1) (a) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 and which are not punishable by imprisonment.

Section 10 deals with instances where the facts establishing an offence are proven but the court does not record a conviction and dismisses the charge. For older lawyers, it is the contemporary incarnation of section 556A. Section 10 orders for such offences are not so frequently issued as to impact significantly on the level of moneys flowing to the fund, although it is inconsistent with the Attorney's earlier comments. I note that I have had the benefit of advice from Harold Brown of the Victims of Crime Assistance League, who concurs with the approach adopted in this legislation. The Opposition does not oppose the bill.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.07 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the Courts and Other Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2011, which will make amendments to four Acts. It will amend the Civil Procedure Act 2005 to postpone for up to 18 months the application of part 2A of the Act; amend the Guardianship Act 1987 to enable the Attorney General to delegate the power to approve premises under section 13 of the Act, just as the Minister previously responsible for the Act was able to do so; amend the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 to make clear that appeals by an Aboriginal Land Council against a refusal of a

land claim fall within class 3 and not class 4 of the jurisdiction of the Land and Environment Court; and, finally, amend the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996 to limit the types of convictions in respect of which a victims compensation levy is payable under the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996.

As I just mentioned, this bill will amend four different Acts. Today I will focus on three of these amendments. This bill will amend the Civil Procedure Act 2005 to postpone the application of part 2A of the Act by 18 months in response to the regular legislative review and monitoring program that aims to improve the efficiency and operation of our courts. Pre-litigation requirements contained in part 2A were enacted in the Courts and Crimes Legislation Further Amendment Act. The intention of part 2A is to encourage resolution of civil disputes before they get to a courtroom and to reduce the length of the proceedings. Parties involved are required to take reasonable steps to resolve the dispute by agreement or to clarify or narrow the issues in dispute before commencing court action to reduce costs and the length of the proceedings. However, doubts and concerns have been expressed by stakeholders that part 2A may lengthen and increase costs for the parties involved.

Of particular concern to members of the legal profession and the judiciary is that the pre-litigation requirements could promote satellite litigation about what constitutes reasonable steps. Part 2A has valuable and potentially very workable goals, which will improve the efficiency of the justice system by freeing up courts to focus on disputes for which different forms of resolution have not been effective. To achieve these goals, a period of 18 months is required to test the concerns raised by stakeholders. During that time community justice centres, wholly funded by this Government, and New South Wales courts will continue to offer alternative dispute resolution programs. Schedule 1 to the bill will ensure just, quick and affordable resolution of court proceedings for the people of New South Wales.

The bill will also amend the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996. Schedule 4 to the bill will ensure that a person will not have to pay a victims compensation levy under the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996 where he or she obtains an order under the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 that directs the charge for an offence to be dismissed if the offence to which the order relates is not punishable by imprisonment. Currently, where a person has a charge for a summary offence dismissed that person still has to pay the levy that was established to assist in funding the Victims Compensation Scheme in New South Wales. Payment of this levy by a person who has had a charge dismissed can be interpreted as harsh and unnecessary as the offence, in most cases, is minor and extenuating circumstances have justified dismissal of the charge.

The Victims Compensation Scheme provides compensation to those injured by an act of violence such as assault, robbery, domestic violence or sexual assault in New South Wales. Those who are injured as a result of witnessing an act of violence, those trying to prevent someone from committing an act of violence, or parents or guardians of children who are injured as a result of learning about the act of violence can also claim compensation under the scheme. The scheme is important for victims of violent crimes and should be utilised by these victims. The Government acknowledges that the scheme needs to operate but at a reasonable cost to the community. The Government knows, unlike those on the other side, the costs the community deals with on a day-to-day basis and it also knows that the community does not need any unnecessary costs.

The Government wants to be sure that a person does not pay the levy for a dismissed or a relatively minor offence. The levy will still be payable for offences of a more serious nature punishable by imprisonment, even if a court dismisses the charges. This amendment will achieve the balance between providing adequate funding for victims while ensuring that the compensation levy is not unfairly imposed. The bill will also amend the Guardianship Act 1987 to enable the Attorney General to delegate the power to approve premises under section 13 of the Act. Approved premises are used to provide safe lodgings for people who have been removed from other premises under order of the Guardianship Tribunal under section 11 of the Act or by police under section 12 of the Act. This amendment will ensure that the Attorney General, as the Minister responsible for the Guardianship Act 1987, will be able to delegate the power of approval, as was previously the case for the Minister for Disability Services.

Guardianship orders may be made by the Guardianship Tribunal under section 14 of the Guardianship Act if the tribunal finds that a person is totally or partially incapable of managing his or her person because of a disability—that is, they require a guardian to make health and welfare decisions on their behalf. If an application for a guardianship order has been made with respect to a person, the Guardianship Tribunal may, if it considers it to be appropriate in the circumstances of the case, make an order under section 11 of the Guardianship Act for the removal of that person from any premises. An authorised officer or a member of the police force may, pursuant to the order, enter and search the premises for the person and remove that person from the premises.

The Act also enables individuals to be removed from premises by police pursuant to a search warrant under section 12 of the Guardianship Act and to be placed in the care of the director general. This may occur if the police have reasonable grounds for believing that a person in any premise appears to be in need of a guardian, is being unlawfully detained against his or her will, or is likely to suffer serious damage to his or her physical, emotional or mental health or wellbeing unless immediate action is taken. Individuals removed from premises pursuant to a guardianship order or search warrant are vulnerable and in need of urgent care. Decisions need to be made quickly. This bill will enable that to happen. The proposed amendment will allow the Attorney General to delegate his powers as to decisions about the care of these vulnerable people. The Government clearly has the best interests of the people of this great State in mind. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [5.16 p.m.]: The Courts and Other Legislation Further Amendments Bill 2011 seeks to make miscellaneous amendments to courts-related legislation and other legislation administered by the Attorney General. The bill seeks to amend four Acts: the Civil Procedure Act 2005, the Guardianship Act 1987, the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 and the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996. The bill will amend the Civil Procedure Act 2005 to postpone the commencement of part 2A of the Act. Part 2A refers to measures to encourage parties to early resolution of disputes. It requires parties to resolve disputes by agreement or to narrow the issues in dispute prior to commencing court action.

The legislation also talks about reasonable steps to resolving disputes. Concern has been expressed that although the principles are sound, and whilst they have received general support from the judiciary, in practice the reforms could give rise to further litigation as to what constitutes "reasonable steps" and this could lead to further cost for both litigants and courts. The intent of the original bill was to encourage parties to resolve their disputes or to clarify the real issues in dispute before commencing court action. Court resources would thus be lessened and there would be less cost for the disputing parties. The Commonwealth Parliament passed similar legislation in May 2011. It is anticipated that the effect of this legislation should be monitored for 12 to 18 months to see whether the concerns raised by stakeholders will eventuate. The Government believes it should defer the application of part 2A until the effects, if any, are determined.

The transfer of responsibility for the Guardianship Act from the Minister for Disability Services to the Attorney General in June 2011 requires the Act to be amended. This amendment will enable the Attorney General to delegate power to approved premises under section 13 of the Act. Approved premises are used to provide safe housing for people who have been removed from other premises under the order of the Guardianship Tribunal or by police. The Minister for Disability Services was previously responsible for this function. The amendment to the Land and Environment Court Act will clarify that certain appeals by an Aboriginal land council will fall within class 3 of the jurisdiction of the Land and Environment Court. Class 3 matters are those in which appeals are heard by way of rehearing and new evidence may be considered.

The Land and Environment Court Act also provides that class 3 matters are conducted with minimal formality and allows commissioners with specialist knowledge of matters concerning land rights to assist a judge hearing these matters. The Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996 is amended so that the victims compensation court levy does not apply to matters where charges are dismissed under section 10 (1) (a) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, except where an offence is punishable by imprisonment. The victims compensation court levy is imposed where a conviction is recorded, except for those exempted by the legislation. These levies are put into a fund from which all payments of statutory compensation to victims of crime, approved counselling services and other victims service-related costs are paid.

At present those found guilty of an offence but because of extenuating circumstances—for example, they have no criminal record or have a good driving record—have the charge dismissed are still required to pay the levy. This proposed amendment will seek not to apply such payment. Many people have argued that this levy may seem harsh as in most cases the offence is minor and the person has a history of good behaviour. The Government wants to ensure that vulnerable people who are often the ones facing these offences are not financially disadvantaged even though the case has been dismissed. Key stakeholders have been thoroughly consulted about these amendments. All the amendments pertaining to this bill have been recommended to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the New South Wales court system. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [5.21 p.m.]: As previous speakers have said, this bill amends four specific Acts. The bill contains a number of issues. I am pleased that the Attorney General has addressed those issues but, more importantly, provided transparency and consulted the legal fraternity far and wide as well as many victims groups. It is good to see such changes starting to filter through in this legislation. The first

amendments relate to the Civil Procedure Act 2005. The Government remains committed to finding new ways of promoting early resolution to disputes in appropriate circumstances, reducing the cost of litigation and increasing efficiencies in court. However, it is not clear at this time whether some of the unintended consequences relating to part 2A, as predicted by stakeholders, will be realised in practice.

I agree with the Attorney General that the commencement of part 2A should be postponed so that we can see the effects of the Commonwealth legislation in the family law courts. I have a strong belief that often hardworking people cannot go to court to settle their disputes because of the fairly significant costs and charges involved. The quicker we can resolve many of these disputes, the better it will be for everyone. The amendment to the Guardianship Act 1987 enables the Attorney General to delegate the power to approve premises under section 13 of the Act. Approved premises are used to provide safe lodgings for people who have been removed from other premises under order of the Guardianship Tribunal under section 11 of the Act, or removed from premises by police. The amendment will ensure that the Attorney General as the Minister responsible for the Guardianship Act will be able to delegate the power of approval, as was previously the case for the Minister for Disability Services.

People in the local area of the Tweed have had a fair amount to do with the Guardianship Act. Any clarification and tightening up of the Act is to be applauded because it is usually used at a traumatic time in people's lives, both young and old. The more open we can make the process, the better it will be for everyone. The amendment to the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 clarifies the right of appeal of Aboriginal land councils under section 36 (7). Once again, people in the lovely area of the Tweed have a significant interest in the Land and Environment Court. We have a proactive land council. At times one might say that the Tweed Aboriginal land council has a permanent booking in the Land and Environment Court, usually between 9.00 a.m. and 12.00 p.m. on a Wednesday. I endorse any clarification of the Act that will make it easier for people in the community to understand.

Finally, the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996 is amended so that the victims compensation court levy does not apply in matters where charges are dismissed under section 10 (1) (a) of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999, except where an offence is punishable by imprisonment. Once again, I have seen some fairly harsh rulings and judgements. This amendment clarifies the situation and removes unduly harsh cases, where money was being paid by people with no criminal record and a good driving history. Once again, I support all the legislation. The Attorney General and the hardworking staff in his department should be applauded. The staff are always ready to give advice, and they are a great tribute to the Attorney General's Department. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [5.25 p.m.]: I support the Courts and Other Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2011. The bill makes a number of amendments to several Acts for the purpose of enhancing the efficiency and operation of our courts and other agencies. The amendments include an amendment to the Civil Procedure Act 2005 to postpone the commencement of the pre-litigation requirements contained in part 2A of the Act by up to 18 months; an amendment to the Guardianship Act 1987 to enable the Attorney General to delegate the power to approve premises under section 13 of the Act, as the Minister previously responsible for the Guardianship Act was able to do; an amendment to the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 to make it clear that appeals by an Aboriginal land council against a refusal of a land claim fall within class 3 of the Land and Environment Court's jurisdiction and not class 4; and an amendment to the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996 to limit the types of convictions in respect of which a victims compensation levy is payable under the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act 1996.

I will contain my comments to the amendment to the Civil Procedure Act 2005. The intention of this amendment is to ensure that the costs of litigation are kept to a minimum. The intention of part 2A was to ensure that costs were kept to a minimum. However, there would appear to be research and stakeholders who have made a contribution that indicate that this section of the Act may not necessarily achieve that aim. I was a lawyer in my previous profession. In my work in commercial litigation and insolvency law I participated in mediations in an attempt to settle cases, where the aim is usually to minimise the costs incurred. In my practice I found that the opportunity to settle may not necessarily occur at the commencement of a matter. Sometimes, whether through discovery or the exchange of evidence, only later in the litigation process would it become apparent that one party may find it in their interests to settle.

Under the current part 2A regime, costs may increase when litigants put themselves in a position where they are forced to, or must, take reasonable steps to settle a matter, which may not be in their interests at the time. That may prejudice a possible potential settlement down the track. Another issue the Attorney General

raised in his agreement in principle speech was the prospect of satellite litigation that may arise in respect of whether a party has taken reasonable steps to resolve a dispute. I note that this is only postponing a review for a period of 18 months to consider and monitor the Commonwealth legislation. Another court affected is the Family Court. That is an important step and obviously one that the department and the Attorney General monitor closely to ensure that as a Government we are committed to keeping down the costs associated with litigation and that if there are prospects for settlement that that is achieved. It is an important bill and I commend it to the House.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [5.31 p.m.] in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate, particularly the members for Liverpool, Camden, Blue Mountains, Tweed and Castle Hill. The bill contains miscellaneous amendments arising from the regular review of courts-related legislation and other legislation administered by my department. The amendments will ensure that court procedures continue to be as effective as possible and that decisions about the future of part 2A of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 are based upon evidence rather than speculation. Those amendments allowing a delay of the provisions have been well received by the profession and amongst the media that take an interest in these matters, particularly the legal section of *The Australian*, which appears in the newspaper on Friday, and I am pleased to see that. The amendments will also support the effective administration of justice in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! It being close to 5.45 p.m. the House will now proceed with General Business Notices of Motions.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES AMENDMENT BILL 2011

CROWN LAW OFFICERS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RETIREMENT AGE) BILL 2011

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

INDIGENOUS LITERACY

Matter of Public Importance

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.39 p.m.]: Today, Wednesday 7 September 2011, is Indigenous Literacy Day, which originated in 2004 as a means of raising awareness and resources to combat the disparity in Indigenous literacy compared with the literacy levels of mainstream Australians. Indigenous Literacy Day comes under the umbrella of the Indigenous Literacy Foundation, which is a not-for-profit organisation that aims to challenge Indigenous literacy rates, not by research or reports but by placing books in the hands of Indigenous children and adults to tackle the issue head-on. The Indigenous Literacy Foundation was not instituted by some government body but by an everyday person—a person who saw firsthand the issues facing Indigenous youths and adults.

This everyday person was a Queenslander named Suzy Wilson. Suzy was an educator and owner of the bookstore Riverbend Books. In 2004 Suzy instigated the Riverbend Readers' Challenge, which inspired students

from 112 schools to participate and raise funds for Indigenous literacy. That year Suzy, along with the students who participated in the inaugural challenge, read more than 38,000 books and raised \$25,000 to improve Indigenous literacy. In 2005, after much lobbying, Suzy gained the support of the Australian book industry, the Australian Publishers Association, the Australian Booksellers Association and the Australian Society of Authors and instigated the Australian Readers' Challenge.

In 2006, together with the Fred Hollows Foundation and the Ian Thorpe Foundation for Youth trust, the first Australian Readers' Challenge raised more than \$80,000 to combat Indigenous illiteracy. In the following year, 2007, more than \$250,000 was raised. It was in 2007 that the Australian Readers' Challenge became the Indigenous Literacy Challenge. To highlight the importance of the cause it was given community recognition by the very first Indigenous Literacy Day. In that first Indigenous Literacy Challenge in 2007 more than 350 schools, 48 bookshops and publishers and 64 libraries participated and more than 150,000 books were read.

In 2011 what started off as an idea to address an underlying social problem in Australia became a fully fledged foundation with full charity status. In the course of seven years that idea has evolved to become a grassroots movement that in 2010 has resulted in distribution of more than 60,000 books over a 24-month period to more than 200 communities across Australia. Communities in Brewarrina, Wilcannia, Ivanhoe, Enngonia, Bourke, Menindee, Broken Hill, Jerrinja, Kempsey, Parkes, Coonabarabran, Boggabilla and Coonamble were all recipients of books from the foundation.

Indigenous Literacy Day not only combats Indigenous literacy rates but also ensures that communities in general are aware of one of the most potent issues affecting Indigenous Australians today. The disparity speaks for itself. It is an indictment on our community that in this day and age, in a country such as Australia and indeed in a State such as New South Wales, there are sections of our community that are overly represented in the bottom echelons of standardised literacy testing. The results of the 2009 National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy tests indicated that in remote Indigenous schools, representing 20,000 Indigenous students, only 15 per cent of students met the national minimum standards. That means 85 per cent of all Indigenous participants in remote schools fell below the minimum standards in comparison with the 10 per cent failure rate for non-Indigenous participants in the same tests.

In education, in general the 2011 Indigenous disadvantage indicators of the Productivity Commission highlighted the disparity in educational attendance and retention throughout Australia. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students' attendances was outstanding with a 5 per cent difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students enrolled in year 10 in New South Wales. Furthermore, Indigenous students had lower attendance rates across the board in all States and all levels across Australia compared with their non-Indigenous counterparts. In 2008, 64.8 per cent of Indigenous people aged 15 years and older reported leaving school before completing year 11 or year 12 in comparison with 39.5 per cent of non-Indigenous people aged 15 years and older.

As members of this Chamber are only too aware by now, before my election to the Fifty-fifth Parliament I was a teacher in western Sydney. One of the most poignant experiences I had as a teacher in my first year out from university was teaching a young Aboriginal boy by the name of Namatjira Skuthorpe at Parramatta Marist High School at Westmead. At that time, young Namatjira was a student in my design and technology class. Namatjira loved working with his hands. Practical projects basically were what inspired Namatjira to achieve in the subject. When I needed extra help Namatjira was the first to volunteer. That showed the level of dedication and passion he had for design and technology. However, despite Namatjira's love of practical projects he struggled when completing the design folio written work component of the course. Furthermore, Namatjira feared class tests and small in-class assessments. For me, Namatjira was a firsthand example of the effects of the disparity in Indigenous literacy levels.

Despite his passion for the subject and the possibilities it could have opened up for his future direction, Namatjira's success in the field would almost have been limited because of his level of literacy. From my experiences, literacy opens up the doorway to opportunity. It breaks down the barrier of poverty. Following my experience with Namatjira I was privileged to have taught other Indigenous children in western Sydney. While those children were all keen and eager to work practically in my subject area of design and technology, much like Namatjira they struggled when it came to literacy. I have witnessed many children regarding the task of reading and writing as all too much. Addressing the fear of the written word would go a long way towards addressing some of the socioeconomic issues facing Indigenous Australians. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

In 2010 the Australian Government's Productivity Commission published a report linking literacy and numeracy skills with labour market outcomes. The report indicated that people with higher levels of education

earn higher wages and, more importantly, were more likely to be in the labour market. Further, it noted the positive effect educational attainment had on a person's labour market participation. How fitting it is that tonight we pay tribute to a cause that aims to do something about the disparities of Indigenous literacy by doing the very thing that will tackle the issue: putting the books in the hands of Indigenous Australians. I commend the organisers of Indigenous Literacy Day and the thousands of participants who are part of a solution to one of the biggest issues affecting our community today.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.47 p.m.]: I commend the member for Fairfield for bringing this very important matter to the attention of the House. Indigenous Literacy Day is a national day that is intended to assist in fundraising and improvement in the lives and opportunities of Aboriginal Australians who live in remote and isolated regions. I would not describe the North Coast as a remote or isolated region but part of the region has a very high Indigenous population. The inequities are apparent every day, and it saddens me to see kids on the streets who should be at school. Often the reason for their truancy is that their literacy levels are not up to standard. They are embarrassed so they do not go to school, or they ensure they are suspended from school, to hide their feelings of inadequacy over not being able to reach a certain literacy level that is achieved by other kids.

It is very important to address these problems at an early stage. Only today I made three phone calls to three North Coast preschools to inform them of a grant of \$5,000. The grants are intended to assist in improving literacy levels at an early stage in preschools, especially preschools where high proportions of Indigenous kids are enrolled. The program is designed to give young people a chance to gain advantage from opportunities that exist in preschools and to obtain the assistance they need at a very early age. They say that a dollar spent in a child's early years is probably \$14 dollars saved at a later stage. I know that positive measures to address inadequate levels of literacy mean a lot to young people.

The issue of literacy and numeracy is solidly in my area on the North Coast, which has a 36 per cent unemployment rate of Aboriginal youth compared with the wider community average of about 10 per cent. There are real inequities and very little encouragement is given through family networks to support those children. A great initiative is Fresh Start, put together by the education department's North Coast director, Ron Phillips. Recently at the 2011 Nanga Mai awards the Fresh Start Aboriginal education and employment package won a prestigious State award for outstanding regional innovation. The annual New South Wales Schools Nanga Mai awards celebrate and recognise innovation, excellence and achievement in Aboriginal education in public schools, school communities and Department of Education and Communities regional and State offices.

The gong follows an announcement earlier in the year by Baillieu Myer, AC, chairman of the Yulgilbar Foundation, who confirmed the foundation's backing of the Fresh Start initiative with \$44,000 to assist with coordination. The program works in partnership with businesses, TAFE, and Clarence Valley high schools years 10, 11 and 12 to get youth into employment such as nursing, aged care, building and carpentry or mechanics, which will go towards the Higher School Certificate mark of participants. The employment can lead to apprenticeships and is very successful in its early stages. We need to break the cycle of expectation of unemployment and no future. We have to give the kids a future that they deserve. Fresh Start should be recognised and backed by all forms of government to support our Indigenous communities.

I have seen Aboriginal children hanging around the streets and overrepresented before the courts day in, day out. I am sad because we can do very little for them at this stage but we need to start by giving a future to the younger children through education in literacy and numeracy to get them up to scratch. People who are adept in numeracy and literacy have a good chance to get a job and go on to a good and normal life that all Australians expect, but they have to be given the opportunity.

Improving literacy levels for all Aboriginal students in New South Wales public schools is a key priority for the Government's literacy and numeracy plan, and a key feature of the work of the Minister's Advisory Group on literacy and numeracy. The 2010 National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy data indicate that there is a significant gap in the outcomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students in NAPLAN reading and writing tests. At each year level a lower proportion of Aboriginal students met the minimum standard compared with non-Aboriginal students. In both reading and writing the proportion of Aboriginal students in New South Wales meeting the national minimum standard tends to decrease with years of schooling. We need to encourage students to stay at school and give them an interest in school activities.

A major breakdown in getting these kids to stay at school and move on with a good life is because when they truant from school and are suspended they cannot keep up with the curriculum. They should have

extra, intense tuition away from school so that when they return to school they can hold their head high as they know how to add up and read a book. If they cannot they will not bother going to school, will rebel again and be suspended. We need to tackle those issues. Programs are already underway but they need to be intensified to provide more encouragement in Aboriginal communities. The Ngaru Aboriginal community at Yamba is looking at putting a preschool in the mission so that kids can go to preschool and get early intervention. Educators in preschools say that children who do not attend preschool are disadvantaged for the rest of their lives. We need to support these kids whenever we can. I commend the member for Fairfield for raising this matter.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [5.54 p.m.]: I will state the aims of the Indigenous Literacy Day. I will quote a source from the Federal Department of Education, Science and Training analysing the overlap between students' underachievement in literacy and poor health. I will state the reasons why I am so delighted to take part in this discussion on Indigenous Literacy Day and give my personal experiences of working in a remote and disadvantaged school in north-western New South Wales. I will also talk about the critical need to attract quality teachers to remote and disadvantaged schools.

The aim of Indigenous Literacy Day is to raise literacy levels and improve the lives and opportunities of Indigenous Australians living in remote and isolated regions, which is a really sound aim. I will quote an analysis of the Department of Education, Science and Training in 2005 of the overlap between students' underachievement in literacy and their poor health, behavioural health, and wellbeing that is relevant to the topic. It recognised the importance of literacy in a child's education since literacy competency is foundational, which means it is very important in the formative years not only for school-based learning but also for the psychosocial wellbeing of students. It also argued that there is a correlation between an individual's education, including literacy levels, and an individual's behavioural health. Studies show that people with poor education also have poor behavioural health and wellbeing. As such, what should be an educational issue has become a systemic social issue.

I will mention the consequences of behaviour that arise and what I saw when I was first appointed to Walgett High School. Frankly, at the age of 21 I did not know where Walgett was until I talked to my father, who was a truck driver. I did not want to go to Walgett because it was too far away. However, my father quickly reminded me, as I referred to in my inaugural speech, that I had spent all those years at university talking about the fact that everybody, rich or poor, deserves an equal quality of education and, therefore, those kids at Walgett also deserved that and therefore I should go—and I did. It was the best experience a young teacher could have. Following four years at Walgett I spent six years at Kempsey. I can say that I have had a great deal of experience teaching disadvantaged students, many of them Aboriginal.

When I was at Walgett half the students—the proportion has increased since then—had an Aboriginal background. They came from the mission and the reserve. I grew up in a family that did not have much wealth and lived in Housing Commission homes. When I first visited the mission and the reserve with some Aboriginal friends I realised that I was quite wealthy. The living conditions of these people were horrendous, which no doubt contributed to their behaviours at school. My primary school teacher friends at Walgett talked to me about the lack of school readiness of these kids from really poor backgrounds. Many of the children at the infants school had never learned to brush their teeth, they were not school-ready and were not toilet trained.

For a long time many of those students who lived on the reserve and mission did not have electricity in their house or running water. They could not read or write. When those kids begin school they are already disadvantaged compared with students in city areas. I appreciated that because I saw how remoteness contributes to high unemployment and poor literacy levels. Kids at those schools often lived in communities that suffer endemic high unemployment because of their remoteness from the city and work experience. It is vital that we attract quality teachers to those remote schools because that will help to improve the literacy of Aboriginal children, and that is critical.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.59 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contribution of the member for Clarence. He clearly articulated his experiences with the Aboriginal communities and particularly young Aboriginals in his electorate. He pointed out that because of their low literacy skills some young people are afraid to go to school. They truant and hang around in town and generally rebel. The member for Clarence also referred to the preschools grant that is providing extra money to facilities in his electorate to assist children to get a good start prior to going to primary school. I am sure that members on both sides of the House agree that that is essential for the development of our children's literacy and numeracy skills. As the member said, a one

day a week program has been initiated to get young Indigenous people into employment. That allows them to experience working in various fields, whether it be with an electrician, a carpenter or in the hospitality field, and to develop basic skills.

I also acknowledge the contribution made by the member for Wallsend, who referred to the aim of Indigenous Literacy Day to raise the level of literacy in Indigenous communities. I pay particular tribute to her for the work she carried out in her early teaching days in Walgett. She shared her experiences and pointed out that poor literacy leads to physical and mental disadvantage later in life. I thank her for drawing that to the attention of the House. I am sure that her experiences inspired her to give her best to those Indigenous students under her care. As she said, Indigenous preschool students in remote areas are disadvantaged compared with city preschoolers.

I am sure that the member for Clarence, the member for Wallsend and I agree that there should be equality in education, that our children must have every opportunity to learn to read and write and that no child should be left behind. Of course, a great deal more work can always be done. I acknowledge all stakeholders for raising awareness of Indigenous literacy and the importance of helping children in remote communities to get the best possible start in life. As I said, we must break the chain of poverty so that they can succeed in life. I also thank members for agreeing to extend my speaking time earlier.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HUNTER HOMELESS CONNECT DAY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [6.05 p.m.]: The Hunter Homeless Connect Day is a unique community-based event run by a partnership of like-minded businesses and charities with the aim of assisting the homeless in and around the Hunter. Government and non-government organisations work alongside charities and volunteers to provide those in need with the equipment and skills they require to get their lives back on track. Initiated by various organisations, including the State and Federal governments, Hunter New England Health, Hunter TAFE, NSW Housing, the Department of Human Services, Red Cross, Mission Australia, the Salvation Army, the Samaritans, Community Housing and Job Services Australia, the events offered clients a huge range of services ranging from haircuts, manicures and vaccinations to help with Medicare. They relied solely on the work of volunteers from the area who were willing to give a few hours of their time to help those in a much worse position than themselves.

Clients were provided with free transport to and from the venue at the police and community youth club Broadmeadow, legal and financial services, accommodation and housing help, youth and family services, employment aid and a health centre that provided immunisation and health checks, mental health services, and dental and podiatry services. Clients were provided with services that they would normally have trouble accessing. To make the day even more enjoyable free food, entertainment, recreational activities, coffee, family activities, photography and so on were provided.

How do we define homelessness? It refers to anyone who is without stable accommodation and includes those sharing facilities and those in shelters. Data collected in the 2006 census indicates that there were about 200 homeless people in the Hunter area, 27,374 people homeless in New South Wales and 105,000 in Australia. That demonstrates that homelessness is still a big problem in our country. Therefore, the more that we all do the better the situation will be for these people. Homelessness is a difficult and worrying issue facing our country and our State. It is something which comes in many different guises and which affects many different people across all demographics. It is often greeted with prejudice and judgement.

It is also often very difficult for people without stable accommodation to work towards regaining a secure living arrangement. Whether it is due to health problems, unemployment, domestic violence, family breakdown, mental illness, sexual assault, drug addiction, financial problems, alcoholism or gambling, each individual has his or her own reason for being homeless and they all face different problems. It is for that reason I offer my hearty thanks and congratulations to the many people who gave up their time to help on Homelessness Connect Day. Providing clients with the opportunity to get a free haircut, a manicure, a massage and chiropractic services allowed them access to privileges that they cannot normally afford. I am not surprised that the hairdressers were fully booked by midday.

It was great to see the TAFE students offering free hairdressing vouchers for anyone who did not get a slot on the day. The health facilities provided at the events were also extremely popular and potentially lifesaving for many participants because they allowed them to have free vaccinations and health checks that they would not otherwise have received. What is more, with Medicare representatives there to talk to guests about their rights and entitlement to free services, many went away with a much greater chance of receiving health care when they needed it. Guests were also provided with free clothes, food, washing facilities, blankets and products such as toothpaste and soap.

The event received no specific funding and is run using contributions from all the participating services and funds raised by events such as the Woolly Hat Day held in July. Students from the Callahan College campuses at Wallsend, Jasmine and Waratah raised \$200 for the event. The day's achievements can be best demonstrated by how it helped a gentleman named Gerry. Thanks to the organisers he was able to secure lodging in a hostel, got an application for a free birth certificate and checked his Centrelink payments. It is fantastic to see people working together to organise such a great event for people less fortunate than themselves. I hope that the event continues to be held. It shows that we care.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [6.09 p.m.]: On behalf of the Government I thank the member for Wallsend for her speech and also thank those who were involved in Homeless Connect Day. Some 200 people are homeless in the Hunter. This day was brought about by the community, not government, to support those individuals. I was particularly pleased to hear the involvement of TAFE in the process. I commend the member for Wallsend for her words this evening.

ST IVES YOUTH PRECINCT

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [6.10 p.m.]: It is a fundamental right of all Australians to be able to take part in their local community to help contribute and create positive changes. It strengthens local communities and the nation as a whole. The New South Wales Government's Community Building Partnership Program is an excellent agent for such positive community development. It allows individuals and organisations within the local communities to join forces with the State Government to promote necessary and meaningful projects that target key issues within our local communities and generate solutions that are based on local knowledge and needs.

The grant outcomes of the scheme in my electorate of Davidson are varied, with 14 grants approved on my recommendation in 2010. The largest of these was \$150,000 for a revamp of the St Ives Village Green to incorporate a specialised youth precinct and the relocation of the local Boy Scouts and Girl Guides accommodation. It is a project that helps address key issues within the St Ives town centre, such as increased youth-related crime, especially graffiti, as well as growth in population associated with increased residential densities in St Ives.

The planned youth precinct works are part of a 10-year master plan by Ku-ring-gai Council for the village green. The master plan deals with key issues in the areas of planning, development and youth issues in a way that undoubtedly will help ease pressure and allow for the community to flourish. The proposed changes include the expansion of the existing BMX skate park and improved lighting, which should help counter the growing vandalism and graffiti around the area. This youth precinct also will strive to further incorporate the Fitz Youth Centre into the plan to promote positive rather than antisocial behaviour. This will be pursued through holding safe and monitored under-age events at the centre, as well as providing the youth of the area with a place to go after school and facilitating an opportunity for legitimate graffiti artists to express their work in a legal and suitable manner.

An agreement has been reached to consolidate the Boy Scouts facility with existing scouting premises at Warrimoo Oval, which will be extended. The Girl Guides will move to the existing Warrimoo Oval soccer clubhouse, which will receive a new roof, new kitchen, disabled toilet, insulation and disabled access. A new clubhouse for the soccer association will be built overlooking the oval. The project will help to address certain local issues relating to youth, while ensuring the rest of the local population can safely enjoy this public space.

It is vital to the local council, which has had to consider the effects of a large increase in dwellings and new residents on the public amenities, spaces and services of St Ives. In the council's words, this program should create a "more liveable and sustainable area". This issue presents the greatest challenge for the council in the area and its 10-year plan for the St Ives Village Green. Unfortunately, the former New South Wales

Government failed to ensure that public services, infrastructure and local transport would be able to cope and support the rapid growth and development in St Ives, an issue about which I have spoken many times in this Chamber in the past.

The St Ives youth precinct project is an initiative of Ku-ring-gai Council, and I acknowledge its considerable financial contribution to the project. I am pleased that the New South Wales Government has been able to support the council and the local St Ives community through the Community Building Partnership Program, on my recommendation. I also am delighted that in yesterday's budget the new Treasurer confirmed that this program will continue for another year to provide funds for community groups and local councils to invest in community infrastructure throughout New South Wales, thus contributing to positive social, recreational and environmental outcomes.

PRETTY PINE FATHER'S DAY EXPO AND MARKET

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [6.15 p.m.]: On 4 September 2011, last Sunday, I had the honour of opening and event at Pretty Pine. For the information of members, Pretty Pine is about 15 kilometres west of Deniliquin. Pretty Pine is aptly named because it is a magnificent part of the world. The Pretty Pine Father's Day Expo and Market was held in ideal surroundings. The Pretty Pine committee, which is made up mostly of the local farming community, runs this successful event to raise funds for a range of worthy causes in the area. The committee consists of a well-organised group of people. They each have allocated duties and all know what they have to do for this well-run event.

The father's day expo is a family day. The weather was fine and the expo was well attended. Many people drove from Deniliquin to attend the event. Those who did attend had a very good day. I will highlight a couple of events. All-day events included a blacksmith and farrier, who demonstrated his skills; Clydesdales, which were a great attraction, particularly for the young; a petting zoo; and a jumping castle. An interesting competition that was held involved a Morse code operator competing against people texting messages. The Morse code versus texting competition was a unique attraction, one that I had never seen before. The Morse code operator was very skilled. I did not see the final results but he competed well against the new generation of texters.

A Yak aeroplane performed aerobatics above the Pretty Pine Recreation Reserve. Many people in attendance stopped to watch this amazing demonstration. Another interesting event was the flat chat dog race, which provided the opportunity for everyone to bring along their mutts. The dogs did not have to be of pedigree breed. The owners got into the spirit of the event and we saw some interesting dogs. Some amazing breeding has been taking place in the Conargo shire. I saw kids hanging off the leash of some very unusual dogs. It was a great event. Pretty Pine is in the Conargo shire. A hall has been built in virtually every community in the shire.

Pretty Pine Recreation Hall, which was used during the expo, is also used for council meetings. The halls in the Conargo shire attract great community support. Pretty Pine Recreation Hall housed art and other static displays as part of the event. It is a credit to people who have put in the hard work. The first question my old mate Bluey Turner put to me was, "Have you got a responsible service of alcohol certificate?", to which I replied, "Yes." He said, "Righto, you are on in the bar." I spent a couple of hours working in the bar, which was an enjoyable experience because it presented me with the opportunity to catch up with a few constituents.

WESTHAVEN ASSOCIATION

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.20 p.m.]: Some weeks ago I took the opportunity to visit the Westhaven Association in Dubbo. The organisation provides vocation, employment and housing support for people in the Dubbo area with disabilities. It is a privilege to draw to the attention of the House the great work that the Westhaven Association does in my electorate. Westhaven is best known for manufacturing sheepskin Ugg boots, which it has been making since 1976. In the heydays of 1987 Westhaven employed more than 210 people with a disability and produced 150,000 Ugg boots annually.

After some recent legal battles over the use of the brand "Ugg", an influx of other manufacturers and cheap overseas imitations, that market has declined considerably. In 1973 the factory was destroyed by fire and then rebuilt in Hawthorn Street, Dubbo, where it is now known as Westhaven Business Services. Westhaven employs 65 people with a disability. They are engaged in various stages of the production of Ugg boots—although in smaller numbers than their previous production levels—utilising their finely-honed skills in cutting, sewing, trimming and quality control.

In addition, the employees engage in activities such as document destruction, lawn mowing and garden works. They also undertake component assembly, constructing components that go up the backside of a sheep at the local abattoirs called a butt plug. The association is constantly looking for businesses to partner with it and to encourage its employees to become valued members of the community. Westhaven supplies its workers with accommodation facilities that are funded by the State. I thank the Minister for Disability Services for his ongoing support for disability services within the Dubbo electorate, as announced in the budget on Tuesday. Those services are on the front foot in my electorate due to the contributions of the Minister for Disability Services.

The first accommodation service was established in 1957 in a small school on the corner of Palmer and Cobra streets in Dubbo to assist 17 mentally and physically handicapped children. By 1980 a village-style accommodation facility was built on the present Wheelers Lane site. It played host to a visit from the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, and his wife, Tamie. These days the facility provides person-centred services to 62 residential group home clients and 21 drop-in support clients in and around Dubbo. Emergency respite services are also available. The Westhaven Association is a vital organisation in my community. It provides paid jobs and offers accommodation to people who otherwise would not have an opportunity to participate in society in a useful way.

I enjoyed my time with the employees at Westhaven immensely. It has a real sense of community. When I hear the Premier and Deputy Premier speak about the intent of this Government, I feel proud that one of the things they often refer to is that we trust and want to empower our local communities. The people associated with Westhaven in Dubbo are a great example of people who are empowering themselves. The State Government is providing them with the assistance to do so. The Government is giving a hand up, not a handout. Westhaven is a terrific organisation with a real sense of community. The people are proud of their work. They taught me how to assemble the component mechanism they use for the butt plugs.

The Westhaven workers get joy and value from the work they do and clearly feel that they are contributing to the community. Roger Fletcher, who engages them in this process, runs the largest sheep abattoir in the Southern Hemisphere. He tells me that the components they provide make that part of his industry viable. The workers at Westhaven are making a significant contribution to an important employer in my electorate, which demonstrates the worth of just one of the things they produce. When a birthday is to be celebrated the whole team comes together and joins in a goodwill birthday song, which I had the pleasure to participate in. It is a ton of fun and I look forward to returning to Westhaven to share a day with them. I know they will be watching—so G'day guys, I'll see you soon.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [6.25 p.m.]: I thank the member for Dubbo for bringing the Westhaven Association to the attention of the House. Westhaven is a terrific regional-based disability services enterprise that provides an array of services. I have seen the work it does first hand. I am grateful to the member for raising Westhaven in the House this evening. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is determined to assist local communities by providing more services to people in regional New South Wales. A large component of the approximately \$1.2 billion of disability services funding that will be rolled out over the next 12 months is earmarked for rural and regional areas. Westhaven does a wonderful job. I congratulate it on the work it does.

THE SAPPHIRES

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.26 p.m.]: Coober Pedy has its opals and the Kimberley has its diamonds, but Albury has its Sapphires. Over late August and into September, filming was underway in Albury and surrounding towns for the long-awaited movie about the indigenous 1960s all-female singing group, The Sapphires. First there was the successful stage musical; now we have the film. Albury hosted the cast and crew of The Sapphires for over two weeks before the production returned to Sydney. I was delighted to be part of Albury City Council's welcoming function on stage at the Albury Entertainment Centre and then to visit the set last Thursday. The filming has been a great coup for our region, with direct positive benefits to our economy. In addition, our beautiful local scenery has been placed in the national and international spotlight.

It is estimated that the film will inject over half a million dollars into our regional economy, creating more than 350 jobs for locals. On set I met former local radio announcer Darren Sommer, who was working with the art department, and former Albury High School student, Benji Davidson, one of 97 Indigenous cast members recruited locally. The producers tell me that the response to the auditions was astonishing, with

hundreds of people queuing for a part in the film. The Sapphires production has generated an incredible spirit of goodwill and pride in our local community. It has reinforced what Albury residents have known all along—that Albury is a great place to live, work and visit.

The film is about a group of young indigenous women who love singing together. Two were sisters and two were cousins; they were living ordinary lives on a mission in regional Australia. Their harmonies attracted the attention of a talent scout, played by Chris O'Dowd, an Irish actor who appeared in the recent movie *Bridesmaids*, but who is arguably best known for his role as a computer nerd in *The IT Crowd* television series. It was the late 1960s and The Sapphires, with their Motown sound, became Australia's answer to the famous American act The Supremes. Soon The Sapphires were sent to Vietnam to entertain the troops. They were not in rural Australia anymore.

Those playing The Sapphires all have Aboriginal heritage. The central roles of the four singers are presented by Australian Film Industry award-winning actress Deborah Mailman, one of Australia's top recording stars Jessica Mauboy, and newcomers Shari Sebbens and Miranda Tapsell. In an inspired piece of casting, Pastor Darren Wighton, a minister in real life, plays the role of a minister in the movie. Darren is a respected community leader and a role model in the Indigenous community of Albury. It is hoped he will not now seize the opportunity to leave Albury and become a Hollywood star. Albury resident and Wiradjuri elder Nancy Rooke met one of the original Sapphires at her church and was the proud owner of a Sapphires record. She said of the movie:

I am grateful it will be in the community. It gives it a real feel of ownership over the story.

One of the producers, Rosemary Blight, told me she chose the Murray region for filming as The Sapphires were born on the Murray, so the story needed to be filmed on the Murray. Film locations included Albury, Corowa, an orange orchard at Howlong, a farm property at Culcairn and a church at Morven. The Henty Central B & B was turned into the Globe Hotel for shooting of the talent quest scenes. After filming completed in Albury the cast and crew headed off to Asian locations to capture the Vietnam story.

Director of Photography is Warwick Thornton, who is perhaps best known for his directorial debut in *Samson & Delilah*, winner of the Camera d'Or prize at the Cannes Film Festival in 2009. One of the writers is Tony Briggs, the son of Laurel Robinson, one of the original Sapphires. The New South Wales Government screen agency, Screen NSW, has invested \$800,000 in *The Sapphires* through its Production Investment Fund. This fund invests in independently produced Australian screen content in New South Wales. Screen NSW also provided \$100,000 in funding to *The Sapphires* through its Regional Film Fund, which encourages productions to film outside metropolitan Sydney to ensure regional New South Wales shares in the economic and cultural benefits of this important sector.

On 31 August I was at Albury's Koori Kindermanna Preschool to present a \$5,000 grant from the New South Wales Government for books and other educational resources for the children. At this event one of the preschool directors, Valma Murray, told me of friends and relatives who had roles in the movie and that she was hoping to visit the film set on location. There is a very real sense of excitement in the Albury Indigenous community. This is a good-news, positive story. *The Sapphires* movie has been made in association with Screen Australia, Screen NSW, the Melbourne International Film Festival Premiere Fund, Singapore-based IFS Capital Limited, E-Film Australia and eOne's Hopscotch Films.

In particular I thank the producers, Rosemary Blight, Kylie du Fresne and Goalpost Pictures, the director Wayne Blair, and Kya Blondin, Manager of Stakeholder Relations for Screen NSW. The movie will have a regional premiere in Albury in October 2012 so everyone should look out for *The Sapphires* at their local cinema soon after that date. On a personal note, my son Scott—a pianist of some renown—plays the role of a double for Chris O'Dowd.

COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION BERRIDALE BRANCH EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [6.31 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the eightieth anniversary of the Berridale branch of the Country Women's Association in my electorate of Monaro. I was honoured to attend celebrations in Berridale on Monday 15 August when more than 50 people joined together to celebrate the anniversary. I participated in a tree planting ceremony in which two Manchurian pear trees were planted at the Country Women's Association hall, and I was lucky because someone else had dug the hole, saving my back a lot of pain. Of course, one cannot celebrate such an event without popping champagne corks

and indulging in scrumptious Country Women's Association homemade cake. All this was conducted by Alice Sturgeon and it was followed by a beautiful lunch at the Snowy River winery. The spread that was put on for the guests was brilliant in the true Country Women's Association tradition.

Branch President, Inge Grace, could not attend the celebrations due to illness, so Bev Allen, the agricultural-environment officer, hosted the day along with Natalina Casarotti. Special guests in attendance made speeches, including the Snowy River Shire mayor, John Cahill, and representatives of the Country Women's Association Monaro group branches. The Country Women's Association is a self-funded, non-party political and non-sectarian organisation, whose aim is to improve conditions for women and children and make life better for families, especially those living in rural and remote communities across Australia.

The Country Women's Association branches play an important social role in Monaro by bringing women together and growing community participation. I will read a brief history of the Berridale branch of the Country Women's Association, compiled by Beverley Allen and Lily Constance, who sadly passed away on 22 July 2011, aged 100. By coincidence, present in the Chamber this evening is the Minister for Disability Services, and Lily was his great aunt. I pass on my condolences to the Minister and his family. The history reads as follows:

The Berridale CWA Branch was started by Mrs Hazel Allen on the 7th August 1931, in consultation with Mrs Blyth and Mrs E. H. Litchfield from Cooma.

Fifteen women met at the hotel in Berridale and Mrs Blyth outlined the aims of the Association.

A committee was elected and continued to meet in a cottage on the square. Later the group moved to a large room rented from Mrs Annie Jones, where they remained for ten years.

After moving to the GUOOF Hall, the CWA raised enough funds to build their own rooms. The Anglican Church offered a small portion of their land in Myack Street for sale and Mr Norman Allen purchased and donated the land to the CWA in 1936.

The present rooms were built in 1952 by Ron Jamieson for just £2,800. These last few years, the CWA rooms have been home to the Berridale Red Cross, Maggie McKendrick's music afternoons, Anglican women, card afternoons, Shire events, weddings, etc.

Mrs Allen needed a good secretary and had her eye on Lily Constance. Lily was Secretary off and on for years and became the backbone of the CWA taking all positions over 50 years.

There have been many members since the first fifteen with Mrs Hazel Allen as President, Rosie Kraft as long time Treasurer, Mrs Harry Reid, Mrs Betty Stone, Mrs Myrtle Bottom, Mrs Stella Suthern, to name just a few, who have served Berridale CWA as office bearers.

In the last five years, the branch has attracted some very active and willing new members. Today the mainstays are Natalina Casarotti, Inge Grace, Sue Luccarda and Pat Field. Members enjoy International Country of Study work and Natalina regularly wins the International Doll Competition. The CWA's cooking is really appreciated by the Autumn Leaves group and Boys From Snowy River. Whilst catering is the main fundraiser for the branch, the Spring and Easter market days are a highlight of the year.

Celebrating 80 years of dedication and service, the Berridale branch of the Country Women's Association is looking forward to more improvements to its rooms and lots of fun and outings. With new and old leadership working together the future is indeed bright. I extend my congratulations to the Berridale branch of the Country Women's Association and all its members past and present on their 80 years of service to the community.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [6.35 p.m.]: I thank the member for Monaro for bringing this matter to the attention of the House, because all my family are from Berridale and obviously we are very sad at the passing of Lily. I note that the former member for Monaro, Peter Cochrane, is in the gallery this evening. It is important that we recognise not only the contribution that has been made by the Country Women's Association in Berridale but also the contribution that has been made by branches all around the State which in many ways have provided the backbone for a number of communities. The work done for the farming community by the Country Women's Association in Berridale over a long time has been incredible. That work has been backed by some strong-willed women determined to get on and ensure that the people of Berridale are protected and the farming community safeguarded. It is a tough climate and a tough place to farm, but I know that life would be a hell of a lot different without the wonderful work carried out voluntarily by the Country Women's Association.

MACARTHUR BUILDING INDUSTRY SKILLS CENTRE

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [6.36 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to inform the House of the good work being done at the Macarthur Building Industry Skill Centre. On Tuesday 30 August this year

I attended the Macarthur Building Industry Skill Centre, which is located at a most appropriately named street, Austool Place, Ingleburn. The centre is part of the TAFE Faculty of Building and Construction and I was privileged to spend some time with the faculty director, John Humphrey—a long-time servant of education in this State—together with David Johnson, manager of the Macarthur Building Industry Skill Centre. I am very proud to say they are both long-term Rabbitoh supporters, which indicates the quality and calibre of the fellows at the centre. I was fortunate also to spend some time with Annette Dickson, the college manager.

These educators, devoted to vocational education, have dedicated their lives to the positive perception of TAFE, the education of their students and the importance of TAFE to our community. The Macarthur Building Industry Skill Centre is a dedicated and specialist centre for training in the building trades. It specialises in construction, allied building trades, specialist engineering and manufacturing skills. The building that houses the centre is probably at least 20 times the size of this Chamber. It is a large and modern factory setup with large overhead gantries and it is a multistorey building with classrooms and facilities. While I was there I saw classes in action on adult learning involving rigging and scaffolding, carpentry, and painting and decorating.

I was very impressed with the attention to detail and the enthusiasm and pride in workmanship that was displayed by the young people there—the best of the opals of the south-west of Campbelltown. Some of the training offered at the centre includes building industry high-risk licensing programs, pre-apprenticeships in carpentry and joinery programs and pre-employment programs used to construct high-quality transportable housing units. The students produce some of these homes for social housing. It was wonderful to see their pride in the high-quality work they produce. So successful are the students engaged in this pre-employment program that they are often employed before reaching the end of their training program.

A TAFE college Higher School Certificate with a building career pathways focus is also offered. It was engineered by David Johnson as a two-year course for those students unable to complete their Higher School Certificate whilst at school. It not only gives them a trade qualification but also their Higher School Certificate. A new careers pathway option involving school, TAFE colleges and university options, including a certificate IV in diploma-level courses, is also offered. The faculty offers courses to address the skills shortages faced by the building industry.

The faculty also offers a wide range of commercial short courses to address WorkCover requirements for accreditation and licensing in specific areas of the building industry, which unfortunately include asbestos removal, working in confined spaces, demolition and occupational health and safety. The courses at the faculty address New South Wales Board of Vocational Education Plan targets, particularly in the 15 to 19 age cohort and the 20 to 24 age cohort in apprenticeship programs. Mr Acting-Speaker will be pleased to know that the facility also caters for cohorts over 45 years of age. Mr Acting-Speaker could enrol in night trade programs to upgrade his existing qualifications. Equity targets are also addressed with programs in painting and decorating for women—no doubt some would be interested in that—and a number of programs aimed at Aboriginal youth, such as carpentry and joinery, and civil construction. The building and construction faculty provides a wonderful training opportunity for the young people of Campbelltown; the best of the opals of the south-west. I commend it to the House.

PARRAMATTA ELECTORATE EVENTS

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [6.41 p.m.]: Tonight I share with the House several great events I attended in the past week or so in the Parramatta electorate. On Saturday 3 September Rosehill Public School celebrated its 125th anniversary. About 400 or 500 people attended that celebration. Those in attendance were not only students and their parents but also friends of the school and past students. The choir sang and some students gave a wonderful performance in dance and drama. The culmination of the event was the launch of the school's time capsule, which will be opened at the school's 150th anniversary celebration. I was particularly impressed by the leadership displayed by the two year 6 school captains throughout the ceremony. They did a great job.

A great school is often led by a great principal and Mr Wood, the Principal of Rosehill Public School, is no exception. He does a great job in leading the 491 students from kindergarten to year 6, and about eight part-time students at preschool. He is supported by a dedicated team of teachers. In the past two or three years the school has won an excellence award for high performance, and at this diverse school some 89 per cent of the children come from families that speak a language other than English. The Rosehill Public School makes a valuable contribution to the electorate of Parramatta and I wish it all the best for the next 125 years.

I also had the pleasure of representing the Premier, Mr Barry O'Farrell, and the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, Mr George Souris, at the presentation of the Premier's Cup at Rosehill Gardens. The wonderful Rosehill Gardens racing venue is located in the electorate of Parramatta, and its \$24 million upgrade is soon to start. I congratulate Chief Executive Officer Darren Pearce on looking after the racecourses at both Rosehill and Randwick following the merger of the Australian Jockey and Sydney Turf clubs. The winner of the cup was a horse named Great Card. He was trained by Rosehill trainer Gerald Ryan. The jockey of Great Card was Jay Ford, and Mr John Baxter is the owner. Rydges Hotel Parramatta sponsored the cup. I congratulate the Sydney Turf Club on its hard work in delivering this world-class standard venue at Parramatta.

Finally, last weekend I had the pleasure of attending the Onam Festival at Granville Town Hall. Mr Tony Issa, member for Granville, also attended that celebration. Onam is the largest festival in the Indian state of Kerala—a coastal state in southern India. The 10-day festival celebrates many aspects of Kerala's tradition and culture. I thank the Sydney Malayalee Association for its warmth and hospitality in putting together such a wonderful and well-organised event in the heart of Parramatta. President Padmanabhan Karamil was ably assisted by Vice President Jose KP, Secretary Jayakumar Sadananda, Treasurer Jacob Alex and Public Officer George Panikar. The winners of the Excellence Award were Susan Jacob, Neetha Thampy and Nikita Santhos. The winner of the Community Service Award was Anil Chambad. The Lifetime Social and Cultural Service Award was posthumously awarded to Mrs Leelamony Pillai, and was collected by her husband Dr Parameswaran Pillai.

FUSION WESTERN SYDNEY

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [6.46 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House of the wonderful work of Fusion Western Sydney. Fusion is an international youth and community organisation. Fusion Western Sydney is one of the largest centres in the world, with more than 100 staff and 300 volunteers managing more than 40 programs. Fusion works to give disadvantaged and marginalised young people a purpose in the community; it gives them the resilience to deal with adversity. Fusion also engages in community building because a healthy, caring community is crucial to the development of young people. St Marys is the home of Fusion Western Sydney and it provides a service and support hub to Fusion's work throughout western Sydney and around the world. I thank the board of the St Marys Band Club for its partnership with Fusion in offering its disused club property to help in its great work.

I am proud to have the newest facility of Fusion Western Sydney, which is currently undergoing massive renovation, in my electorate. Many people have worked hard to pull together the new campus and without the generosity and community spirit of many people this development would not have become a reality. Mr Dave Hammond, for example, has worked tirelessly to make the St Marys campus of Fusion Western Sydney a reality. Dave recently informed me that the project is now "reaching the tipping point" with many outstanding details coming together. I congratulate Dave Hammond, his wife Sally, and all Fusion Western Sydney volunteers on their passionate commitment and dedication to the western Sydney community and on their welcoming embrace of international volunteers who come to learn of the extensive good work being delivered by Fusion Western Sydney at St Marys.

Donations of more than \$1 million in cash or in kind from local people and business owners have given the old St Marys Bowling Club a new life. I specifically thank Sargents Pies; Mul-T-Security; Rex Lehmann from Skycool; the Belaroma Coffee Roasting Company; Devcon; My Business Voice; Bunnings Warehouse, especially David and Narelle from the Minchinbury store who organised a Bunnings Warehouse army to begin work on the community garden; Luxottica OneSight, Penrith Good Guys; Stephen Poucher and Associates; Nepean Regional Security; Sydney Packaging; Clipsal by Schneider Electrical; Hudsons Timber and Hardware Limited; Shades Painting and Decorating; Corinthian Doors, Brookfield Multiplex; Boral; DeMartin & Gasparini; National Australia Bank; BT Financial Group; Supa Poo Garden Fertiliser/Mulch, a very important contributor to the community garden; the Macquarie Group; Hobart Music; and Brownbuilt Pty Limited.

When the renovation works are completed the St Marys campus will provide a Hot Fusion Cafe, Fusion Arts, Fusion Community Centre, young parents support groups, foundations for families courses, music and movement for children and Fusion Vintage Clothing. The auditorium will be equipped with a public address system, lighting and seating for 250. There will be large glass sliding doors opening to the green space which includes 3,000 square metres of lawn and gardens. The campus will house the Refuge Recording Studios and a metal fabrication workshop to build ramps and rails for home modifications to help the frail, aged and disabled stay in their homes longer. The campus will also provide a gallery, a training kitchen, community garden and community barbecues.

While Fusion Western Sydney's tagline is "Imagine Western Sydney Bringing Hope to the World", when seeing the miracle that is unfolding in the St Marys campus one does not need to imagine anymore; it is now a reality. Fusion Western Sydney is bringing hope to the world. This is not just a community centre being built; it is a centre of community. I offer my congratulations to all involved and I look forward to joining with the team in October for the official opening of the St Mary's campus.

CLOVELLY SCOUTS

RANDWICK BOYS' AND RANDWICK GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOLS MUSICAL PRODUCTION

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [6.51 p.m.]: As an extremely proud member for Coogee, today I to congratulate the 1st Clovelly Scouts on the occasion of their eighty-fifth anniversary, making them the second-oldest scout troop in New South Wales. On Saturday 27 August I attended their celebratory dinner at Waverley with many former scouts and current leaders. I was a scout once and I believe that I benefitted greatly from the skills, teamwork and discipline I learned as a member of the 3rd Coogee Scouts. A couple of interesting facts I learnt that evening were that of the 12 astronauts who walked on the moon, 11 of them were Boy Scouts. Of the New South Wales prison population, less than 5 per cent are Boy Scouts. One can take from that what one will, but I believe that Lord Baden-Powell's scouting movement has had an incalculably positive benefit on boys and consequently on our community.

I will make special mention of Denise and Ron Begg who have committed over 30 years of their lives to the 1st Clovelly Scouts. Denise recounted at the evening that when she was first asked to help out with the troop all those years ago she was told by her friend that it would only take an hour or so a week. It has since consumed the lives of her and her husband. Thankfully the 1st Clovelly Scouts is going strong. It has over 60 cubs, scouts and venturers in its ranks and an amazing 12 leaders to lead the troops. That is fantastic. Let us hope that this remains the case and the local kids get the benefit of the adventure and fun that being part of the scouting team will bring.

Last week I also attended the *Once Upon a Time* production at the National Institute of Dramatic Art's Parade Theatre in Kensington that was staged by Randwick Boys' High School—my old school—and Randwick Girls' High School. The musical drew inspiration from favourite books from across the ages: Charles Dickens, Dr Seuss, Harry Potter of course, Charlie Brown, *Follow the Rabbit-Proof Fence* and many others. The performances were so impressive that I gave them a standing ovation. I was amazed by the standard of dance and choreography and, most of all, the soloists who were incredible—and these are schoolkids.

But this should come as no surprise because Randwick Girls and Randwick Boys have won the Rock Eisteddfod twice before. I have been informed that they came second in this year's Rock Eisteddfod held last weekend. So the talent is there. Randwick Boys and Randwick Girls have carved themselves out a formidable reputation for excellence in the visual arts. These students are a credit to their headmasters, Wayne Duncombe of Randwick Boys' High School and Heather Emerson of Randwick Girls' High School. Importantly, they are a credit to the public education system of New South Wales and a credit to the electorate of Coogee.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.56 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the importance of small businesses to the economic development of New South Wales and to the role they play in strengthening the local community in my electorate. Vaucluse electorate includes areas within the Woollahra and Waverley local government areas. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics there are around 190,000 businesses operating in those local government areas. The vast majority of these are small businesses and the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 83 per cent are micro-businesses that employ fewer than five people.

These businesses are incredibly important and they contribute to the village atmosphere in each suburb of the electorate I represent. Residents in my electorate rely on them every day for services that we take for granted—everything from meeting friends and family at a local coffee shop or restaurant, to visiting a hairdresser or calling a tradesperson for home repairs. Across New South Wales there are around 650,000 small businesses and these enterprises provide 50 per cent of all employment opportunities. That is a large number.

To put that in perspective, the mining sector, which is currently experiencing a boom, only accounts for 2 per cent of national opportunities in the job market. This is why small businesses are so important to the New

South Wales economy. Not only do they provide employment opportunities and economic development, but they contribute to the culture and atmosphere in our suburbs and communities. This is certainly the case in the electorate of Vacluse. In fact, it is the case in my suburb where the one and only shop, the village store run by friendly Richard, provides a warm meeting place for local residents in the area.

Recent years have been difficult for many small businesses in my electorate and across the State. Interest rates have risen and the cost of living pressures have impacted on the demand for consumer goods. This has been felt hard by the small business sector. The O'Farrell Government has made small business a priority and we have already appointed a small business commissioner. We have committed to reducing red tape in the State for small business by 20 per cent. In our first State budget yesterday the Liberal-Nationals Government committed a further \$5 million in 2011-12 to increase the level of support available to small businesses. We are also supporting small business through ongoing funding for the New South Wales business advisory services, through partnering with the University of Sydney on the Small Business Toolkit and by supporting a range of other programs to assist small businesses across the State.

Helping small business does not just involve Government programs. It also involves listening to the concerns of small business operators and their employees. It involves explaining the current regulatory system to them, how the system impacts on their businesses and getting frank and forward feedback on how they feel about that. Given the size of the small business sector and its contribution to the economic growth of this State we must ensure that these businesses can trade with confidence and reliance on the regulatory environment in which they operate.

This is why I am pleased to inform the House of a successful small business forum I hosted in the suburb of Double Bay within my electorate on Tuesday 30 August. Over 60 owners and operators of local businesses attended and the forum represented a diverse range of enterprises from every suburb in my electorate. The event was attended by the Minister for Fair Trading, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, who spoke to small business owners about the new national consumer law provisions that took effect from the beginning of this year and he explained how these provisions impact on trading operations. The Minister also spent time answering questions from the audience. He was pressed by them on a number of issues directly relevant to their businesses.

I thank the Minister for his attendance and his willingness to help the business people at the forum. He helped them to understand the new consumer law regimen that is important to their businesses, which sustain our local community. It is also important to gain feedback about how laws are operating and suggestions for how they can be improved. I welcomed the willingness of those business people in attendance to give examples to the Minister and me about areas that could be improved. The O'Farrell Government is committed to identifying how the law can be improved to support small business. I look forward to having strong relationships with the small business leaders in my electorate, hosting more forums and continuing to engage with business people to make their lives better and their businesses more successful, and to continue to add to the local community.

MOUNT DRUITT DENTAL SERVICES

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [7.01 p.m.]: My private member's statement relates to public dental services in western Sydney. I highlight the fact that western Sydney has one of the longest waiting lists for the public dental program. As local members would be aware, the public dental program is restricted to people who are on some form of health benefit or Centrelink benefit; it is not available to employed people. There is a comprehensive list of private dental surgeons operating throughout the western suburbs, as there are throughout New South Wales. The issue of public dental services in western Sydney and in my electorate has been substantial over the past few years. The number of constituents who travel to the Mount Druitt electorate to seek assistance from the dental services at Westmead Hospital and Mount Druitt Hospital is substantial.

We have had many sorry cases of people who have been waiting a long time to get on the list. However, nearly all of those who have accessed the service have commented on the high standard of dental care and treatment they receive from the public dentists working in those two facilities. I am also aware of other aspects of the service in the Liverpool region. For some time the Mount Druitt Hospital dental service had been lobbying for an expansion of its service. The dental service, which is located in what was originally named the May Cowpe Centre in the grounds of Mount Druitt Hospital, has five dental chairs and, to state the obvious, the dentists work flat out every day. For some time the service had been receiving positive feedback through the bureaucracy.

Earlier this year, about January, the service secured an agreement to expand the dental program at Mount Druitt Hospital, with the provision of eight additional chairs. In addition, to cater for the additional eight chairs, the building would be expanded; the size of the building would increase substantially. I do not think the story has such a bad ending as I have been saying in the past couple of days, although the future of this project is uncertain. In June of this year I put a question on the *Questions and Answers* paper about the present situation. With the new Government being elected in March, I wanted to know how the dental centre was faring and how the building expansion and provision of the eight extra chairs was proceeding in terms of the announcement that the former member for Londonderry, health officials and I made earlier this year. The first response from the Minister was that, as with all health infrastructure, the public dental program was under review and any decision on it would be based on the outcome of the budget. The budget came down yesterday.

While an initial perusal of the budget papers failed to find any information about the already announced expansion of the dental program at Mount Druitt, I am happy to report that in today's *Questions and Answers* paper the Minister for Health answered a question I put on notice some time ago about the announcement of a health agreement between the Federal Labor Government and the State Labor Government. In answering the question, the Minister made what I think is a positive comment. She said that "planning" is now in progress for expansion of the dental service at Mount Druitt and the provision of the eight dental chairs announced prior to the election. It is not in the budget and the word "planning" puts the matter in doubt. However, I am encouraged by at least a recognition that this particular service will be provided at some stage in the future. I ask the Minister: When will expansion of the dental service, as announced in the *Questions and Answers* paper today, come to fruition?

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.06 p.m. until
Thursday 8 September 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
