

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 14 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.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.00 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the resumption of the adjourned debate and passage through all remaining stages at this or any subsequent sitting of the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011.

By arrangement with, and without opposition from, the Opposition the remaining stages of the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011 will be dealt with this morning. However, that will not be done immediately; the House will deal first with the Identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.

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

Motion agreed to.

IDENTIFICATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 13 September 2011.

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [10.03 a.m.]: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on the Identification Legislation Amendment Bill. Following the decision by Judge Clive Jeffreys in the Carnita Matthews case far too much misinformation has been spread about when a person may be required to remove a face covering. I wish to set the record straight. The Identification Legislation Amendment Bill will not create heavy-handed or harsh laws, it will not intrude on anyone's religious or cultural beliefs, and it will not get in the way of a multicultural Australian society that welcomes people from all over the world. The bill will fill a hole that clearly exists in several laws of this State—a hole that has prevented New South Wales police from doing their job effectively and that allows unidentified persons to enter a court or correctional centre.

Under the current legislation police officers can require persons to show identification to prove that they are who they say they are. The law should allow a police officer to require a person to prove that he or she is the person whose photograph appears on the form of identification produced. Clearly there should be no difficulty with that, but there is, and it is for that specific reason that we need the Identification Legislation Amendment Bill in New South Wales. As I said earlier, there has been far too much misinformation and speculation about the impact of this bill; there has been far too much talk claiming that this bill targets one particular group of people. In reality the bill will allow police officers to require a person to remove a face covering so as to enable that person's face to be seen for identification purposes.

The term "face covering" is very broadly defined in this bill. A face covering can mean an item of clothing, a helmet, a mask, or anything worn by a person that prevents that person's face from being seen. What is wrong with that? I say, absolutely nothing. The Identification Legislation Amendment Bill is a logical, responsible and necessary step forward. Once again let me set the record straight. When this bill becomes law there will be no discrimination either in favour of or against anyone. When it becomes law it will help police identify people suspected of criminal behaviour. When it becomes law it will not matter whether a person is wearing a motorcycle helmet, burqa, hijab, face veil, or anything else that covers the face, because police will be permitted to require that person to make his or her identification clear. But the bill goes even further. It provides

that if a person is required to remove a face covering, he or she must do so as quickly as reasonably possible and in a way that provides reasonable privacy for the person. Again I ask, what is wrong with that? And again I answer by saying, there is nothing wrong with that. Only people who have something to hide will have a problem about the impact of this bill.

The bill goes one step further. It requires the Ombudsmen to monitor the use of these new police powers for a period of 12 months after the bill becomes law. The Ombudsman will be required to provide a report to the Minister, who will table that report in Parliament. Simply put, the bill will require all persons, regardless of who they are, to prove they are who they say they are, and the application of the bill will be monitored by an independent third person to ensure that the new powers are not abused. The Identification Legislation Amendment Bill will create good and appropriate laws that have been sadly lacking in this State for far too long. I congratulate the Attorney General for introducing this bill and I commend it to the House.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [10.09 a.m.]: I support the Identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, brought to the House by the Premier. In doing so, I wish to make it abundantly clear that this legislation has absolutely nothing to do with racial or religious discrimination. It is about assisting police officers to do their job. Unfortunately, this legislation became necessary because of the highly publicised Carnita Matthews court case. The actions of Carnita Matthews disgusted a lot of people, including members of the Muslim community. Police need powers to identify people, be that in respect of a road offence or any other offence, so that they know who an offender or suspected offender is.

Under this legislation, anyone required by law to show his or her face—whether it is covered by a hijab, burqa or a niqab—can elect to do so in the privacy of a police station. The purpose of this is not to publicly ridicule the person; it is a matter of identification. I am sure that every member of this place has walked into a bank or service station, especially a 24-hour service station, and seen a sign requesting all motorcycle riders to remove their helmets when entering the premises. The obvious reason for that is that, because of the high incidence of hold-ups over the years, proprietors wish to know the identity of those entering their premises, and if closed circuit television equipment is in use, they will be able to identify all persons present should an armed hold-up or any other untoward circumstance take place in their business premises.

In that regard I am equally sure that no member has received representations, nor has there been media pressure, suggesting discrimination against motorcycle riders. In those cases it is a matter of identification, the same as it is with this legislation. The Carnita Matthews court case showed how frustrating it can be for police officers if someone claiming racial discrimination refuses to show his or her face. Anyone seeking a driver's licence must show his or her face for the purpose of taking a photograph for inclusion on the licence. This is to confirm, for identification purposes, that the holder of the licence is the person to whom the police officer is speaking. The legislation is lengthy as it amends a number of Acts: the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, the Court Security Act 2005, the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 and regulations, the Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987 and regulations, and the Oaths Act 1900.

The bill is a matter of necessity for good governance in New South Wales. I have Muslim, Sikh and Hindu friends, none of whom would suggest that this legislation is a form of racial discrimination. Anyone who makes such a claim, as some have, is absolutely wrong. New South Wales has been, and will always be, very tolerant. It tolerates people's religions, political views, et cetera. We are one of the oldest democracies in the world. At the end of the day, the people that this Parliament appoints—the judiciary and the police—must be able to do their jobs in a way that does not waste the time of the courts while ensuring that no-one is discriminated against. I bring the attention of the House to the following comments made by the Premier in a radio 2UE interview on 5 July 2011:

This is not about banning a piece of clothing. This is about ensuring whether if someone is wearing a motorcycle helmet, a burqa, if they're in the snow wearing a balaclava, if they're wearing some other face mask, if police have concern and reasonable grounds for suspecting that breaches of security or laws may have occurred or will occur, that they can require those people to make their identification clear. So this is not about discrimination in favour of any religion or against any religion, in favour of any racial background or against any racial background; it's about giving police the powers consistently for the whole community in relation to identifying people suspected of criminal breaches.

It is a matter of necessity to adjust laws in this culturally diverse State and country to give police the authority they need to enable them to do their job of protecting all in the community from anyone who would seek to disguise themselves whilst committing criminal breaches. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [10.14 a.m.]: I wish to make a short contribution to the debate on the Identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. I begin by stating a comment that I hear a lot from constituents in

Penrith—that commonsense is not that common. I think the Government has been able to strike a chord with the community in providing a commonsense bill that the community feels is appropriate to ensure security is maintained in the most appropriate fashion while being sensitive to cultural implications. The bill will amend a number of Acts, but primarily the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 and the Oaths Act 1900.

The amendments to the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 will confer power on police, Juvenile Justice officers, officers authorised by Corrective Services and court security staff to request the removal of face coverings in certain circumstances. The Oaths Act 1900 is to be amended to require a person witnessing a statutory declaration or affidavit to identify the person swearing the declaration or affidavit. The bill will empower police to require a person to remove a face covering to enable an officer to see a person's face in circumstances where the police can lawfully require a person to identify himself or herself, and to require photographic identification. It also provides that a police officer proposing to give a move-on direction to a person can request that person to identify himself or herself.

I note the comments made yesterday by the member for Campbelltown, who has significant experience in the Police Force. He informed the House just how critical it is for police to be able to identify people that they are moving on. The bill contains a number of provisions enabling police to engage appropriately with members of the community. It also provides safeguards for members of the community who do not feel entirely comfortable about removing their face coverings, including the opportunity to have their face covering removed in a police station. The Premier and the Commissioner of Police are taking measures to ensure that police understand clearly the outcomes sought to be achieved by the bill.

I would like to mention the work of both the Attorney General and the Minister for Citizenship and Communities and particularly their consultations with the Muslim community in this proposed legislation. It is fair to say they have come under significant pressure from media outlets and community groups regarding the bill. The leadership shown by the Minister and the Muslim community should be commended. I note that the Australian National Imams Council and the Islamic Council of New South Wales have demonstrated exceptional leadership on this issue and have clarified with this Government an appropriate way to move forward on this matter. It is critical that the House note and the community recognise that this is not an attack on any particular religion, and it should not be considered to be so. It is not a burqa ban.

It is not a ban on hijabs or niqabs. It is appropriate legislation to ensure that those responsible for the protection of our community are able to do their jobs appropriately. The proposed legislation is a timely reminder of the need to encourage diversity within our community. Regardless of what area of New South Wales members have the privilege to represent in this place, I guarantee they have diverse communities throughout their electorates, with people from all different walks of life and countries. I take this opportunity to read onto the record some words with which I hope most members of this House are familiar, and perhaps words that they should talk more about. It is a message for people from all different parts of our community:

Beneath our radiant Southern Cross
We'll toil with hearts and hands;
To make this Commonwealth of ours
Renowned of all the lands;
For those who come across the seas
We've boundless plains to share;
With courage let us all combine
To Advance Australia Fair.

It is with such courage that we are able to generate this legislation, which provides security without diminishing the consideration we have for the diverse groups in our community.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [10.19 a.m.]: I support the Identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, which amends the Law Enforcement Act 2002 to confer a power on police officers, Juvenile Justice officers, officers authorised by Corrective Services and court security staff to request the removal of face coverings in certain circumstances. It amends also the Oaths Act 1900 to require a person witnessing a statutory declaration or affidavit to identify the person swearing the declaration or affidavit.

The initial conviction and subsequent acquittal of Carnita Matthews for making a false complaint against a police officer raised the issue of how police and other officials interact with those whose face is covered. Currently, little legislative authority exists for police or other government officials to require a person to remove a face covering. However, it has been proved that there is a need to ensure that police and certain other officers have the power to require that a person remove a face covering to enable an officer to see that person's face for the purpose of identification.

How is "face" defined? "Face" is defined in legislation as "from the top of the forehead to the bottom of the chin and between but not including the ears". What is a face covering? "Face covering" refers to an item of clothing, helmet, mask or any other thing that is worn by a person and prevents the person's face from being seen because it conceals or obscures a person's face either wholly or partly. It may include, for example, helmets, scarves, balaclavas, burqas, hoodies and masks to the extent that those items obscure a person's facial features.

What powers will the police have? The amendments will allow police in certain circumstances to require that a person remove a face covering. Police will be able to require this when a person has been lawfully required to provide photographic identification or to identify himself or herself. For example, police can require people to state their name and address and provide a drivers licence when executing their functions under road transport legislation. In addition, they can require people to give their name and address in a range of other circumstances, including when they are investigating indictable offences, when they suspect a person may be the subject of an apprehended violence order, when they intend to issue a penalty notice to a person, and when they suspect a person has committed an offence under particular legislation, including offences under the Rural Fires Act 1997 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979.

What powers will sheriffs have? The amendments will give court security officers—that is, sheriffs—new powers to require people entering court premises and people they arrest or for whom they have grounds for arrest to remove a face covering to allow an officer to identify their face. If a person entering a court does not comply with such a direction, the officer will warn the person that failure to comply or failure to leave the court premises may be an offence. A person who does not comply will have committed an offence. The maximum penalty is five penalty units, the same as the penalty for not complying with a requirement from a court security officer to submit to a search or to leave court premises. Amendments to the Court Security Act 2005 were passed recently to provide that a court security officer can direct a person to remove a helmet and to not wear a helmet on court premises. This power is wider than the power to require a person to remove a face covering for identification and will be retained.

The bill contains a range of safeguards that are to be applied so far as is reasonably practicable. These safeguards require court security officers exercising the power to ask for the person's cooperation, conduct the viewing of a person's face in a way that provides reasonable privacy if the person requests it, conduct the viewing of a person's face as quickly and as reasonably as practicable, and ensure the viewing of a person's face is carried out by a security officer of the same gender if the person requests it. What powers will correctional and detention centre officers have? Officers at adult correctional centres and children's detention centres will be given new powers to require people visiting these centres to remove a face covering to allow an officer to identify their face. This may occur upon entry to a facility, while a person is on the premises or when a person is exiting a facility. A failure or refusal to comply may result in the person being refused access and escorted from the premises.

When can police exercise the power to require a person to remove a face covering? Police currently have powers under a range of laws, including the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 and road transport legislation, to require a person to identify himself or herself. Where this power exists, the amendments provide an additional power to police to require the removal of a face covering so that the officer or another police officer can see the person's face. The bill also amends part 14 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002 to provide that police can require identification when a move-on direction is issued. This means that they also can require the removal of a face covering when issuing that direction.

One might ask: For how long will the face covering need to be removed? The amendments provide that the face covering need be removed only so long as is reasonably necessary in the circumstances for an officer to see the person's face. Are there any grounds on which a person can refuse to remove a face covering and what happens if a person refuses to remove a face covering? It depends on the circumstances giving rise to the request and who makes the request. In most cases the maximum penalty for failing to comply with a police requirement to remove a face covering will be two penalty units or a fine of \$220. Where police exercise the power when they require identification in relation to vehicles used in indictable offences, as provided by section 14 of the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002, the penalty matches the higher penalty that non-compliance with section 14 attracts—that is, 50 penalty units, or \$5,500, and/or 12 months imprisonment.

If a person entering a court is required by a security officer—that is, a sheriffs officer—to remove a face covering and fails to comply, the security officer must then warn the person that a failure to remove the face covering or to leave the premises may be an offence. If a person who is arrested or for whom there are grounds for

arrest is required by a security officer to remove a face covering and fails to comply, the security officer must warn the person a failure to immediately comply may be an offence and a potential \$550 fine applies. If a person visiting a juvenile detention or correctional centre is required by an officer to remove a face covering, a failure or refusal to comply may result in the person being refused access to, or being escorted from, the premises.

What would happen if a person is wearing a face covering for religious or cultural reasons? The amendments do not allow a person to refuse to remove a face covering on the basis of their religious or cultural practices. The only reason to refuse is if a person has a special justification. "Special justification" is defined in the Act as a legitimate medical reason for not removing the face covering. This means that a person will, for example, not be required to remove a bandage or face patch that is in place following surgery. What if a person is wearing a face covering for medical reasons? The legislation provides that a person will not have to comply with a direction where there is special justification, defined as including a legitimate medical reason. This recognises that there may be circumstances in which a person is required to have an object or item concealing all or part of their face for a medical purpose.

Are there any safeguards or protections to ensure the power is exercised appropriately? Legislative safeguards are set out for court security officers, correctional and juvenile detention centre officers. Court security officers, correctional and juvenile detention centre officers exercising this power must: ask for the person's cooperation, conduct the viewing of the person's face in a way that provides reasonable privacy if the person requests this, conduct the viewing of the person's face as quickly as is reasonably practicable, only view the face of a child under 12 in the presence of a responsible person, and ensure the identification is carried out by a security officer of the same gender if the person or, in the case of a child under 12, the person responsible for the child requests this. These safeguards apply to the extent that it is reasonably practicable to do so.

In addition, if a person is required by a court security officer to remove a face covering and does not comply, the security officer must then warn them that failure to remove their face covering or a failure to leave the premises may be an offence. There are legislative safeguards with which the police must comply when a person is required to remove a face covering. Police must, as far as is reasonably practicable: ask for the person's cooperation, conduct the viewing of the person's face in a way that provides reasonable privacy if the person requests this, and conduct the viewing of the person's face as quickly as is reasonably practicable as possible.

Why were these particular safeguards adopted? These safeguards are not new. The safeguards applying to court security, juvenile detention and correctional centre officers are based on those that already exist in the Court Security Act 2005. They now operate to ensure that court security staff, when exercising powers to ensure the secure and proper operation of the courts, do so with respect and understanding for people accessing those facilities. Those safeguards complement existing procedures in detention and correctional centres as well as courts while ensuring that those officers are able to identify people and ensure the security of these regulated facilities. When do the safeguards apply? The common safeguards must be applied by all officers exercising the power, if it is reasonably practicable to do so.

Do the safeguards mean that some people get special treatment? The Government is committed to delivering services in a respectful and sensitive way, while ensuring that officers have the powers they need to function effectively. This legislation is drafted to reflect community expectations that everyone should cooperate with a lawful requirement to show their face and that, to the extent possible, officers responsible for enforcing our laws and providing us with security will respond to a person's wishes with respect to privacy and dignity. This legislation is about identification. It is not about humiliation. There will be various circumstances in which a person may request privacy or a person of the same gender to undertake the identification. This legislation aims to give police and other people the power to do their job properly into the future at the same time as taking into account the privacy of people and ensuring that they are not subjected to any humiliation or undue duress. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [10.34 a.m.]: I support the Identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 and will make a brief contribution. At a quick glance the objects of this bill are:

- (a) to amend the *Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Act 2002*:
 - (i) to allow a police officer to require, in certain circumstances, a person to remove a face covering so as to enable the officer or another police officer to see the person's face for identification purposes, and
 - (ii) to allow a police officer to request that a person disclose the person's identity to the officer where the officer proposes to give the person a direction under that Act to leave a place,

- (b) to amend the *Court Security Act 2005*...
- (c) to amend the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999* and the *Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2008* ...
- (d) to amend the *Children (Detention Centres) Act 1987* and the *Children (Detention Centres) Regulation 2010* ...
- (e) to amend the *Oaths Act 1900* ...

The identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 will give police and other government security personnel the right to view a person's face for identification. This timely bill is in response to a high-profile case in New South Wales involving confusion over the identity of a woman wearing a burqa. Carnita Matthews was sentenced to six months in jail for falsely accusing a police officer of forcing her to remove her veil during a random breath test. But she won on appeal after a judge found the prosecution could not provide she had made the false complaint. The District Court Judge dismissed the case against Carnita Matthews on the grounds that he was:

... not satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that she made the complaint and even if he was ... he would not have been satisfied beyond reasonable doubt that it was knowingly false ... all we know is that a person with a black burqa came in [to Campbelltown police station] with a man in a brown suit with an envelope and that's it ...

His Honour also found that there were differences between Ms Matthews' signature and the one on the statutory declaration. The President of the NSW Police Association, Scott Weber, said the burqa identity case highlighted the pressures police are under and that some police are unfairly being accused of being racist. The identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 amends the Oaths Act 1901 to require that an authorised witness must see a person's face if he or she witnesses their signature. It also amends the Law Enforcement Powers and Responsibilities Act to extend to police officers the right to see a person's face for identification purposes.

The Government has consulted with members of the Islamic community on the content of this bill and is committed to ongoing work through the Community Relations Commission on the development of guidelines that will apply to government agencies. This is not about outlawing a piece of clothing that has a cultural or religious connection. This is about ensuring that police have the power, if they have a concern or suspect that breaches of the law may have occurred, to require people to show their identification. Veils are worn by some Muslim women in the presence of all those except their spouses and family members. France made headlines by banning the niqab earlier this year, which is regarded as very extreme.

This bill achieves its objectives without going as far as a total ban. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government remains opposed to suggested bans on Islamic dress. But at present the law hampers police officers and officials from doing their job effectively. The changes to the Law Enforcement Act have the backing of many community leaders. It is also important to note that the New South Wales Ombudsman will conduct a review of the new laws after 12 months and make recommendations. Some civil libertarians will claim that this is racism but I object to those calls. This bill is not about religion. I was saddened to hear those spruiking this message. The law respects all religions and is not a threat to any religious group or any other community, cultural or spiritual group. This bill allows police to do their job without fear of false accusations or charges being dismissed.

We live in one country with one set of laws for all. I am proud of the strong multicultural community in which we live and from which we as Australians benefit—great cultures, history, food and even religion meshing together in our communities with positive impact most of the time. While there are different views in the community about the overall issue of multiculturalism I believe that multicultural principles and practice have served Australia well. These values, for example, freedom and compassion for others, are considered to be the basis for building a cohesive multicultural society for the future. In addition, cultural diversity provides real and tangible benefits. Social and cultural benefits add significantly to the culture and quality of our lifestyles and to interactions between individuals and groups domestically and internationally.

I reiterate that this is not an attack on cultures or religions or on freedom and democracy. This is about addressing laws and loopholes that, on rare occasions, are exploited by minority radicals. Governments must continually adjust their laws so that they remain relevant. Recently I read in the news that Islamic leaders are comfortable with the New South Wales Government's decision to give police the power to demand the removal of burqas and other face veils. The Islamic Council of New South Wales says that it accepts the decision, while the Muslim Women's Association says it has no problem with the decision if the powers are handled sensitively. Islamic Council chairman, Khaled Sukkarieh, said:

Nobody wants to break the law. If you're asked to do something by a police officer and it's legitimate, then you do it.

Jamila Hussain teaches a course in sharia law at the University of Technology, Sydney, and she has said that under Islamic law a woman is required to remove her niqab to be identified if asked by a police officer. She also said:

If you live outside an Islamic country, then you have to obey the law of the land. And if the law of the land says that you need to remove your face veil for identification, then you should do so. And you really have no excuse for not doing so.

Keysar Trad from the Islamic Friendship Association of Australia says it is a moderate approach that should be followed elsewhere. He said:

We've balanced the needs of people who choose to cover their face as well as the needs of law enforcement and security. There might be some people who will have concerns that this might pave the way for perhaps greater restrictions in the future, but I think the vast majority of Muslims will welcome this decision.

Whether it means the removal of a motorcycle helmet, a face mask or a burqa, we are determined to give police the power they need to establish the identity of individuals. These changes to police powers clear up any ambiguities. Police already had the power to order face coverings to be removed while investigating serious offences but not during traffic stops. For many years we have seen signs on banks, petrol stations and other government offices stating that if a person entering those premises is wearing a helmet, they must take it off. What most of us did not know was that it was common practice to do so but it was not backed by legislation. A person is required as a security measure to remove his or her helmet before entering business premises, and no reasonable person could object to that requirement, especially in this day and age. The Identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 now addresses and backs that practice.

In framing and developing the bill the Government consulted with members of the Islamic community on its content. The Government is committed to ongoing work through the Community Relations Commission on the development of guidelines that will apply to government agencies. The guidelines will assist to ensure that the Government is responsive and sensitive to individual wishes for privacy and flexibility in the provision of quality services and support. This bill is premised on the foundation that people will comply with a lawful request to remove a face covering. It is about ensuring that our police officers and other specified officers have the powers they need to exercise their functions and to ensure the protection of everyone in our community, while respecting and being responsive to the different reasons why people wear face coverings, which include sunglasses, masks, balaclavas, religious headwear or motorcycle helmets.

The legislative safeguards provided by the bill, the monitoring mechanism, the community consultation and the development of guidelines demonstrate the Government's commitment to ensuring that it strikes a balance between the need for certain officers to have the power and the ability to appropriately exercise that power with respect to the diverse needs and wishes of everyone in our society. I again thank the Muslim community and congratulate it on its hard work and commitment in working with the O'Farrell-Stoner Government. Organisations such as the Islamic Council of New South Wales and the United Muslim Women's Association have shown strong leadership on this issue.

We live in a great country—a country in which individuals play an active and positive role in shaping its future. We are blessed by natural resources, we are blessed by our democratic principles and we are blessed by the positive influence of many people from around the world. Our laws are to protect those principles and, in order to do so, at times we need to realign and adjust our laws so that we continue to support those who have been given the duty to uphold the law—the dedicated and valuable men and women in the law enforcement sector. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women) [10.44 a.m.]: I support the Identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, which is essentially a confirmation of police powers and responsibilities and is a common sense response to the confusion that arose from the Carnita Matthews case. The bill has been the result of wide consultation, and the involvement of the New South Wales Islamic community has been especially welcome. The bill enables the police to require the removal of face coverings for the purpose of identification. It also enables other criminal justice agencies—for example, the courts—to enjoy similar powers, as well as those who swear oaths.

It is important to note that the amendment allows women to request that they be seen by a female police officer and that where it is practicable the law enforcement authorities will oblige. Were this amendment not to have been proposed and had we pursued a different path—for example, requiring law enforcement agencies to provide a female police officer, the resource implications, particularly for the police, in our very diffuse State

are fairly obvious, as is the precedent that it would create. It would mean increasingly a departure from the capacity of the criminal justice system to work without fear or favour and—importantly in a democracy—to be seen by the community as treating all people equally.

This is a very significant challenge in a diffuse, multicultural and robust democracy such as ours. Inevitably, as part of living in such a democracy, tensions occur between the rights of individuals and the concerns and rights of communities within the greater community to defend and protect their cultural and religious values. A democracy such as ours has to balance those tensions. That is why we have the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Discrimination Act, and that is why in each of those Acts, as in other parts of human rights law, there are exemptions for religious institutions.

The complexity of this issue reflects the importance of balancing the rights of individuals while recognising that discrimination may occur and must be seen as unlawful. Religious exemptions enable religious communities, whether Roman Catholic, Anglican, Uniting Church, Sikh, Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim, to have their beliefs and values respected and appropriately accommodated within a cultural and values regime, such as the Australian democracy. In this light, the identification amendment before us merely reflects the continuously evolving nature of the New South Wales polity and in that sense is a common sense effort to safeguard a very great and universal aspect of democracy: respect for the rule of law and the commitment of all of the community to uphold, without guns or armies, those same laws. I commend the bill to the House.

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

BUSINESS NAMES (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 13 September 2011.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [10.50 a.m.]: I support the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. As I am sure members are aware, a common feature on the wall of any local shop, delicatessen or drycleaners is a business name certificate. The business names registration system allows consumers to have confidence that if something goes wrong, they will be able to identify the trader involved. New South Wales has had business names registration legislation in place since at least 1934. Over time, the system has been reformed to meet the changes that have occurred in the marketplace. The Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011 is the next step in that evolution.

The advent of a national business names project occurred in 2008 when the Council of Australian Governments earmarked this important area of business regulation for reform as part of the National Seamless Economy Partnership Agreement. The project reflects that Australia's economy is very different now from how it was in 1934, in 1962 and again in 2002 when the legislation was significantly reformed. National infrastructure and communications advancements mean that it is very easy for businesses to reach across the country and the national business names project recognises that change.

The Commonwealth's new business names legislation—the Business Names Registration Bill 2011—will create a national business names register to be administered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. In general, it will create one set of rules for all traders across the country—one set of rules, one register, one regulator, a streamlined process for registering and renewing business names and, most importantly for traders, one business name that will cover the entire country, not only one State or Territory. The benefits for business are clear. If traders in New South Wales want to open a branch in another State, it will be much easier to do so under a national business registration system. Likewise, if traders want to concentrate their business in New South Wales and sell throughout the country online, through mail order or in a virtual marketplace, then the national business name project will make life easier.

As with any national reform project, it can be a success only if it is truly national. I am advised that all States will be referring their business names powers to the Commonwealth as part of the scheme, which will also include Western Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, which will also adopt the new scheme. There has been extensive consultation on the proposed new national business names register. The Senate has held an inquiry into the laws and stakeholders have been given an opportunity to comment. Moreover the Parliament of the first State to introduce a referral of powers bill, Tasmania, also has

considered the legislation. New South Wales, like all other jurisdictions, has been involved in the discussions about the new system, its transitional arrangements and what it will mean for the many businesses registered under the State system. That has ensured that the views of the State with the largest economy have been heard. The fact that all jurisdictions support this reform is testament to its benefits.

It is expected that the new national business names system will commence from May 2012. The Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill includes a number of transitional arrangements leading up to the May 2012 handover that will ensure that traders with existing names will continue to be able to use them under the new system. If a business has a current business name at the time of the changeover, it will not need to do anything—the business names will transfer over to the new system. If they have the same name registered in several jurisdictions, they will need to maintain only one of the registrations. If they have a number of different names registered, they will be able to seek a common renewal date. This is a win-win for traders. As the Minister already has noted, a national business names register is a significant reform initiative that will help to break down the artificial barriers to people getting on with the job of building our nation's economy and creating jobs. For that reason, I am pleased to support this bill.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [10.56 a.m.]: I am very pleased to speak in support of the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. In August 2011, there were more than 501,000 business names registered in New South Wales. That means there are more than 500,000 business operators in this State alone that stand to benefit from the introduction of a single national business names registration system. A key feature of the new system is that it will be available online. Through the one application, a person will be able to apply for both a business name and an Australian business number. There will be no more chasing after paper forms and no more attaching cheques and sending them to different departments and hoping they arrive in time.

In future, a prospective new business operator will be able to obtain both requirements by going to a single online portal. Doing business online at times that suit each individual is now a way of life. We pay bills online, we can compare home loans and obtain them online and we can renew our vehicle registrations online. We can submit our tax returns by e-Tax, and even have some of the necessary details filled in for us. As we saw with the recent census, we can now even submit our census returns by electronic means. Governments at all levels have recognised the demands for convenience of business and private individuals in doing our day-to-day business. As my colleague the Minister for Fair Trading mentioned when introducing this bill, a national business names system is only the first part of several key national reforms that will make it easier for businesses to conduct business with governments in Australia.

Another part of the reforms agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments is the business online system, which will enable a business to establish one online account and interact with many different government agencies through a single portal. This initiative is being introduced in stages and will develop over time. Ultimately, it will enable businesses to obtain information about start-up requirements, to pre-fill and submit some forms electronically and to undertake various other transactions with governments. One key feature of this service is a new national business licensing information system, which is planned for implementation during 2012. I am sure all members will be familiar with the many issues facing people who want to start a business in this State. They need business names, they need Australian business numbers, they may need various licences, authorities and permits.

Some of these are available from the State Government, some can be obtained from the Commonwealth Government, and others from a local council. Finding all this information and obtaining the necessary forms can be a minefield. As the Minister noted when introducing this legislation, this bill will help to cut red tape for businesses in New South Wales. It will be especially welcomed by small businesses operating across State boundaries. In my electorate of Albury, which borders Victoria, many businesses must duplicate registrations with all the attendant costs and paperwork. Some businesses choose to register different names in Albury and Wodonga, such as the veterinary practices operated by Dr Arthur Frauenfelder, who is also the chairman of the Albury Northside Chamber of Commerce. This bill will be welcomed by his and many other border businesses.

I ask members to consider the problem confronted by a Wodonga, and therefore Victorian, sign-writing business that also operates across the Murray River into Albury. Signs by Knight had to register in New South Wales to protect its name and to operate in the Albury area. I am told that costs amounted to approximately \$1,000 to make the initial registration, and that administrative fees cost approximately \$500 annually. All this is in addition to the primary registration of the business just a couple of kilometres away in Victoria. This bill will

deliver sensible and tangible benefits for business operators in our border region. Like other jurisdictions, New South Wales has a business licence information system where a person can find out what State or Commonwealth licences or permits are required for a particular business.

However, the current business licence information system does not provide information about New South Wales local government requirements. The new national system, however, will provide information across all jurisdictions. The improvements will particularly benefit New South Wales business operators as the system will contain local council information for the first time. This Government supports the businesspeople of our State, many of whom operate small businesses as sole proprietors. The introduction of a national online business names registration system, followed by the gradual implementation of the other reforms I have mentioned, will produce cost and time savings for businesses. I am therefore pleased to support the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [11.00 a.m.]: I am pleased to also support the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. This is one of those pieces of legislation introduced in this place for the greater good. I acknowledge the presence of the former Premier, the member for Toongabbie, in the Chamber. He saw many Council of Australian Government reforms implemented when he was Premier. It is therefore appropriate for me to commend the Minister for Fair Trading, who has been entrusted by the people of New South Wales to introduce these reforms. As somebody who has represented small businesses throughout the State as an industry association chief executive officer, I can say that there will be a generic sigh of relief throughout the small business community of New South Wales that the Government has listened and implemented these microeconomic reforms.

They are ongoing microeconomic reforms that are essential for Australia to continue to build a strong economy into the future. A strong, efficient national economy is critical for driving jobs growth. The Council of Australian Governments National Seamless Economy Partnership Agreement includes a number of reform initiatives that are designed to make it easier to do business—a welcome relief. The need for certain business activities to be regulated through licensing and registration systems is clear. Registration and licensing schemes, in whatever form, help to protect consumers—hence the passion of the Minister for Fair Trading for this legislation. Registration also protects other traders and the community as a whole. We must constantly strive, however, to reduce regulatory burdens when they are unnecessary or when something can be done better and achieve the same outcomes.

A national business names registration scheme does exactly that. Some type of regime to register trading names is warranted in the interests of consumer protection and the operation of a transparent market. Business has never denied that. However, it is unnecessary for eight different business name registration systems to operate in a country that already has a highly integrated national economy. In 2011 the States are highly integrated. The introduction of a national business names register is a practical solution to an already widely known fact: Australian businesses operate in a national environment. I am advised that New South Wales has more than 500,000 registered trading business names.

It is not the case that only a small proportion of traders operate in more than one jurisdiction, but even if that were true, or if they hold more than one name, the benefits in time and money saved through a national register will quickly accumulate. Time-poor business operators, of whom there are many in my electorate of Baulkham Hills, will be able to register and renew their business names online at a time that suits them and their busy working schedules. As their businesses grow, their nationally recognised business names will grow with them. For larger traders that have multiple business names across many jurisdictions—I pause to highlight the Norwest Business Park in my electorate, which has a high number of such businesses—the savings in terms of time and money will be substantial. Less time, effort and resources will be spent complying with necessary laws.

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission will become a focal point for a number of regulatory functions, not just business names but also company registration and regulation, financial advice and consumer credit oversight as well as having an ongoing role as a critical marketplace regulator. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission website and portals will enable people to search a range of business types and allow traders to register companies and company names as well as simultaneously register a business name and their Australian business number. While there are many benefits, national reform is not always easy. Governments have wrestled with how to integrate the Australian economy for years. Indeed, it was one of the great issues that stopped us from achieving Federation before 1901. Although entertaining, more than 100 years

ago creating a national rail network from a series of State-based railways with tracks of different gauges was a problem that plagued politicians for many years. Steps have been taken to make the path to a national business names register less troublesome.

The Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011 includes a number of transitional arrangements to help smooth the way forward. First and foremost, those traders with an existing business name under New South Wales law will be able to carry the name over to the national system at the date of changeover even if the name is also used by a different trader in another jurisdiction. Where the New South Wales Government has restrictions on the display of business names in place, such as gaming venues, those regulations will continue. Likewise, the Commonwealth will not be able to restrict the ability of a New South Wales government body to conduct business under a name. If for reasons of health and safety a person's information is not disclosed publicly on the New South Wales register, that information will be protected on the national register. However, the important role the register provides in verifying who owns a business will continue.

I am advised that in the lead-up to the introduction of the new national register in May 2012 traders will have access to a range of information about what the changes mean for them. This information will be in addition to the advice and educational material already available. It is my understanding that during the transfer of New South Wales data to the Commonwealth advanced notice will be provided if the State's business names register needs to be closed. Information will also be provided to business proprietors whose name registration falls due for renewal immediately before or after the changeover. The referral of each State's business names powers to the Commonwealth makes sense. It makes sense for traders who will have their regulatory burden lessened. It makes sense for consumers who will have the added protection of a complete national business names register rather than a disparate group of State and Territory based information. Most importantly, this makes sense for the Australian and New South Wales economies.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [11.07 a.m.]: I am pleased to support the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. My colleagues have mentioned the many benefits of a national business names registration system and have outlined some of the other improvements planned to be implemented by later parts of these national reforms. In supporting the bill I will mention one group of businesses that will benefit particularly from a single business names registration system. I refer of course to those businesses located along State borders that invariably operate across them. New South Wales shares borders with four other jurisdictions: Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Many companies operating nationally will have already registered the same business name in all jurisdictions. These businesses will immediately benefit from the national system because they will need to maintain only a single registration.

However, it is often smaller businesses that have faced problems caused by the existing separate systems. A plumber operating a business in Tweed Heads will undoubtedly need to work in Coolangatta or nearby areas in Queensland. A baker with a shop in Albury may wish to expand operations and open a second shop in Wodonga. For businesses such as these, the existence of State and Territory business names systems poses problems. If they are physically carrying on their business in more than one jurisdiction they need to register their business name in each of those States or Territories. This increases their administrative time and costs. In many cases this is an unfair burden on them simply because they are located on one side of a State border with many clients based on the other.

An additional problem is that they may discover that the business name they use in one State has already been registered to another person in another State. "Joe's Plumbing" may be a name registered in New South Wales for a business located in Albury. But if another Joe's Plumbing has already been registered to a different person operating in Melbourne, then the New South Wales Joe may find that, even if he is properly licensed as a plumber in both States, he cannot use the same business name when working just a few kilometres away in Victoria. A single national business names registration system will prevent this sort of difficulty in future. If builder Fred starts a business and registers his business name as "Fred's Fantastic Building Services", he will be able to use that name throughout Australia. All currently registered State and Territory business names will be migrated to the new system and can then be used throughout Australia. There undoubtedly will be instances in which the same name is registered to different people in different States. However, no business will be forced to change its registered name.

The changeover process provides that each of the names will be validly registered on the national system, and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission will be able to add an identifying term to the register to differentiate them. This might include the State or the location of the business. Customers will be able to easily confirm the identity of such a business through its Australian business number, which must be

disclosed on invoices, receipts, orders for goods or services, and other similar business documents. The introduction of a national business names registration system will be an important milestone in streamlining and simplifying business processes in Australia. It will produce many benefits to the economy, both immediate and long term. I welcome the initiative and commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [11.10 a.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contributions to debate on the Business Names (Commonwealth Powers) Bill 2011. I thank the shadow Minister, the member for Kogarah, for her support and that of the Opposition for the bill. I also thank members representing the electorates of Rockdale, Albury, Baulkham Hills and The Entrance for their contributions to the debate. This bill will help to cut red tape for businesses in New South Wales, especially small businesses that operate across State boundaries. It is the culmination of an important national reform initiative that will have significant positive outcomes for the entire Australian economy. 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.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2011-2012

Debate resumed from 13 September 2011.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [11.12 a.m.]: I speak in this take-note debate on what is commonly referred to by most people as the budget. I will address a number of matters but first I want to set the record straight in relation to the financial situation this Government has inherited. I acknowledge the fantastic contribution made by the Treasurer and his staff in preparing the budget under fairly trying circumstances and in a reasonably short time. There has been extensive discussion and debate about the concept of a budget shortfall and a \$5.2 billion black hole. It is worth going through some of the figures listed in Budget Paper No. 2 to make sure that members are aware of where we stand. I will speak a little about the concept of an underlying result in relation to the budget. The previous Government was able to mask the State's true budget position through the funding it received from the economic stimulus. If members look at the figures listed in the budget paper they will see that in 2009-10 there was a budget surplus of \$989 million.

If the economic stimulus of that year is taken away, we see that the budget's underlying position was a deficit of \$895 million. In 2010-11 we see a \$1.2 billion surplus but the underlying result was \$194 million. If we had continued the spending regime of the previous Government without taking any action the forward estimates would have resulted as follows: in 2011-12, a deficit of \$170 million; in 2012-13, a deficit of \$550 million; in 2013-14, a deficit of \$1.316 billion; and in 2014-15, a deficit of \$2.4 billion. That adds up to somewhere in the vicinity of \$4.5 billion, but we have discovered since taking office that there was an unfunded liability of about \$720 million relating to the Solar Bonus Scheme. If we add together all those deficits and the Solar Bonus Scheme liability there is a deficit of \$5.2 billion. That is the reason this Government has had to take some action.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: The member for Penrith is misleading the House. Numerous reports have demonstrated that there is no black hole. The member continues to repeat this claim and is clearly misleading the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr STUART AYRES: If this Government had continued the revenue and expenditure regime of the previous Government we would have ended up with a \$5.2 billion shortfall in the State budget. It is critical that

we are absolutely clear about the position that existed when this Government took over the State's finances. One of the things we have had to do is make sure expenses are brought under control. We have to consider where our expenses lie right across the budget. When I talk to people in my electorate and explain to them what is essentially a pie chart of our expenditure across the State many of them are surprised to learn that close to 50 per cent of the budget goes on wages. That is a perfectly reasonable expenditure of money. We are investing in people across the State to enable them to provide crucial services to our communities.

People throughout the State also need to be aware of the rate at which public sector wages in this New South Wales have grown compared with other sectors across the nation. There has been well above average growth in New South Wales public sector wages compared to public sector wages in other States and Territories and private sector wages in New South Wales. The budget papers show this quite clearly. Public sector employees in New South Wales have received wage increases well above those for other employee groups for an extended period. Since 1997, public sector wages have increased by 21.9 per cent in real terms. New South Wales public sector wage growth exceeded the New South Wales private sector wage growth by 10.7 per cent and the public sector in the rest of Australia by 6.1 per cent.

If the private sector pay increases had applied to government employees over the past 13 years, employee expenses would have been \$3 billion lower in 2011-12. Essentially, it is fair to say that public sector employees in New South Wales have been on a pretty good wicket. We need to make sure this State continues to live within its means. That is why having a 2.5 per cent wages cap before any productivity gains are demonstrated is a sound position for this State to adopt. It will ensure that the 50 per cent of the budget that is spent on public sector wages is manageable and under control and will give the State the opportunity to continue to invest in the services and infrastructure it needs.

I refer now to an area that I touched on previously in a debate about investment in education. I encourage members to look at the Long-Term Fiscal Pressures Report, Budget Paper No. 6, the New South Wales intergenerational report, which refers to a number of matters. As one of the younger members of this House I note that a significant event will take place this year. The intergenerational report talks about changes to the age dependency ratio. This is the first year that baby boomers will reach traditional retirement age. The baby boomers will be turning 65 and, according to the budget papers, there will be an 18-year period of accelerated growth in the age dependency ratio. The age dependency ratio relates to people aged above 65 compared with those in the 16 to 64 category. It indicates that New South Wales will come under significant pressure to ensure full employment so that the State generates enough revenue to support those aged over 65 years.

The foundation for the long-term strategic approach that has been taken by the Government in this budget will enable New South Wales to tackle some of the significant challenges that exist around the State's population. This leads to the question of people's participation and productivity. The budget paper predicts significant challenges with regard to productivity. The real gross State product has grown at an average of 3.1 per cent every year since the recession in the early 1990s. Continuing employment projections and productivity assumptions, I point out that real growth is expected to slow to 2.6 per cent over the next 18 years as the baby boomers reach traditional retirement age. It is important to think about how we will attract people back to the State, how we can support businesses to improve productivity and how we target overseas immigration to continue to support the growth industries in New South Wales.

Another thing the budget does, which is crucial to the long-term prosperity of this State, is lay the foundation for a reduction in the fiscal gap. According to the intergenerational report, the fiscal gap will reduce to 2.8 per cent. Although it will not receive headlines in the local or metropolitan media, the budget paper outlines the strength of the Government's Treasury team in taking a long-term strategic approach to the finances and the financial management of the State. I applaud the Treasurer and his team for the work they have done. I turn now to the work being done in my local area of Penrith. We are seeing significant investment in a number of areas. The Penrith region will benefit significantly from investment to provide 900 extra teachers. It also provides for 2,475 extra nurses and 550 police. The budget provides direct investment of \$46.3 million for the Nepean Hospital. Additional funding for the hospital will allow 39 extra beds to open in 2012. We are also seeing significant investment in other areas such as transport and roads.

One project that is particularly important to me is the investment in the Nepean Creative and Performing Arts High School, with its creative and performing arts centre. The school decided to tackle falling enrolments by finding a unique way to promote the school. It identified that creative and performing arts was the way to do that. There is a strong and emerging arts culture across western Sydney, whether through engagements with the Penrith regional gallery or the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre. Getting vertical

integration that engages schools in that process will provide opportunities for young adults and children across the region to participate in creative and performing arts. The first million dollars is being invested in the Victoria Bridge cycle and pedestrian pathway. I saw an article in a paper published in the 1960s about concerns with the Victoria Bridge.

I saw reports from the 1860s about concerns with the Victoria Bridge. A problem in the Penrith region that has existed for more than 100 years is finally being tackled by this Government. By the end of this term of government we should see a new cycle and pedestrian pathway over the Nepean River. For the first time in about 100 years residents will be able to cross the bridge on their daily runs or walks from Emu Plains or Leonay to the Penrith central business district and see the river. The current bridge is an old-style, wrought iron construction that does not allow residents to view the beautiful vistas of the Nepean River. I am sure that the new pathway will be used for many events and activities. Planning work is underway for the construction of a car park at Nepean Hospital. This is a particularly important issue for the hospital. The hospital has grown significantly over the past 20 years. I acknowledge the work done by the Greiner and Fahey governments, particularly Peter Collins, who made the hospital a teaching hospital, and the investments made by both Liberal and Labor Federal governments and the previous State government in Nepean Hospital.

The hospital continues to provide a service for people on the other side of the Great Dividing Range as it is the teaching hospital closest to them, but car parking is lacking. It means that people who live locally cannot park near the hospital or even access the hospital. I regularly receive constituent inquiries about how to improve parking. Residents are forced to park kilometres away. A resident contacted me to say that they were unable to secure a parking spot near the hospital. They had to drive back to their mother's house and collect their mother so she could drive them back to the hospital and then do laps of the hospital while they accessed the services they needed. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

That resident is symbolic of those who are unable to access the services of Nepean Hospital. I have had numerous discussions with members of staff, such as doctors, nurses or allied health professionals, who are finding it difficult to perform their duties because of the lack of car parking at the hospitals. Beyond the direct investment in the hospital, there is quite innovative investment in telehealth, which will be led by the dynamic team at the Sydney University Teaching School at Nepean Hospital headed by Mohamed Khadra. I inform my good friend the member for Bathurst that I am sure many residents in regional New South Wales will benefit from the innovative ideas coming out of that telehealth project. I look forward to see how it progresses over the next four years.

The other area I would like to touch on in relation to this budget is the significant growth in investment in disability services. The Nepean region will receive more than \$160 million in extra funding for services and will see direct investment in capital works for supported accommodation in Penrith throughout a four-year period. I commend the Minister for Disability Services and his team for their work in this area. The previous Government established the Stronger Together program and should be commended for that, but there was no forward growth funding. The current Minister has secured that growth funding. There would not be a member in this House who does not have extremely strong disability advocates in their region who recognise that we need security in this area. Regardless of the decisions made at a Federal level around the national disability insurance scheme, the work being done by this Government will ensure that New South Wales is ready and will continue to support those people in our community who are disadvantaged because of their disability.

We must continue to support those people. Regardless of what happens with savings, jobs and all those things that attract headlines about the impact of budgets on the State, governments will be judged by how they treat disadvantaged people. People with disabilities should see clearly that this Government will continue to support them. Once again I thank the team in the Treasury department led by the Treasurer, who has been able to pull together a budget in trying circumstances. Most people across this State expected us to inherit a piggy bank with not much in it—that clearly is the case. The budget papers show that if we had continued along the path of the previous Government, we would have ended up with a \$5.2 billion shortfall. Most mums and dads try daily to manage their household budgets by making sure their expenses do not exceed their revenue. For the first time in a long time we have a Treasurer who is placing that formula at the centre of this State's decisions.

If our revenues are decreasing because of global financial issues, we must make corresponding changes to how we spend our money. Budget spending must be more efficient and we must continue to press home the importance of productivity. This State can no longer live beyond its means. We will not be able to provide the services in Western Sydney, regional New South Wales, the South Coast, Wollongong, Newcastle or wherever

unless we live and operate within our means. Finally, for the first time in 16 years, we have a Government that is placing that very simple economic thought at the centre of what it does, and this will allow us to invest in services and infrastructure that this State desperately needs. I commend the budget to the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! Before I call on the member for Cabramatta to make his contribution, I commend each public sector worker in Parliament House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [11.32 a.m.]: The O'Farrell Government's first budget is a slap in the face to the people of Western Sydney and the vibrant, diverse community of Cabramatta. Gone is the Cabramatta commuter car park, which was fully funded by the previous Labor Government. Gone are stamp duty exemptions for first home buyers, crushing the dreams of many young families in Cabramatta and throughout New South Wales. Gone is 80 per cent of the Community Building Partnership Fund, slashed by the Treasurer. And soon 5,000 public servants will be gone. Western Sydney is the engine room of New South Wales—a region that more than 1.5 million people call home. Every day in western Sydney workers front up for work, roll up their sleeves and get the job done without complaints and excuses. They do their work honestly and with the best intentions for their employers and their families.

Those workers and their families deserve the best services any State Government can afford. Workers put in the hard yards that provide economic benefits for the whole State. They have a right to expect their Government to protect them. I am a proud resident of south-west Sydney and I am proud to represent Cabramatta in this Chamber. It is my responsibility and duty to speak for and protect the interests of the hardworking families and communities of western Sydney. This begs the question: Why does the Premier, who calls himself the Premier for Western Sydney, continue to neglect and take important projects away from those people? Why does he treat them like second-class citizens and rob them of the opportunities they truly deserve? Let us examine some of the projects the Premier has taken away from western Sydney.

The Premier has axed the Parramatta to Epping rail line. He is shutting down Parramatta jail. He has dumped the \$25 million funding to revamp the old Kings School site for a new arts precinct in western Sydney. However, the Premier has not stopped there. Apart from trying to take credit for spending funding that was earmarked by the former Labor Government, he is attacking the most vulnerable in our community. New carers will lose the equivalent of the youth allowance when children turn 16, and fees will be introduced for publicly owned preschools, putting parents as much as \$40 to \$50 per day out of pocket. The O'Farrell Government will try to con the public and blame its budget decisions on the former Labor Government, but it is worth remembering that this Coalition Government inherited a triple-A credit rating and a healthy New South Wales economy with a State Government capital expenditure program of \$62.2 billion. In his critique of the budget in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 6 September, eminent economist Ross Gittins agreed and said:

... not because Labor left the State's finances in such an almighty mess ... it didn't.

He said there was no black hole. As the member for Mount Druitt has always said, Labor left the State with a triple-A rating because there was no quadruple-A rating to upgrade it to. Standard and Poor's would have upgraded our credit rating to quadruple-A if such a rating existed. The truth is that Treasury coffers were left in good shape by the previous Labor Government with record spending and a triple-A rating economy. The Premier has started wielding the axe on public service jobs and on the communities of Cabramatta. The Premier has abolished the stamp duty exemption for first home buyers, sending a shock through the people of the State, especially to young couples and families of Cabramatta. He has made it more difficult for first home buyers to achieve their dreams.

Every couple that has scrimped and saved, spent frugally and sacrificed so their children can enjoy the comfort of living in their own home has been slapped in the face by the O'Farrell Government. As if the well-documented rising costs of living—electricity, water, other utility bills and fuel prices—were not enough, the Premier pulls this stunt and says potential first home buyers, "Sorry, you'll just have to save more, work harder and wait longer." This decision is just to stimulate the housing market of rich developers. How convenient that 14 of the 20 suburbs hit by the first home buyers cuts are in western Sydney—a pure act of bastardry. But the Premier has not stopped there.

The major upgrade of the Fairfield Transport Interchange and the construction of the Cabramatta commuter car park have both been dumped by the Premier. If the Premier ever decides to visit Cabramatta—to my knowledge he visited only a few times before the election and has not returned since his star candidate Dai Le was defeated—he would see that the one thing Cabramatta residents are crying out for is more parking

spaces. Under the former Labor Government, Treasury had fully funded the building of a commuter car park for the people of Cabramatta, but that has now been axed by the O'Farrell Government. This is an unbelievable decision, especially since the Liberal Party's candidate Dai Le helped to organise a rally calling for a car park on the western side of Cabramatta. Labor committed to building the car park, but Premier O'Farrell scrapped it.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Dirty campaign.

Mr NICK LALICH: It certainly was a dirty campaign. No-one would believe the dirty campaign that came from the Liberal Party in the final few days before the election. I have been in politics for 40 years and participated in every election since Gough Whitlam was elected in 1972. The 2011 Liberal Party campaign was the dirtiest I had ever seen.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Cabramatta will direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr NICK LALICH: The Liberal Party spent something like \$200,000 on its Cabramatta campaign, paying its workers \$10 an hour but saying they were volunteers.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Point of order: I ask that the member for Cabramatta be drawn back to the leave of the debate rather than continuing with this diatribe, which is unparliamentary. He is attacking members of the public.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I realise that the member for Cabramatta is speaking to the budget. I ask that he move on from the last election and return to the leave of the debate.

Mr NICK LALICH: My remarks were due to interjections from members opposite. The former Labor Government was committed to the people of western Sydney. The Coalition Government obviously is not, or maybe it has been pretending. I do not think that the electorate of Cabramatta has been on Barry O'Farrell's mind since the defeat at the last election of the magic candidate they had for that seat. I acknowledge that the budget earmarks money for the upgrade to Cabramatta High School and fire station, but after some consideration and analysis it would not take a rocket scientist to know that these projects survived only because the previous Labor Government had already started spending money on them. Let there be no doubt: This budget contains no new money for Cabramatta. A vital piece of infrastructure, the Cabramatta community car park, has been axed. The budget merely continues projects that were commenced under the former Labor Government.

For the Premier to call himself the Minister for Western Sydney is nothing more than a bad joke. He has no interest in looking after the people of Western Sydney. The Premier is more interested in sections of Sydney that are closer to home. As has been said, no money will be spent west of the Sydney Harbour Bridge—that was Barry's campaign slogan. The Government would have caused enough pain, but the Premier and the Treasurer have not stopped there. They have hurt young families, they have hurt communities, and now they are hurting community groups in Cabramatta. The diverse community that exists in Cabramatta is the life blood of a happy and harmonious society. Funding for the Community Building Partnership local infrastructure grants program has been cut by \$47 million. That is a cut of 80 per cent compared to what was offered under Labor.

Before becoming Premier, Barry O'Farrell said he would help local communities. Those communities took him at his word and many of them voted Liberal for the first time. It will be the last time they vote for the Liberal Party and I know those communities are sorry they voted for the Liberal Party at the last election. That was demonstrated by the 30,000 people who rallied to show their displeasure with Barry O'Farrell's policy. Barry O'Farrell has betrayed the people of New South Wales. The Liberal Party has betrayed the people of New South Wales. Government members have betrayed the people of western Sydney. The Government could not care less. The Government has reduced funding for the Community Building Partnership program to a mere \$11 million—\$47 million less than the previous Labor Government.

In 2010 a total of 1,775 grants were awarded to build or upgrade local community facilities. Important community infrastructure reaped the benefits from these grants—facilities such as sporting fields, community halls and religious buildings. The O'Farrell budget is a detriment to the many community groups in Cabramatta. A frightening pattern is emerging: targeting communities out west while looking after the electorates that are closer to home. This O'Farrell Government is making the people of New South Wales lose confidence. In April the Premier and the Treasurer started scaring everyone with their myth of a \$5.2 billion budget black hole. They told every man, every woman and every dog that it would be a hard budget and a tough budget—the O'Farrell

Government would have to administer some tough medicine to rectify the perceived problems. Nobody bought the black hole scenario. Everyone could see it was a typical scare tactic from a Government that is fast earning itself a reputation as being not trustworthy.

The Government repeated the black hole scenario so many times that it thought it would come true eventually, but there was no budget black hole. The Parliamentary Budget Office has told us this and the Lambert report has told us this. In actual fact the Coalition needed a soft landing for a budget that does not take care of the people of western Sydney but instead takes projects away from them. What better way to soften a landing then by trying to trick the public into thinking that there is a budget black hole. It is worth noting that in the 15 out of 16 years the former Labor Government was in power, the State was in surplus. The O'Farrell-Baird first budget will take New South Wales \$1 billion into the red—a crushing \$3 billion decline from May this year. We all know about the 5,000 voluntary redundancies that the Premier has on his chopping board. The Premier is targeting the public service. He does not care about western Sydney.

On top of that, 70,000 pensioners will have their public housing rents increased by almost \$10 a week. Our society's most vulnerable people are being led to the guillotine by Mr O'Farrell and his motley crew. The New South Wales Labor Opposition will continue to fight for our society's most vulnerable. We will continue to fight for the hardworking families and communities of Cabramatta. We will stand up for their rights. We will fight every inch of the way to ensure that the services they need are provided. As I said earlier, this budget contains no new money for Cabramatta. It axes a critical piece of infrastructure—the Cabramatta commuter car park—and merely continues projects that had already commenced under Labor. For turning its back on the people of Cabramatta this O'Farrell Government stands condemned. The people of New South Wales will remember that in four years time.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [11.45 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the budget brought down by the O'Farrell-Stoner Government. At the outset I congratulate the Treasurer on the great job he has done in picking up the mess left behind by 16 years of Labor rule. We must remember what the Premier said in the speech yesterday: For more than 16 years Labor had rivers of gold running through New South Wales, but what did they do? The answer is that Labor wasted the money. I listened with some amusement to the member for Cabramatta who said that the Labor Government did not leave us a \$5.2 million black hole. Read the budget papers. Do not come in here and read a prepared speech and belt up the Government that is going to put New South Wales back on track.

The Government has adopted the slogan, "A plan to make New South Wales number one". New South Wales was number one until a Labor Government wasted money hand over fist. An example that claws at my gullet is the \$500 million wasted on the Rozelle Metro. At the same time that money was being wasted, people were being killed on the Pacific Highway, yet the former Government failed to step up to the mark and match the Federal Government funding. I commend the Minister for Roads and Ports for the great job he did in meeting the challenge—which was nothing more than a political challenge—by the Federal Government to match the Federal funding for the Pacific Highway. The Coffs Harbour electorate will benefit from \$190 million this year for the Pacific Highway upgrade between Sapphire Beach and Woolgoolga, and the Warrell Creek deviation, which goes to Urunga, is in the planning stages. There will be continued expenditure.

The Government will attempt to meet the Prime Minister's expectation of a 2016 completion date for the Pacific Highway, but that may not be achievable because of the wet weather we have had, particularly over the past 12 months. I suggest that we sit down with the Federal Government to set targets and make sure the targets are met, unlike the empty promises made by those opposite when they were in government. In 1996 Carl Scully stood in this House and said that in 10 years we would have a completed four-lane dual carriageway from Newcastle to the border, yet only 40 to 50 per cent has been completed to date. This Government will strive to meet the expectations of the Prime Minister, but it may be physically impossible.

Mr Anthony Roberts: He is a member that delivers.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I acknowledge and thank the Minister for Fair Trading for his comment. I compliment the Minister for Fair Trading for visiting the electorate of Coffs Harbour, where he was received warmly. The budget for regional rural New South Wales has been nothing short of outstanding. The Coffs Harbour electorate has received the long-awaited funding for a new police station and a new court house, which is manna from heaven as far as the people of the Coffs Harbour electorate are concerned.

In 1995 the then Coalition Government had targeted a justice centre for the Coffs Harbour electorate. Unfortunately, upon the Coalition losing government, the Carr Labor Government ignored any forward

programming. Since then the money has been floating around in the budget for the past 16 years—it was probably redirected to marginal Labor seats. In 2004 the then Minister for Police, John Watkins, wrote to me saying that planning had commenced for a police station at Coffs Harbour. It is 2011 and we do not have a new police station. But now we will have one because the budget has allocated in excess of \$19 million for a new police station in Coffs Harbour. The sods will be turned in the next 12 months.

The police officers in Coffs Harbour are working under appalling conditions. They were totally ignored by a Labor Government that had been in power for too long and was wasting money rather than providing infrastructure to regional New South Wales, as it should have done. The police commander's office is located out the back of Coffs Harbour police station in an old house, which contains asbestos. I am sure the previous Government knew about this problem but chose to ignore it. Opposition members talk about assisting public servants in this State, yet they did nothing for 16 years knowing that the local area commander's office was located in a building with asbestos. It is appalling that they put those officers in danger of contracting asbestosis.

I welcome funding of \$40.8 million for the courthouse. The Coffs Harbour courthouse was built in 1963 as a government office block. It was then turned into a courthouse. It would be one of the most dangerous courthouses in New South Wales. On one occasion in the past few years a magistrate ordered the courtroom cleared of all but the witnesses and the defendants because there was no security between prisoners in the dock and witnesses giving evidence. It is my fervent belief that in a case of attempted murder two of the witnesses changed their evidence because they were within 10 feet of the accused. I believe the set-up of the courthouse—where witnesses have to mingle with the accused in a crowded area—led to the acquittal of the accused. Over the past 10 years the antiquity of the courthouse has enabled three or four prisoners to escape from the dock and make their way into the street.

Both the courthouse and the police station are expected to be completed by 2015 and 2016 respectively. It is welcome news for the hardworking court officers and police officers who deserve respect and assistance from Government, which this Government will provide. The budget has allocated \$161,000 for ongoing work at the regional cancer care centre. I commend Tom Shakespeare and his great staff, the nurses and doctors, who provide a wonderful cancer care service. It is of great assistance to local people because who no longer have to travel to Sydney to undergo radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatment. I speak from experience on this issue because 21 years ago my wife was diagnosed with cancer.

Although we had a young family, we travelled to Sydney for three or four weeks for diagnosis and treatment. Kerrie then had chemotherapy in Coffs Harbour but she had to travel to Sydney to see her oncologist to revise her treatment. When she required radiotherapy she had to travel to Newcastle. I commend the citizens of Coffs Harbour who gathered 29,000 signatures on a petition for the establishment of the cancer care unit and presented it to the Parliament. With the assistance of Federal funding, the unit is now in operation. Funding of \$79,000 has been allocated for fire and rescue works within the electorate and \$17,000 for home care. I welcome the \$1.1 million of additional funding for community transport in Coffs Harbour. I compliment our community transport organisation on providing a transport service in regional New South Wales that otherwise would not be available.

The city of Sydney and any other major metropolitan city, such as Newcastle and Wollongong, have a transport service that is second to none in comparison to the service provided in regional communities. Many elderly and disabled people in regional areas rely on community transport. People who live in major metropolitan areas take their transport system for granted which, I add, is heavily subsidised by taxpayers, that is, those who live in regional New South Wales. I am pleased with the funding that is being provided to community transport in Coffs Harbour. I compliment the organisation on the great job it has done. I know the Government will continue to provide funds to community transport in Coffs Harbour, Nambucca and Bellingen shires.

I thank the Minister for Primary Industries for the allocation of two fishing inspectors to Coffs Harbour. The two fishing inspectors already employed in Coffs Harbour have been struggling for many years. Coffs Harbour is a great area for recreational fishing and a number of fishing tournaments are held there every year. I am pleased that the number of fishing inspectors will be boosted by 200 per cent, although some people will not like it. We must conserve and preserve our fishing stocks. By making sure that all recreational and commercial fishers abide by the laws of this State we will ensure the preservation of our fishing stocks. I thank the Minister for her assistance in that regard.

The budget has made allocations for a number of other capital improvements, including the upgrade of science classrooms at Coffs Harbour High School, or Jetty High as it is known locally. Science classrooms and

laboratories have been upgraded in the past but this school, which achieves great results for its students, is growing. I commend the teachers and staff at Jetty High and schools across the Coffs Harbour electorate for their great work in making sure our children receive the education they deserve. Too often, students in regional New South Wales do not have an opportunity to undertake tertiary education. The Coffs Harbour university campus is supported by a number of programs in the budget of the Department of Education and Training.

The education campus provides children in the Coffs Harbour electorate and surrounding districts with an opportunity to obtain a tertiary education at TAFE or university. I commend all those who work at those facilities for their fantastic work. The results produced at the Coffs Harbour education campus are second to none. This is a great budget across the board, not only for the Coffs Harbour electorate but also for the whole of regional and rural New South Wales. Regional and rural New South Wales have been neglected for 16 years under Labor rule. The capital works projects in Coffs Harbour that were delayed initially by Premier Carr when he came to office will be put back on the agenda. This budget has allocated in excess of \$300 million to the Coffs Harbour electorate. The council will benefit from funding announced by the Minister for Local Government yesterday for water and sewerage schemes, and for local road maintenance and construction.

This is a budget for all the people of New South Wales. Despite the rants of the member for Cabramatta, it is a budget that is fair across the board. It has provided capital works expenditure in regional and rural New South Wales. The Department of Primary Industries budget has provided extra funding for Coffs Harbour. With this budget the Government will get rid of the \$5.2 billion black hole left by Labor. The Opposition can quote Ross Gittins all it likes. The reality is that if we had another Labor Government in office this State would be in even worse trouble. Under the O'Farrell-Stoner Government the State has an opportunity to move forward and make New South Wales number one again. I commend the budget to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [11.59 a.m.]: I take this opportunity to discuss accountability as my response to the budget. Before I do so, I acknowledge and welcome Steven Krinks in the gallery, who is a resident of the Shellharbour electorate—a fantastic place. I used to teach Steven at the fantastic Lake Illawarra High School in the Shellharbour electorate. On 26 March this year, approximately 16,000 people in the Keira electorate voted for the Liberal Party, which is an enormous number of people and, without a doubt, that was the highest Liberals vote in recent years. As the elected member, I received a fairly significant swing against me of more than 18 per cent. In the days, weeks and months since the election, people have said to me that I should not take responsibility for that swing because at that time it was a protest against the Labor Party. However, I do take responsibility for the swing. I was the one whose name was on the ballot paper, I was the one tasked with trying to convince people to stick with the Labor Party, and I am accountable for the result.

The community of the Kiera electorate regards accountability as very important. When Government members were in opposition, they came down to the Illawarra, visited Keira countless times, and screamed about the importance of Bulli Hospital. The people in the Illawarra believed them. In fact, approximately 16,000 people believed them. When the current Minister for Health visited the Illawarra in October last year and said, "Bulli Hospital deserves the resources it needs to put patients first", and, "The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals are committed to a functioning health facility at Bulli", people in Keira believed her—16,000 people in Keira on election day believed her. Accountability is important because when the Liberal candidate said that he had "contacted the leaders of the Coalition and received a commitment towards an upgrade of the \$2.5 million Lysaght Oval facility", people actually believed him—more than 16,000 in Keira on election day believed him.

Accountability is important because when the Minister for the Illawarra said in the week after the historic victory in the State election that he would "not neglect the three seats around Wollongong because they were still held by Labor", and, "We are committed to the Illawarra being one of the jewels of the State", people believed him. Finally, accountability is important because when the Government said it would stand with the people of the Illawarra at a time when 800 jobs were lost at BlueScope Steel in the Wollongong electorate people believed it. In fact, 16,000 people in the electorate of Keira—one of the most significant swings that electorate has ever faced—believed that.

Mr Paul Toole: Point of order: Mr Acting-Speaker, I draw your attention to Standing Order 76, which relates to relevance. Although it is very good to receive an update of the election win of the member for Keira, we are debating the budget rather than the 16,000 votes the Coalition got at the election. I ask you to draw him back to speaking about the budget.

Mr Richard Amery: To the point of order: The budget speech by the Treasurer was very political and referred to the State election. Every speaker from the Government side has referred to the Government's historic

election win and has spoken about keeping promises. This is the Government's first budget and it is a very political budget. It is the first budget since the election—a fact that already Government members have highlighted. The member for Keira is only responding to those points.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Keira is talking about budget accountability and in the context of the budget that is appropriate. However, I am sure that the member for Keira is getting to the substantive points of the budget.

Mr RYAN PARK: What did those 16,000 people who voted for the Coalition get in this budget? They did not get one dollar committed to the Bulli Hospital. In October last year when members of the Government were in opposition they came down to the Illawarra and said they needed to make Bulli Hospital an important health facility in the Illawarra and that they would put the patients first. But less than six months later, in the first budget—the first opportunity to nail that commitment—not one dollar was allocated to that hospital. The Government did not allocate one dollar to the Lysaght sporting facility, and today there has been an announcement of an inquiry. I welcome an inquiry—I welcome 100 inquiries—but what the member for Wollongong wants, what the member for Shellharbour wants and what I want as the member for Keira is that \$2.5 million commitment for a home for football in our region. If it is not in the electorate of Keira, that is okay. If it is in the electorate of Wollongong, that is great. If it is in the Shellharbour electorate, that is great. But what we want is the \$2.5 million.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting and listen to the member for Keira in silence.

Mr RYAN PARK: I will tell the House why we want that \$2.5 million. It is because John Dorahy and the Liberal Party committed to getting that \$2.5 million. They did not commit to an inquiry, although we are happy to have one; they did not commit to a review, although we are happy to have one. What we want is \$2.5 million safeguarded for our communities. What else did those 16,000 people miss out on? Not one single dollar was allocated to the important Illawarra Advantage Fund, which has helped the electorates of the member for Shellharbour, the member for Wollongong, the member for Kiama, the member for Heathcote, and my electorate. We did not get one single dollar. In fact, the fund was scrapped at a time when members of the Liberal Party said to the member for Wollongong, the member for Shellharbour and me that they would stand shoulder to shoulder with us during this difficult time.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: They say they will stand shoulder to shoulder with us but then take away an economic stimulus package. That is hardly standing together with us. In addition, those 16,000 people did not get one dollar allocated to the Figtree High School library—an important piece of infrastructure that would not only stimulate jobs but would give a very important local high school in the Kiera electorate world-class facilities for teaching and learning. But it gets worse for Keira. The statistics for Keira indicate that approximately 8 per cent of the population—which is a pretty high percentage—relies on public housing for accommodation. Many who constitute that 8 per cent are pensioners: they live in public housing and they are also on a pension. In our neck of the woods we say they are the people who are doing it tough.

Ms Anna Watson: Most vulnerable.

Mr RYAN PARK: The most vulnerable, as the member for Shellharbour says. What do we see for those who are doing it tough? In this budget 70,000 pensioners will have their public housing rents increased by almost \$10 a week. For me and for some of the well-off members on the Government side of the House \$10 a week is okay; but \$10 is an important part of the weekly budget for the most vulnerable people in our community. This increase in rent will hurt them. If one went doorknocking in areas such as Bellambi and Tarrawanna and asked them what they would do with \$10 some of them would say it is the difference between eating or not; that \$10 is the difference between being able to pay a bill or not; or being able to make a payment on hire purchase or not. Ten dollars can make the difference between whether or not they take the humiliating step of reaching out for charitable gifts and support at a time when they do not want to. It is an amount that makes a hell of a big difference to people who are doing it tough. Government members may think they need to whack up public housing rents but I challenge them to look anyone who is doing it tough in their electorates in the eye and ask them what they could do with \$10.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: But it gets worse for Keira. Foster carers are people who take in some of the most vulnerable young people in our community. They put their hands up to help our community by giving young people a stable home. What do foster carers get? The foster carers in the Kiera electorate will see their allowances cut by more than \$212 a fortnight when their child turns 16. That is an absolute disgrace. It is disgraceful that after getting 16,000 people in my electorate to vote for it the Government has the gall to do that to them. The last election was the first time many of people from my electorate voted Liberal, and this is how the Government thanks them.

It gets worse. We know that the cost of living is increasing in places such as Keira, particularly in the parts of the community where people are doing it tough. We know that electricity costs are increasing. The actions of Government members will mean a massive \$12 increase in electricity bills. But it gets worse still because the young people in the Kiera electorate will miss out on stamp duty concessions worth tens of thousands of dollars. That will mean the difference between owning a home or being stuck in public housing. It will mean the difference between staying as renters or becoming owners of property. It makes a difference to the people of Keira, 16,000 of whom made the Coalition number one on 26 March. I suffered an 18 per cent swing against Labor, and the thanks given by Government members to voters is a budget that attacks the most vulnerable people in our community.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: I say to members opposite, particularly backbenchers, that if they think their communities hold only a Premier, a Treasurer, a Minister—even a member as good as the occupant of the Chair, the member for Kiama—accountable for this budget then they need to think again. Each Coalition member is their community's representative in this Parliament, and they have sat back and allowed Cabinet to attack the most vulnerable people. Coalition members have sat back and watched their masters and their bureaucracy destroy important front-line workers' conditions and wages and attack vital public services that communities need.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: I was accountable on 26 March and accept being accountable for that result. I seek an extension of time.

Extension of time not granted.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [12.14 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I commend the O'Farrell-Stoner Government on its first budget. I believe the Government has struck the right balance under particularly difficult circumstances.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Shellharbour will come to order. The member for Drummoyne will be heard in silence.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: The previous New South Wales Government squandered terrific opportunities from extra funds received courtesy of the property boom. But we know they were short-sighted and failed to invest for the future, like most Labor governments. One thing is certain: Labor is like a drunken sailor when it comes to spending. The budget position left by Labor was by no means fiscally sustainable. As a Government, we have taken steps to rebuild our finances and to deliver to our electorates on our pre-election commitments. Those commitments include delivering more front-line services. This Government is providing 900 more teachers and 2,475 more nurses, which should be of interest to the member for Shellharbour. We are providing 550 more police officers over the next four years. Substantial investments have been made to deliver another 662 hospital beds. Investment has been made for new buses and for new police stations.

[Interruption]

I will be get to Drummoyne shortly. One of the many highlights is the record \$4.7 billion spend on hospitals and health capital works over the next four years. That is 50 per cent higher than spending in the previous four years. We will provide world-class clinical services with timely access and effective infrastructure. We have heard a lot said in the past about the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link: the budget takes action to deliver these key projects. Also of great importance is that as a society we have

a responsibility to help those who are not so fortunate. The budget provides for a \$2.8 billion investment in disability services, which is the most significant budget allocation in the history of this country—one that makes us proud to call ourselves Australian.

This will better protect the most vulnerable members of our community and break the cycle of disadvantage. If we increase opportunities for people with a disability by providing support that meets their individual needs, only then will we see them reach their real potential. I am pleased also that a structure will be set up to provide quarantined accountable funding for mental health expenditure. Our communities were crying out for more infrastructure, and this budget delivers a record infrastructure spend for this State. On 26 March 2011 I was elected to this House on the basis that I would deliver on a number of commitments to which my community gives high priority.

In August 2010 I mailed a survey to the electorate that asked people to order by priority a number of issues that had been identified. The survey also provided extra room for them to note issues that had not been listed. I was inundated by some 6,000 respondents. I was amazed by the number of letters that were attached to a simple survey. The replies went into great detail about issues. The key issues were: improved services at Concord Hospital; traffic congestion; no marina at Kendall Bay; returning local planning decisions to communities; better public transport, especially the RiverCat services; the dilapidation of the beautiful heritage Yaralla Estate; and the rising cost of living. This informed me of the issues and I then set about devising a plan to fix many of them.

In July this year \$1.2 million was allocated to the research institute at Concord Hospital. That is fantastic news not only for the people of Drummoyne but also for those outside the electorate who use the services of Concord Hospital. In the budget it was announced that \$500,000 will be spent this year to provide the community with access to an improved foreshore walking trail around Concord Hospital. That is \$500,000 for the good people of Drummoyne and those in adjoining electorates who wish to take a walk in the beautiful Drummoyne electorate. The importance of public transport to my electorate cannot be overstated. That is why I continually ask questions in this House of the Minister for Transport. I was very pleased to see a significant boost of 261 new buses and an investment of more than \$100 million to expand light rail services.

Ferry services are of great importance to my electorate. Our ferry reforms are about restoring and expanding services, improving customer service, upgrading wharves and looking at fleet replacement. This of course is in stark contrast to the previous Government, which planned for a decline in ferry patronage. Also of great importance is the inclusion in the budget of a five-year \$2 billion program for disability services, which is the largest commitment to disability services in this nation's history. For Drummoyne, that means \$128 million for disability services for the inner west local planning area and includes \$2.5 million in new funding. The Government's commitment to integrity in government is backed up with record funding for the State's watchdog.

Mr Nick Lalich: Not for Cabramatta.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I am glad this funding has been allocated because many of the corruption allegations were raised on the previous Government's watch.

[Interruption]

The member should look at the records because the person who represented Drummoyne before me has some questions to answer. The Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission have been given an additional \$4 million in funding, which represents a 7 per cent increase. After witnessing numerous scandals, cover-ups and corruption, the community lost faith and trust in the former Government. This budget allocation comes on top of banning lobbyist success fees and strengthening whistleblower legislation.

The Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme will pay half the interest on significant loans that councils take out for large infrastructure projects, such as roads, community halls, libraries, paths, sporting fields and water facilities. This will get rid of a major infrastructure backlog. It is great news for local council areas and for our partners in local government. The biggest infrastructure spend in this State's history, \$62.6 billion over five years, is nearly \$7 billion more than Labor allocated in its last four years, and a 12 per cent increase. This is on top of money for infrastructure maintenance, traffic management and road safety initiatives in my electorate.

Mr Nick Lalich: Inner city.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I thank the member for that interjection. The budget delivers the change we have been waiting for.

Ms Anna Watson: Nothing for Shellharbour—nothing.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I am about delivering for my electorate. The member may have to fight harder to deliver for her electorate.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Opposition members will come to order and the member for Drummoyne will not incite the Opposition.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I am sure the people of Drummoyne would love to hear about the wonderful budget allocation for my electorate. The budget delivers the change we have been waiting for. It sets out to improve the performance of the State's entire economy. It aims to rebuild the State's finances and drive economic growth, particularly in regional areas, which I am happy about. With these added incentives we can increase business competitiveness in this State. If we can spend less than we earn it will place downward pressure on interest rates and the cost of living.

As a Government we have been consistent. Even in opposition, prior to the election, we had our five-point plan. Perhaps members opposite should look at the five-point plan because it is very simple and it strikes a chord with the average person. We spoke about rebuilding the economy, returning quality services, renovating infrastructure and strengthening our local environment and communities. We also spoke, of course, about restoring accountability to government. That must really hurt members opposite. If they had given more thought to that aspect there would be more Opposition members in the House.

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

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: Do not blame us for electricity prices. That was well within the time of the previous Government. Do not mislead the public. There are huge plans for public transport in my electorate. I have been pushing for new services. Money has been set aside for upgrades to wharves in the harbour and for fleet renewal. Our aim is to increase patronage on public transport and make it a more attractive choice. We commenced doing that by lowering fares earlier this year. It was not an election commitment but we delivered something we thought was important for the people of the inner west. I am sure that with an integrated transport system and the customer at front and centre we will improve customer experience as well.

This budget delivers infrastructure foresight. We created Infrastructure NSW to deliver strategic infrastructure, we have a 20-year infrastructure plan, we have plans for the North West Rail Link and South West Rail Link, we have plans for a new city convention centre and exhibition centre, and we have a funded short-term five-year infrastructure plan. I believe a good balance has been struck in the budget by delivering on pre-election commitments, quality services, cuts in waste and, more importantly, restoring integrity to government. I congratulate the Treasurer, Mike Baird, the Premier and the Government and, more importantly, the people of New South Wales because the community also contributes to shaping our policies.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.26 p.m.]: The budget handed down by the Treasurer, the Hon. Mike Baird, is the first budget of the O'Farrell Government. My main bone of contention, looking past all the hype and messiah-like fanfare with which my parliamentary colleagues opposite heralded the announcement of this budget, is its effect on the hardworking families of New South Wales, in particular the hardworking individuals of the working-class electorate of Fairfield that I am very honoured to represent. There will be many people in New South Wales, including a large number living in western Sydney, who have every right to treat this budget with a great deal of caution.

Using the premise of a fictitious black hole, which coincidentally appeared at roughly the same time as the Premier took over the stewardship of New South Wales and which has been disproved time and again by one independent expert after another, the Premier and his Treasurer set out to punish the people of New South Wales and particularly those of western Sydney. The budget that the Government has presented is based on job cuts to the public sector, an attack on some of the most vulnerable members of the community, a careless disregard for the financial realities facing hardworking families of western Sydney, and a slashing of real infrastructure commitments that are important to the hardworking people of Fairfield. With the stroke of a pen the Premier took away the livelihoods of 5,000 public servants. Hardworking and honest men and women have been made to pay for the hapless promises the Coalition made during the March election.

Moreover, the Government has put every public servant on notice. The budget reveals a further \$8 billion of unidentified budget cuts. Judging by the way the Government has treated the public servants of New South Wales in its first four months in office, this gives public servants across the State every reason to worry. Members could be forgiven for thinking that this Government is about delivering services to the community. After all, that was one of the catchphrases favoured by the Treasurer during the budget announcement. However, behind this Orwellian chant is a reality that punches public servants in the guts, the very people upon whom hardworking individuals of this State rely to deliver the services they have been promised.

The budget has pegged wage increases of teachers, nurses, firefighters and every other public servant at 2.5 per cent, irrespective of changes to the rate of inflation. Further, if teachers, nurses and firefighters want a pay increase above the 2.5 per cent threshold—an increase that would meet real changes to the cost of living—public servants would have to first meet the cost-saving benchmarks set by this Government. As I have already pointed out, there are still \$8 billion of unaccounted for budget cuts to be made. Talk about a great deal for the hardworking individuals of New South Wales and western Sydney—if teachers, nurses and firefighters want to ensure their salaries keep up with the rate of inflation, they have no choice but to sacrifice the services they provide to the people of New South Wales. That is the dilemma for public servants as a result of this budget.

The electorate of Fairfield is made up of hardworking men and women, a large number of who are either first generation or second generation Australians. Also making a strong showing in the demography of Fairfield is the traditional population base: people who are older and have seen their children grow up to raise families of their own. Because of these demographics a large number of battlers live in the Fairfield electorate. I assure members that the people of Fairfield are worse off as a result of the budget. One thing is for sure: the Premier and Treasurer do not discriminate when it comes to the misery caused by their budget. After the budget announcement, the Premier made 70,000 pensioners worse off, many of them residents of Fairfield and western Sydney and many of them already struggling to make ends meet. How does the Government give them a helping hand? It simply increases their public housing rents by \$11.90 a week, which accounts for one-third of the pension increase given by the Federal Government to help pensioners make ends meet.

Foster carers have also been hit hard by the Premier's first budget. It was announced that their allowances will be cut by more than \$212 a fortnight when their child turns 16. New carers who adopt children and young people in out-of-home care will also have their allowance reduced. These are people who represent the most vulnerable in our society—the everyday good Samaritans who are trying to build a better future for them. These are the people whom Premier O'Farrell has decided to hit the hardest in the budget. The middle-of-the-road working families of Fairfield will also feel the pinch from this budget. Already, hardworking families across western Sydney have had to contend with an 18 per cent increase in their electricity bills approved by the Premier in July this year. To add insult to injury, the Premier's budget allows for an increase of \$12 in household electricity bills. On top of that, it has now been revealed that the O'Farrell Government has demanded over the next financial year that Sydney Water meet a targeted 79 per cent increase in pre-tax profits.

Coupled with the Government's plan to privatise the desalination plant at Kurnell, that leads to only one conclusion: the hardworking families of western Sydney, and particularly Fairfield, will see an increase in their water bills. Young couples, a large number of them planning to start a family, have lost the incentive to buy their first home. First home buyers have had their access to stamp duty concessions worth tens of thousands of dollars slashed. Instead of having the choice of relocating close to their support network of family and friends, first home buyers are now resigned to settling in city apartments bought off the plan or building their first home outside the city fringes in order to access the thousands of dollars of stamp duty concessions. Perhaps the biggest illusion for the people of Fairfield in this budget is the claim by the Premier that he was serious about investing in infrastructure across western Sydney.

He was so serious that the budget saw the \$5.5 million earmarked for the Fairfield transport interchange disappear altogether. The interchange was a commitment fought for and won by the people of Fairfield. It would have involved a much-needed upgrade to the bus and train interchange, which is frequented by large numbers of residents not only from the Fairfield electorate but also from the neighbouring electorate of Smithfield. Local road infrastructure has also taken a big hit in the O'Farrell budget. Western Sydney road users will miss out on much-needed funds to improve local thoroughfares. The O'Farrell Government has reduced local road funding in western Sydney from \$543 million last financial year to only \$348 million in 2011-2012.

Ms Anna Watson: Shame.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: It is a shame. For the residents of Fairfield and the neighbouring electorate of Smithfield this deception was most blatant in the backflip on the promised upgrade of the roundabout intersection at Smithfield Road and Polding Street. It is a tricky intersection with nine entry and exit points. It is a local traffic hazard. During this year's State election campaign the Liberal Party, through its candidate and now member for Smithfield, Andrew Rohan, promised to upgrade the local blackspot. However, four months later this promise is nowhere to be seen. It is an example of how serious the O'Farrell Government is in investing in infrastructure for the residents of Fairfield and Smithfield in western Sydney.

Investment in Fairfield Hospital was another promise heralded by the Liberal Party and welcomed with open arms by the member for Smithfield, Mr Andrew Rohan. Indeed, the Liberal Party claimed the extra beds it announced for Fairfield Hospital as a great win for the area. However, four months later when the budget is handed down how much funding is announced for Fairfield Hospital? Nil. How much funding is allocated to Fairfield Hospital from \$56 million to maintain 130 beds in western Sydney? Nil. Indeed, so overzealous was Mr Rohan to announce the great health investment for his electorate that he gave the Government the customary pat on the back for announcing funding for Nepean Hospital. What an achievement for a member of Parliament to herald funding announcements for a hospital not in his area—particularly when Fairfield Hospital, a hospital in his area that caters to the needs of the people of the Fairfield and Smithfield electorates, missed out.

Despite the self-congratulations and the pats on the back between the Premier and Treasurer, the residents of western Sydney, in particular the residents of Fairfield, have a great deal to be upset about as a result of last Tuesday's budget. Instead of receiving the relief they were promised at the last election—relief in the hip pocket and relief from congested local transport thoroughfares—all they got was a great deal of disappointment. The only thing that last Tuesday's budget proved is that the needs of the people of western Sydney, including in my electorate of Fairfield, are not understood and have not been addressed by a Premier who looks down upon the hardworking residents of western Sydney from his perch above the northern beaches.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.38 p.m.]: I welcome the opportunity to speak on the budget and related papers 2011-2012. This budget brings responsible fiscal management back to New South Wales while delivering on the commitments we made to rebuild New South Wales after 16 years of Labor neglect. We will gain control of government finances by delivering a \$5.2 billion turnaround over the next four years. The budget will be in surplus from 2012-13 and our triple-A credit rating will be protected. This is called prudent fiscal management. Prudent fiscal management is a hallmark of Liberal and Coalition governments, and we are honouring that tradition. As the Treasurer outlined in his Budget Speech, the O'Farrell Government inherited a New South Wales economy in decline after years of neglect by the previous Labor Government. Over the past 10 years New South Wales has had the lowest jobs growth and the lowest business confidence of any mainland State. Business leaders, innovators and entrepreneurs in Vaucluse, whom I represent, have moved their businesses to other States in disgust.

This Government believes business needs to be freed from red tape so it can take risks and drive the economic growth of this State. The laws created by the previous New South Wales Government have led companies to shift their investments to other States. We inherited this economy from our predecessors. CommSec's State of the State report for April 2011 shows that New South Wales is shamefully behind all States in economic growth on the basis of decade averages. The performance of the New South Wales economy over the past decade is shameful. The O'Farrell Government was elected to restore the confidence of business when investing in New South Wales, which used to be the premier State. We are creating an environment of business certainty to encourage investment in our State. We will provide the accountability, transparency and openness for which business is crying out and which the previous Government could not deliver. We are showing financial discipline.

It is easy to understand why business has lost confidence. This Government inherited a budget where spending was outgrowing revenue to the point where New South Wales was expected to have a \$2.4 billion deficit by 2014-15. New South Wales households could teach the former Government a thing or two: they exercise fiscal discipline every day across their dinner tables, working out that, essentially, their spending has to be matched by the income of their household. However, the former Government could not do that. If we omit the Federal Government's economic stimulus packages in 2008-09 the New South Wales budget has been in underlying deficit for two of the past three years. In 2009-10 the underlying deficit was \$895 million. The previous Government lived up to the reputation of Labor administrations. The finances we inherited reflected poor policy implementation: programs were constantly underbudgeted. The State's finances were about tax and spend, debt and deficit.

The \$1.4 billion blowout in Labor's Solar Bonus Scheme is a prime example of an irresponsible program inherited by this Government. Ultimately, the burden of such poor financial management and program implementation is placed on taxpayers, the citizens of New South Wales, whom we represent. They were being asked to fund budget blowouts and interest expenses on deficits. Our constituents expect governments to manage their money responsibly and to provide the essential services that New South Wales residents need. That is our contract with New South Wales. We simply cannot provide the services needed by the people of New South Wales if the Government holds excessive debt and cannot afford to spend. We could not protect our triple-A credit rating if the budget were to plunge into years of debt and deficits.

The Liberal-Nationals Government was elected to restore New South Wales as the number one State in Australia, which it should be. We can only do this through responsible and competent management of our State's finances, which is reflected in the budget handed down last Tuesday. Through such management we have brought down a budget that meets our election commitments whilst setting up the State's finances for future surpluses and ongoing strong fiscal management. This is what the people voted for on 26 March, and they deserve to have that promise honoured. Through structural reform and savings measures, we have found \$8 billion of savings over the next four years. We have streamlined administration in the health and transport sectors, and we are providing greater contestability in areas such as the management of Sydney Ferries, which is important to the Vaucluse electorate, and our prison system.

This Government is also delivering around \$6 billion in savings over the forward estimates through an efficiency dividend and wage-offset savings measures. These decisions will allow us to start implementing our election commitments immediately. I am pleased that this budget contributes over \$17 billion of health funding in this State, and that rebuilding health and hospital services is a priority of this Government. Residents in my electorate of Vaucluse rely on the Prince of Wales Hospital in Randwick. This budget delivers funding to upgrade services at that hospital and its teaching facilities, with \$1.2 million being allocated to employ five more doctors in the emergency department, and \$1.1 million will be provided to employ more medical trainees in epilepsy treatment.

The hospital's Australian Advanced Treatment Centre will receive \$61 million in capital grants with Westmead, and the Prince of Wales Cancer and Blood Disorder Unit will share in over \$1 billion from this Government's capital works program for hospital facilities. They are welcome investments. This is only part of the Government's total commitment to improving health services in New South Wales. Across the State, as members on this side of politics have noted already, we are delivering 150 more hospital beds, 69 more subacute beds, 1,600 more surgical procedures each year and 900 more nurses. We also support the important education of doctors by providing \$4 million for more medical graduate positions in public hospitals and more opportunities for junior doctors to undertake specialist training. They are all welcome budget announcements.

This Government supports all areas of education, from early childhood and schools through to TAFE and tertiary education, in which I take a particular interest as the Parliamentary Secretary for Tertiary Education and Skills. We are providing over \$1 billion in additional funding to education services in New South Wales. This spending includes \$261 million over five years for the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan, which includes a review of current literacy and numeracy programs, and will provide an additional 900 teachers over five years. Within 12 months we will roll out 4,300 interactive whiteboards across our school system that will allow teachers to personalise lessons and access new media and online learning programs directly with students in the classroom. Some \$40 million will be used to set up a fund to upgrade public schools, with principals identifying the work that needs to be completed. Importantly, we are allowing school principals to identify the work they need completed rather than being dictated to by bureaucrats.

Every public school in my electorate of Vaucluse and across the State will be audited every two years so that we can address the backlog in school maintenance projects left by the previous Government. The clear message I hear from schools in my electorate is about the backlog of maintenance and that schools would prefer to have the choice of deciding what maintenance projects should be addressed first. We are spending \$298 million to immediately start improving maintenance in our schools. These measures form part of our agenda for local schools. On this side of politics we believe that all schools should have more power to better tailor their programs and projects to the needs of their students.

We were elected with a clear commitment to move more decision-making to schools and local communities. We do not believe we have all the solutions in government; we look to take on board creative suggestions from the community, because some of the best solutions to issues in New South Wales come from the community. Not every school is the same, and students at different schools have different needs. The new

program announced by the Minister for Education attests to that approach. By allowing schools and the local community to have a bigger role in managing their schools we will better reflect the needs of students. Students are the centre of what we do in schools. We also support a stronger vocational training sector in New South Wales. I am particularly proud of these commitments as the Parliamentary Secretary for Tertiary Education and Skills.

Approximately \$2.2 billion will be spent on vocational education during 2011-12, which includes providing training through TAFE NSW institutes, registered providers, registered training organisations, and regulating apprenticeships and traineeships. If New South Wales is to again become number one—which we pledged to deliver to voters—we must improve our skills and increase our higher qualification levels in this State. The Government is providing \$98 million to commence 10 new projects and continue 21 building projects and information technology upgrades to improve the facilities at TAFE NSW colleges across the State. I visit a lot of those colleges and institutes across New South Wales and I can see where those improvements can be made. As the Parliamentary Secretary for Tertiary Education and Skills I am pleased that this Government is so committed to improving the tertiary and vocational sectors in this State.

We have set targets in tertiary education that will make it possible for New South Wales to have the most highly skilled workforce in Australia, and that is a commitment we have made in NSW 2021—A Plan to Make NSW Number One, which was released with the budget last week. These commitments are going to benefit every electorate in this State. In my electorate of Vaucluse the residents will immediately start seeing improved roads, transport and infrastructure. The Government has provided an additional \$200 million to improve blackspots and reduce road congestion across New South Wales. In the Vaucluse electorate this includes \$900,000 for New South Head Road, between Kent Road and Old South Head Road, and \$745,000 for Bondi Road, which is the main arterial road between Old South Head Road and Dudley Street.

Across Sydney there will be 261 new buses, a restored and expanded ferry service—which are very important transport options for the electorate of Vaucluse—upgraded wharves, and improved service on the public transport that is used every day by the citizens of New South Wales. Additional expenditure in my electorate includes \$1 million in 2011-12 for the Vaucluse Diamond Bay sewerage strategy, and boosts in funding for Randwick-Waverley community transport services and for the Holdsworth Community Centre and Services. We would not be delivering these programs and services without a strong commitment to responsible fiscal management. The programs will be implemented prudently, avoiding the cost blowouts and the poor implementation of the previous Labor Government.

As the budget is brought back into underlying surplus and we build the resources to restore New South Wales as the number one State in Australia, every resident of this State will see an improvement in services. This is why we were elected; that is the task that the New South Wales people entrusted to us through—let us be clear—an emphatic rejection of the previous Government at the polls on 26 March. Through this budget and through the 10-year State plan released last week, the O'Farrell Government has started the task of rebuilding New South Wales and ensuring that quality government services are returned to the people of New South Wales, who deserve them. I commend the budget papers to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.52 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the Treasurer's Budget Speech which was delivered on 6 September 2011. Unlike the member for Vaucluse, who I think may have romanticised this budget, I do not intend to commend the Government—surprise, surprise. The Premier told us that his party is the party for western Sydney despite the fact that not one of his Ministers lives in western Sydney. This budget is not about supporting western Sydney; we know that. This budget is a slap in the face for the hardworking people of western Sydney, particularly in my electorate of Bankstown. This budget delivers only one-third of the funding delivered last year for new investment in Bankstown. It is shameless, petty and downright nasty political point scoring.

Labor recognised that communities like Bankstown really needed support, and chose to invest accordingly. The Treasurer needs to explain the cuts in funding to the people of Bankstown and identify which communities will benefit at their expense. To add insult to injury, the Premier has cut \$365 million in funding from western Sydney. These are the actions of the so-called Minister for Western Sydney—a Minister who lives in the Middle Harbour foreshore suburb of Roseville. This Government has perfected the malign art of expectation management by leaking terrifying bits and pieces to the media to "prepare" us for a monstrous budget but it has managed to make this budget look innocuous despite the fact that it will inflict real pain on vulnerable members of our community. The Treasurer promised to give us our medicine in this budget. That was one promise the Treasurer did keep—particularly as far as western Sydney is concerned.

A key election commitment to my electorate was a special needs school at Bass Hill. This was a commitment understood by the community to have bipartisan support. The people of Bankstown went to the ballot box in the knowledge that a vote for either major party would be a vote in support of this vital piece of local infrastructure. Yet it seems that this is another broken promise by the O'Farrell Government. Despite the project being listed as a future project in the budget papers, no funding has been allocated for the project and no schedule for delivery has been indicated. The Government needs to come clean. Will it build a special needs school at Bass Hill? The people of Bankstown and of East Hills should not be left waiting.

This budget also breaks the Government's commitment to invest in Henry Lawson Drive. Prior to the March election the now member for East Hills committed to his electorate that an elected O'Farrell Government would invest in Henry Lawson Drive. Has the Government ignored this promise or has the member for East Hills failed the litmus test of a Government backbencher in securing investment for his electorate? Regardless of his failing, I invite the member for East Hills to join me in my campaign to secure investment for this important road. An item that Coalition members in this place have been quick to excuse, or to ignore entirely, is the projected deficit. The fact is that the O'Farrell Government has brought down its first budget and it has resulted in a deficit.

That is not the Federal Government's fault, nor is it the fault of the now discredited black hole; it is the fault of the O'Farrell Government. But rather than admit this, rather than take ownership of the issue, the Government has resorted to blaming external forces—from housing to infrastructure, an assortment of hidden nasties are starting to come to light. As my colleagues the member for Fairfield and the member for Cabramatta have said, the budget has cut the first home buyers scheme making it harder for people in our electorates in western Sydney to purchase their first home. The Government has said this is to increase the availability of homes in Sydney. It is not hard to see who will benefit, and that is the big end of town. This decision is a kick in the guts for younger families trying to purchase their first home.

This budget is an assault on the vulnerable. The budget attacks children by cutting \$266 million from capital works for New South Wales public schools. We saw yesterday the Minister for Education strutting around like a peacock during question time boasting about graffiti legislation, yet offering nothing for school infrastructure. The budget also attacks the sick and those who treat them by providing only \$500,000 of the \$125 million upgrade needed for Blacktown Hospital. The budget attacks pensioners by raising public housing rent for pensioners by \$10 a week. The budget attacks young families—I will keep repeating this—by charging a minimum of \$6,000 per child each year for public preschools. It is shameful.

In my electorate the Bankstown South Infants School is able to cater for 40 children in its public preschool and has a waiting list of up to 100 children. That demonstrates that there are many parents who cannot afford privately funded preschools; they need public preschools. This Government, instead of investing in public preschools and instead of supporting those families, has chosen instead to slug those parents \$30 per day, \$150 per week. The Treasurer needs to realise that there are parents who cannot afford to pay for private preschools. I acknowledge the wonderful rallies that are taking place outside this Parliament. There is no doubt that there will be more in the future. The Government has said it will eventually cut 5,000 public sector jobs, and that will affect each and every one of our electorates.

Mr Nick Lalich: It's only the start.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: It is only the start. The Government also needs to come clean about its privatisation plans and to stop the assault on the most vulnerable in our community. The Government is stripping away the independent powers of the Industrial Relations Commission, implementing a disastrous wages policy, attacking the public sector, and will now commence a fire sale of State-owned assets. This will have dire consequences for the public sector. I ask the Treasurer: How many jobs will go when the Government leases out Port Botany? Is the Minister for Roads and Ports even aware of this plan?

The Minister announced in the other House a month ago that there would be no lease or sale of Port Botany. I do not know when he received a copy of the memorandum but we know that is not the case. How many jobs will go when the Government leases the Sydney desalination plant? How many jobs will go when the Government sells off electricity distribution, the poles and wires? Government members may scoff but they can be sure that electricity privatisation is on the O'Farrell agenda. This will mean increased costs. People already cannot afford their electricity bills and this will mean future rises. The sale of the Sydney desalination plant will increase water prices.

As I have mentioned previously in the House, the people of Bankstown are struggling with the whopping 18 per cent increase in electricity prices that occurred on 1 July this year under the Premier's watch. The last thing they need right now is to pay more for their electricity. The people of my electorate are not alone on this issue. The Nationals and western Sydney Liberal members should join me in calling on the Government to ensure that water prices do not rise. After all, Liberal-held electorates are not immune to the Treasurer's cuts. The member for Granville needs to stand up to the Premier, given that the Treasurer decided to cancel the Granville commuter car park. That was a major issue in Granville during the election campaign. This Government should realise that Granville is becoming a major regional centre in Sydney and warrants and needs a commuter car park.

Another Government member who has not fared too well from the budget is the member for Blue Mountains. She also needs to stand up to the Premier and Treasurer and make sure that money is invested in the Blaxland commuter car park. She should speak to the member for Penrith, who has done suspiciously well in this budget. He is well on track in his bid for a ministry. I reiterate that this budget cuts \$365 million from western Sydney and more than \$20 million from my electorate of Bankstown. The budget is an assault on the elderly, families, first home buyers, children and the most vulnerable in our community. It continues the Government's disgusting attack on the public sector and confirms that the fire sale of government assets is only the beginning. Far from being commended, the Treasurer should be ashamed for handing down this budget.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [1.02 p.m.]: I support the New South Wales Coalition Government's 2011 budget and congratulate the O'Farrell-Stoner Government on getting on with the job charged to it by the people of New South Wales on 26 March 2011, the job of rebuilding New South Wales. The people voted for change on 26 March. This Government was given a mandate to rebuild New South Wales and its economy and this Government will do that by repairing the State's finances, improving quality services and building the essential infrastructure that this State so sorely needs.

The people were so desperate for change that an unprecedented number of them voted for Coalition candidates in March 2011. On 26 March the people changed their government because they knew that after 16 long years of hard Labor this State needed rebuilding. New South Wales needed rebuilding because under Labor this State had a shameful record of economic mismanagement. The people suffered under a torturous decade of the slowest economic growth of any major State and the lowest jobs growth of any mainland State and, over the past five years, the lowest business confidence of any State government and the lowest housing growth in the nation. That is why repairing the State's finances is so important and why I am proud to support the Government's budget. This is a responsible budget.

Following the deficit in 2011-12 the Government intends to return to surplus in 2012-13 and beyond and protect the State's triple-A credit rating. We have done this through our 100 Day Action Plan: early progress was made to the colossal task of repairing the State's finances with the successful implementation of that plan. In our first 100 days we implemented our plan to rebuild the State's economy through the establishment of a sound financial base by appointing a commission of audit into New South Wales's finances, expenditure and management; establishing a special commission of inquiry into the former Government's electricity sell-off, on which a final report is due by 31 October 2011; and establishing an expert panel to commence structural reform of the electricity distributors.

In relation to creating jobs and supporting business, we passed legislation to create 100,000 new jobs through our Jobs Action Plan, appointed a Small Business Commissioner and required the New South Wales Government to pay its bills within 30 days. To attract investment to New South Wales we established Destination NSW and began bidding for major events. In order to make home ownership a reality we instructed Landcom to target the release of 10,000 housing blocks within four years, passed legislation to repeal the home buyers tax from July 2011, and implemented the "empty nester" transfer duty concession to people over the age of 55 for sales between 1 July 2011 and 30 June 2012.

These are all strong, economically sound actions taken by this Government within its first 100 days to start the process of rebuilding the State's finances. Rebuilding this State's proud finances will take more than a single budget. The condition of the finances when handed over to this Government included hidden deficits, a triple-A credit rating at risk and long-term fiscal challenges, which had been ignored for the sake of politics. I am proud to support these early steps by the Government to restore economic credibility to our State. The 2011-12 budget will boost essential services across the State, with nearly 4,000 extra front-line staff in our hospitals, schools and police stations over the next five years.

This budget commits over \$17 billion to health, a record investment in our health system, to ensure that the people of New South Wales have improved health care. This funding is for a better standard and better access to health care. We have provided funding for 940 of the more than 2,400 additional nurses to be delivered in this term; 660 of the nearly 1,400 more beds to be maintained and delivered in this term; and an extra 1,600 surgical procedures as part of our commitment to provide 13,000 more procedures. This health budget includes \$4.7 billion committed to spending on hospitals and health capital works over the next four years—a 50 per cent increase over the past four years.

For the people of The Entrance electorate this means improvements to the hospitals that service their healthcare needs at Gosford Hospital and Wyong Hospital. Gosford Hospital will receive two special care nursery cots at a cost of \$800,000 and \$17.4 million for the new Gosford Regional Cancer Centre. Wyong Hospital will receive an investment of \$500,000 this year to upgrade the emergency department and \$3.1 million for 10 additional acute care beds. Of course, this process of improving essential services to the people of New South Wales, in particular, the Central Coast, was started within our first 100 days with the delivery of our 100 Day Action Plan.

We commenced amended health legislation to enable the establishment of local health district boards. These boards, which support locally focused management, will help return decision-making closer to local patients. The Chief Executive Officer of the Central Coast Local Health District, Mr Matt Hanrahan, has confirmed that the board is proceeding with the implementation of staffing increases and actively recruiting across Central Coast facilities, and that several additional nursing staff are already at work in Wyong Hospital. The Central Coast Local Health District also has confirmed that three more nurses are in the process of being employed in the emergency department of Wyong Hospital.

As part of this Government's initiative to provide more timely treatment to patients within the busiest emergency departments across the State, Wyong Hospital will see an additional 10 nursing staff employed. In relation to education, as part of our \$261 million Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan this budget delivers 200 more teachers, with 900 additional teachers in total to be delivered over the next five years. The Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan—the first steps of which were taken as part of our 100 Day Action Plan—will ensure that young children do not fall behind in their learning. I am pleased to support an almost 11 per cent increase in school maintenance funding to \$289 million. Under Labor schools were starved of school maintenance funding. This increase in funding will help to improve the upkeep of school facilities.

I am also very pleased to support the \$60 million allocated in this budget for the costs of extra staffing to support the rising number of public school students. As part of the support the Government is providing for better learning facilities this budget has also provided \$23 million to install 4,300 interactive whiteboards in classrooms across the State. New and modernised school facilities are a strong theme in the 2011-12 budget, with \$640 million being spent on capital works throughout New South Wales to provide greater opportunities for students. In addition to these capital works, \$98 million has also been allocated to capital works programs for TAFE NSW. In order to provide relief to those families and parents that are most needy, early childhood education is being supported with \$279 million in this budget.

No conversation about returning quality services to the people of New South Wales would be complete without talking about our police. Once again, our steps towards the goal of returning quality services can be demonstrated with our achievements in our 100 Day Action Plan. Within our first 100 days we introduced legislation to strengthen police powers, including toughening move-on laws and reintroducing the offence of drunk and disorderly. We have introduced legislation to toughen laws relating to graffiti vandals—the same laws that Labor, the Shooters and Fishers and The Greens, in a shameful, irresponsible, reckless and misguided misuse of power, combined to block in the other place.

Despite this hindrance, the Government is acting to deliver more police to improve community safety throughout New South Wales. Over the next four years 550 additional police officers will be employed, including 150 more police officers this year. This is in addition to the Government's commitment to new police stations and station upgrades across the State and funding boosts to police and community youth clubs. For the people of the Central Coast this translates to real action for their two major police stations, with Wyong police station being allocated \$2.6 million and Gosford police station \$4.2 million for their completion.

Hand in glove with our police system is our court and justice system. The Government is investing \$46 million in programs to reduce reoffending and \$78 million to build new courts and to improve existing court and justice facilities. The budget provides for the creation of a new Drug Court and allocates funds for specialist

drug rehabilitation, correctional facilities and education and training programs for inmates in those facilities. The Government is showing that we need to be smarter about crime, with \$7 million to be invested in the electronic filing of court documents and exchange of information, an additional \$5 million to provide for maintenance and technology and more than \$1 million for legal aid services to victims of sexual assault to prevent their counselling records being produced as evidence. These budget measures show that the Government is committed to a responsible plan to reduce reoffending, to assist victims and to make the New South Wales court and justice system the best in Australia.

To have a strong and vibrant economy that generates the best opportunities for its residents New South Wales requires a government that is committed to building essential infrastructure. Once again, a modest start occurred with our 100 Day Action Plan. We introduced legislation for the creation of Infrastructure NSW and appointed its board; we introduced legislation to establish Restart NSW, the Government's infrastructure fund, with 30 per cent of funds reserved for projects in regional areas; we commenced the establishment of an integrated transport authority to ensure that planning and policy are fully integrated across all forms of transport to ensure maximum efficiency and service delivery; and we undertook an audit of speed zones throughout the State which, importantly, delivered a real outcome for the residents of The Entrance electorate by removing the most notorious speed camera on the Central Coast.

We also commenced a council-by-council audit of the local infrastructure backlog. The Government announced a five-year \$70 million plan to help councils pay for the largest and most critical infrastructure projects in their communities. Local infrastructure, which has been neglected for so long, such as roads, community halls, libraries, paths, parks, sports fields and water facilities, will now be supported by a Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme that will pay half of the interest on significant loans taken out specifically for large projects. The interest subsidies will assist councils to help cover the borrowing costs on the loans required to tackle the significant infrastructure backlog.

As I have mentioned, the steps taken thus far are modest steps compared with the long journey we have ahead of us in building the essential infrastructure that has been neglected for so long. That is why the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has delivered the biggest infrastructure commitment in the history of the State, totalling \$62.6 billion over the next four years. This record investment will be an increase of more than 12 per cent—or nearly \$7 billion more—on the last four years of Labor government. This \$62.6 billion record investment includes \$4.7 billion over four years for health capital works; \$6.3 billion in infrastructure investment in transport and roads; more than \$600 million for the North West and South West rail links; \$314 million for the Epping to Rouse Hill Rail Link; and \$70 million over five years to address the local government infrastructure backlog.

This Government is renovating infrastructure to improve the quality of life of the residents of New South Wales. We make no apologies for the tough decisions that need to be made off the back of Labor's economic underperformance. Those decisions will be on long-term structural reform and savings measures and they are not taken lightly by this Government. We will be judged on our record of delivering these services, and deliver is what we will do for the people of New South Wales. On 26 March this year the people of New South Wales held to account a Labor Government that had lost any semblance of accountability.

The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has acted swiftly to implement changes that will restore integrity and transparency to government, which the people of New South Wales sorely lacked but wholly deserve. As promised in our 100 Day Action Plan, the Government Advertising Bill 2011 was introduced by the Premier to prohibit party-political material in government advertising and hold political parties accountable by making them liable to repay the costs of advertising campaigns if the law is breached. Success fees paid to lobbyists have already been banned, along with the introduction of restrictions on lobbying government officials. These are historic changes which will bring to an end the culture of decisions for donations, as seen time and again with the previous Labor Government. These changes return to government a culture of integrity and honesty.

I commend the Premier for his commitment to ending once and for all the attitude of decisions for donations by giving notice of campaign finance legislation that will take drastic measures to curb political donations, and only those who are on the New South Wales electoral roll can donate. Following through on a commitment in the 100 Day Action Plan, a panel of constitutional experts is currently investigating the feasibility of implementing recall elections. Given that, in particular, the last four years of the previous Labor Government was plagued by constant scandal, the people of New South Wales were desperate to have their say and hold the former State Government to account. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government will look at creating a safety valve when a government has lost public support and is not functioning as an effective body. I look forward to hearing the panel's findings when it reports back to the Government at the end of this month.

This budget has seen record funding for the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission. Once again the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is following through on its commitment as an honest and accountable government by strengthening the State's watchdogs. After 16 years of scandals and corruption the people of New South Wales rightfully lost all respect and trust in their Government. This is a government of accountability and integrity. We are managing the State and trying to repair the damage done by Labor after 16 years. I commend this budget to the people of New South Wales.

Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Anna Watson and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

APPROPRIATION BILL 2011

DUTIES AMENDMENT (FIRST HOME—NEW HOME) BILL 2011

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

IDENTIFICATION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [1.18 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Liverpool, the member for Riverstone, the member for Orange, the member for Drummoyne, the member for Parramatta, the member for Castle Hill, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Mulgoa, the member for Granville, the member for Baulkham Hills, the member for Ryde, the member for East Hills, the member for Coffs Harbour, the member for Penrith, the member for Camden, the member for Monaro and the member for Goulburn for their contributions to debate on the Identification Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The bill is about ensuring that police, juvenile justice officers, officers authorised by Corrective Services and court security officers have the power to require that a person remove a face covering to enable the officer to see that person's face for the purpose of identification.

The new powers are designed to ensure that these officers are able to function effectively to ensure the security and safety of our community and its citizens. The bill also provides that a police officer can request a person to identify himself or herself when the police officer proposes to give that person a move-on direction. Justices of the peace, lawyers and other authorised people witnessing a statutory declaration or affidavit will be required to see the face of the person making the declaration or affidavit and identify the person. These safeguards are designed to ensure the identity of persons making statutory declarations or affidavits. I am happy to note that the Opposition does not oppose the bill. 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.

[The Acting-Speaker (Mr Geoff Provest) left the chair at 1.21 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I acknowledge and welcome to the gallery Mr Amit Das Gupta, Consul General of India, guest of the member for Baulkham Hills. I welcome also a delegation of members of the Standing Committee on Law and Parliamentary Affairs from the Parliament of Bangladesh.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Fines Amendment (Work and Development Orders) Bill 2011
Crown Law Officers Legislation Amendment (Retirement Age) Bill 2011
Government Advertising Bill 2011
Independent Commission Against Corruption Amendment Bill 2011
Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill 2011
Courts and Other Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2011
Residential Parks Amendment (Register) Bill 2011
Marine Parks Amendment (Moratorium) Bill 2011
Transport Legislation Amendment Bill 2011

GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Ministerial Statement

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [2.19 p.m.]: I inform the House that Professor Marie Bashir has agreed to continue as Governor of New South Wales for a further two years. Her Majesty, The Queen of Australia, has approved my request for Professor Bashir's term as Governor to be extended until February 2014. Professor Bashir is the State's thirty-seventh Governor and she follows in a line that extends from Arthur Phillip's arrival on these shores 223 years ago. She, of course, was the first woman appointed to an office that has had so few firsts: in 1913, the first and only Catholic was appointed Governor; in 1946, the first Australian-born person was appointed, a tradition that thankfully has continued; and 1996 saw the first person of the Jewish faith appointed to the office.

This extension means that Professor Bashir will become one of only three people to have served in the vice-regal post for more than 10 years, the others being Sir Roden Cutler for 15 years, and Professor Bashir's beloved Lachlan Macquarie, who served for 11 years and 11 months. I know that people across the State will be delighted that Professor Bashir has agreed to continue in the role. It is often trite to say that someone is loved, but when it comes to Marie Bashir it is a statement of fact. Over the past 10 years the Governor's caring nature, her genuine interest in local communities and her extraordinary work rate have endeared her to people everywhere. Professor Bashir's commitment to the role is best demonstrated by her entry in *Who's Who*, where she lists the following as her recreations: Indigenous health, medical education and training; innovative health service delivery via new technologies; Australian social, economic and political history; contemporary Australian art; Aboriginal art; and classical music.

The Governor inspires all those she meets, whether they be student leaders attending leadership functions that she hosts annually at Government House, members of so many Indigenous or ethnic groups or communities that she endlessly visits, or those business leaders or heads of state who come to New South Wales. Professor Bashir's best qualities are perhaps summed up as an unshakeable belief in the inherent decency of people—she believes in those "better angels" that exist within us all—and a strong conviction that hard work will deliver results, something she demonstrates daily in her own life. Because of her diverse background, career and interests, Professor Bashir has given a historic and important post a contemporary relevance and resonance.

Australians have an innately tuned radar for the detection of artifice. The leaders we most admire are those who genuinely believe that the office they discharge is not about them but about the people the office is to serve. This is why the woman who commands an international reputation in medical science and academia reaches people as strongly through these accomplishments as she does through the uncontrived fruits of her background and childhood—the humility, practicality and hard work no doubt instilled by her parents in her early life in Narrandera. The values of personal responsibility and of making the most of one's gifts in the service of others are reflected in a thousand stories across our State about how the unpretentiousness of our Governor in action sustains this most distinctive character of her office.

On behalf of the Government and the people of New South Wales, I thank Professor Bashir for agreeing to this extension of her term. I also thank her partner, Sir Nicholas Shehadie, for his support. Our State is very fortunate to have two such fine Australians as its vice-regal couple. When Professor Bashir was appointed in 2001, I said in this House that I hoped a Liberal-Nationals Government would have had the wisdom and foresight to have made the appointment that Bob Carr did, and I expressed my confidence that she would serve the community with distinction. It was a confidence clearly proven correct, and I am delighted to have had the opportunity today to appoint Professor Bashir to serve as the State's Governor for a further two years.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [2.23 p.m.]: I begin by saying what a wise decision of the Premier to reappoint Professor Marie Bashir as Governor of New South Wales. Her Excellency has made a great contribution to the State over many years and brings a great deal of passion and commitment to her role. As the Premier rightly points out, Her Excellency displays leadership and encourages all people to do as well as they can. In the brief moments one might be privileged to spend with her—as I did at Executive Council meetings on quite a number of occasions—one can learn so much in such a short time. Her Excellency is inspirational.

As the Premier said, the appointment by Bob Carr of Professor Bashir in 2001 was welcomed by all members of Parliament. The *Sydney Morning Herald* editorial at that time described the appointment as an inspirational choice, stating that Professor Bashir would be a powerful advocate for the powerless. As Governor, Professor Bashir has indeed been an effective and strong advocate, and in doing so she has never been partial in her approach. That is to her great credit and it is evidence of the efficiency with which she carries out her role. I am sure her upbringing in Narrandera has contributed greatly to the skills and tenacity that she brings to her role. The Bashir family is well known in Narrandera. I have had the opportunity to meet many members of the family, some of whom still live in Narrandera. I know some members of the family personally.

The Bashir family has worked very hard and has contributed greatly to the local Narrandera community, and Professor Bashir in her capacity as Governor has made a significant contribution to the State. I too acknowledge Professor Bashir's husband, Sir Nicholas Shehadie, who contributes greatly to the role played by the Governor. They are a team; they go to many places together. The active participation of Sir Nicholas in so many of the activities undertaken by the Governor is a great tribute to both of them. On behalf of the Opposition I also welcome the appointment and congratulate the Governor on the extension that has been offered to her.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Reordering of General Business

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [2.26 p.m.], by leave: I move:

That General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 427 have precedence on Thursday 15 September 2011.

During last summer more than 7,000 lives in New South Wales were saved in rescues performed by surf lifesavers—777 of those lives on the Central Coast alone. Almost 30,000 first aid cases were treated, 4,500 on the Central Coast, and 160,000 preventative actions were undertaken, with 31,000 of those on the Central Coast. Sadly, there were 21 drownings in New South Wales during the season, a figure that would have been much higher without the army of red and yellow volunteers.

I have sought to reorder my general business notice of motion as the 2011-12 surf lifesaving season begins next weekend. This sitting week will be the last opportunity before then for this House to acknowledge the tremendous service surf lifesaving provides in our communities. Although a recent private member's statement given by me, as well as this notice of motion and another by the member for The Entrance, highlight the upcoming season, I feel the dedication, passion and commitment that my fellow surf lifesavers show year after year deserve more attention. Surf Life Saving Australia has its origins in 1907 on Bondi Beach, and dedicated volunteers have saved an estimated 550,000 lives on beaches around the country since. The 306 surf lifesaving clubs around the country patrol more than 400 beaches. Some 150,000 Australians are members of surf lifesaving clubs. Gender equality is an achievement of which the movement can be proud.

Surf Life Saving Australia has 86,000 male members and 67,000 female members. Surf lifesaving is an organisation structured in four tiers: it commences at club level, then branch, State and national. Many State government portfolios have an interest in the movement. Police work side by side with lifesavers when carrying out the unfortunate task of searching for missing persons or persons presumed deceased. The surf lifesaving movement gives young adults a place to be rather than on the streets. Surf lifesaving fosters community involvement and spirit. The Health portfolio has a direct link with surf lifesavers as they refer patients who need a high level of care to hospitals or general practitioners. Of course, surf lifesavers always work closely with the Ambulance Service of NSW.

The Education portfolio plays a big part in surf lifesaving as the world's highest practice standards are used for training volunteers, covering defibrillation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, expired air resuscitation, spinal carries, first aid at several proficiency levels, signalling and beach management. The Nipper program

teaches our youth important surf safety skills and basic first aid. Active and healthy lifestyles are essential elements of surf lifesaving, and the added bonus that comes with being a surf lifesaver is being a valued member of an extended family that looks out for one another. The Sports portfolio has a connection with surf lifesaving through competition locally, statewide and nationally. Members compete in beach, water and patient-handling skills. Volunteering is the reason the surf lifesaving movement exists. Every weekend of patrolling is undertaken by volunteers, and every club board director is a volunteer also.

The Tourism portfolio is associated with surf lifesaving by providing information about safe tourist destinations. And, of course, tourists are attracted by the iconic red and yellow uniform, including the quartered cap. Finally, the Environment portfolio is involved also through surf lifesavers encouraging beachgoers to treat our beaches with respect. At the end of a patrol, surf lifesavers often can be seen cleaning up litter left on the beach. Surf lifesaving through volunteer efforts saves this State Government countless expenses. This House should have the opportunity to express its gratitude to all surf lifesaving clubs in New South Wales and to wish their members the best for the coming season. The motion should be given precedence tomorrow, 15 September 2011, so that members have that opportunity before the season begins next weekend.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [2.31 p.m.]: The Opposition supports this motion having precedence tomorrow. In the six years that I have been in this place, I recall a request that a motion be given precedence over other business happening only once or twice. I trust that the Government will not make it a regular occurrence.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Maroubra has the call.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I do not know why Government members are getting so excited; the Opposition supports the motion. My point is that other motions on the *Business Paper*, including one in the name of the member for Wallsend about dementia and Alzheimer's disease, another in the name of the member for Northern Tablelands about the privatisation of public utilities, and yet another in the name of the member for Kiama about the Princes Highway, are all worthy of debate. There is a procedure designed to enable all members to move motions in the House.

I just hope that it does not become common practice for members to seek that precedence be given to motions that are behind others on the *Business Paper*. It did not occur often when we were in government. We support surf lifesaving; everyone in this place supports surf lifesaving. I say to the member for Wyong, however, as a matter of historical note, that the first surf club in New South Wales was not Bondi, but Maroubra. We will talk more about that tomorrow. The member for Wyong should not try to claim historical precedence. The first surf club was the blue and red from Maroubra.

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

Motion agreed to.

QUESTION TIME

[*Question time commenced at 2.34 p.m.*]

CARBON TAX

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that New South Wales Treasury modelling confirms that a price on carbon will increase public transport fares by less than one-quarter of 1 per cent, why is the Premier threatening to increase fares by more than 10 times that amount?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am delighted to answer a question about the carbon tax because the Leader of the Opposition, of course, is famous in his micro caucus for saying that he would never be heard publicly supporting Federal Labor's carbon tax. Despite Labor going to the last State election on a 20-year-old promise to provide fairness for families and keep cost of living increases low—the commitment Bob Carr made before the 1991 election campaign but which every Labor Government for 16 years failed to deliver—the very day after the election the former leader of the Labor Party fronted the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils debate at Penrith and committed herself to a carbon tax. The fact is that a carbon tax will cost this State jobs and push up prices, including transport fares, as I said in the letter to the Prime Minister.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The only way that commuters' transport fares will not increase under a carbon tax is if that cost is extended across all taxpayers. Our position is clear: there should be no carbon tax. Our position was very clear in the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils debate.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: If there is to be a carbon tax, businesses and taxpayers should be fully compensated. The one certainty in the debate is that families across this State will suffer if a carbon tax is introduced. Families across this State earn higher than national average wages, but after 30 June next year no hiding behind national averages will pay a widow's power bill, a young family's power bill or the power bill of someone on a fixed income.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We have been up-front all the way through the carbon tax debate. Every time we made a statement about the impact of a carbon tax, we released the modelling behind that statement. In contrast, the Federal Government refuses to release its carbon tax model. That refusal has continued despite the claims and attempts by Labor Premiers at the last Council of Australian Governments meeting to get the Prime Minister to release her model. She is not prepared to release the modelling because the Federal Government will not stand behind it.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Almost three minutes have passed and the Premier's answer is going nowhere near the question. The question was not about Julia Gillard or the Federal Government. The question asked why the Government is threatening to increase fares when there is no justification.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard the point of order. I am sure the Premier will respond to the question now.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Federal Government refuses to release its modelling because it will reveal for the first time that families and businesses in New South Wales will wear a disproportionate cost increase as a result of the carbon tax. I stand behind the letter I sent to the Prime Minister detailing the cost of the carbon tax. That letter was signed off not only by the head of my department, but also by the head of Treasury. We are happy to stand behind that letter because, should the Federal Parliament stupidly pass a carbon tax, it will reveal that post-30 June next year families and businesses across this State will suffer. They will know when they get their power bills every month or quarter after 30 June that the party in this Parliament that did not stand up for them was the Australian Labor Party. They will know that the party opposite in this Parliament has no concern about the cost-of-living impact of the carbon tax.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: People in the Hunter who are most affected by job losses and those across the State who are going to see jobs grow at a lesser rate will know that it is the Labor Party that failed to stand up for them.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: They will know that this side of the House opposed the carbon tax; that this side of the House demands compensation for the carbon tax; that this side of the House will never support a situation where the French Government is compensated for power stations it owns in Victoria while New South Wales taxpayers receive no compensation but will have increased electricity prices because of Federal Labor's carbon tax.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr STUART AYRES: My question is directed to the Premier. What has been the response to the Government's plans to reform the State's political donation laws?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As members would expect, our proposal announced earlier this week to rid this State of the stench surrounding political donations has been roundly welcomed. It is hard to argue

against reforms that seek to restore honesty and integrity to the political process by restricting donations to individuals who are on the electoral roll. As I said earlier this week, third party interest groups, whether they are unions, corporations or peak industry groups, should not be able to donate because they are not entitled to vote. The Urban Taskforce has led a chorus of support for our reform package. Its chief executive, Aaron Gadiel—not unknown to Labor—said:

The community will have greater confidence in government decision-making across the board as a result of the reforms announced by the Premier today.

GetUp!, one of the nation's largest third party interest groups, supported the package, saying it would remove the undue influence of large corporate and union donors. GetUp!'s Deputy National Director Sam McLean said:

New South Wales now leads the country in electoral reform with a ban on third party donations, strong donation caps and spending limits.

We even received rare support from red Greens Senator, Lee Rhiannon, who said our legislation would "put the New South Wales Government well out in front of the Federal Government on donations reform." There is one group that continues to scream blue murder about the prospect of donation reform in this State, and that is the union movement. The successor to the Leader of the Opposition as Unions NSW boss is actually threatening union legal action against any legislation to ban political donations. He says:

This is a severe restriction on the rights of working people to engage in the political debates of the day.

The unions must realise that the days of the rorts and cosy deals with the Labor Party in power are over. There is a new Government in town and it is governing for the public interest alone. There is no justification for union members having their hard-earned fees ploughed into advertising campaigns to prop up the Labor Party. Unions NSW members will have the same rights as everyone else. If they are on the electoral roll they are free to choose whether they want to make a donation and free to choose to which party that donation will be made. Unions hate freedom of choice. Unions fear the idea that their members will be able to act in these matters as they see fit. But the Government will not stand by and retain a loophole that allows 22 unions to spend \$1.5 million, a total of \$23 million, to campaign on behalf of the Labor Party.

An affiliated Labor union should not be treated the same under the State's electoral laws as genuine independent groups such as the RSPCA or the National Council of Social Service of New South Wales. It is fitting, given we are talking about donations, to preview a book that is to be launched on 5 October. Someone who was at the centre of the stench of corruption over Labor's donations is the former Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Frank Sartor. I notice he has employed two eminent Labor figures, Rodney Cavalier and Graham Richardson, to launch his book. The book is not called "The Light on the Hill" it is called *The Fog on the Hill*. I look forward to reading that book. I hope Frank got it through the lawyers because it will make it even more interesting.

This legislation is going to be a real test for the Leader of the Opposition. He has opposed every piece of legislation designed to clean up the mess left by Labor after 16 years. He opposes the public service reforms, he opposes moves to get rid of the unattached list, he opposes our budget reforms aimed at overcoming the black hole that Labor left us, and he even opposes the most basic legislation to clean up graffiti in this State. The only legislation he supports is evidenced by his first question about the carbon tax, but as he told his mini-caucus, you will never hear him say that publicly. It is time the Opposition joined the bandwagon for reform to clean up politics and supported this legislation.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is to the Premier. Will the Premier make sure that the Liberals and The Nationals comply with his proposed electoral funding laws immediately and that any corporate donations received since Monday are rejected outright?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I heard a rumour that the Leader of the Opposition had a legal qualification—I know he is not an electrician, given the solar bonus scheme. The legislation makes clear that it will come into operation at the time of assent. The legislation is not through the Parliament. The party will abide by the law.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition should listen to the answer to the question rather than interject.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Mr PAUL TOOLE: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government capitalising on trade opportunities in our region?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Bathurst for his question. One of the many reasons that the Opposition was sent packing on 26 March was the failure to capitalise on the greatest Olympics ever, which was held in Sydney in 2000. Despite many of the world's political, cultural and business leaders being in town for two glorious weeks in 2000 New South Wales has slipped behind other States in terms of growing our State's trade and investment. One area neglected by the former Government was the depth and spread of our multicultural population, particularly here in Sydney. This will give New South Wales a competitive economic advantage. With little or no assistance from Government, multicultural communities have been forging strong overseas business links for many years.

They tell us that much more is possible. That is why the Liberals and The Nationals went in to the election with a strong commitment to better leverage the asset of the multicultural business community. This Government is once again delivering on its promises. We have created a new Department of Trade and Investment; we have created a Parliamentary Secretary for Asia-Pacific Trade, Mr Paul Toole; and we have created the New South Wales Multicultural Business Advisory Panel. One of the first tasks for this panel is to engage with representatives from key multicultural groups and consuls general in Sydney at a multicultural business summit on 5 October.

Together with the Minister for Citizenship and Community, the Government aims to capitalise on the State's diversity to increase bilateral and inter-regional trade and investment. It is part of the Government plan to make New South Wales number one again. By focusing on specific industry growth targets the Government aims to grow business investment in New South Wales by 4 per cent per annum and gross State product per capita by 1.5 per cent per annum. It is jobs, economic growth and stronger returns to the State that will enable investment in infrastructure and services.

This positive approach has been applauded by business groups and is in stark contrast to what we have seen from those opposite. Those opposite carp and they criticise but they put forward no coherent plans to increase trade and investment in this State. The speech in reply to the budget from the Leader of the Opposition dealt with less than .01 per cent of the State budget and contained an error of the magnitude of about \$100 million. Labor has been loud and strident, even shrill, in its opposition to savings measures and asset leases to fund key infrastructure projects and front-line services.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: I must apologise to the House. Last week I referred to the Leader of the Opposition as "skull", but I forgot to add the "numb". The shadow Treasurer put forward a curious proposition to have fewer front-line teachers, nurses and police to fund more middle managers. Perhaps his sole purpose in life is to simply serve as a warning to others. The Labor Party has completely lost its way, as we will see in the book by Frank Sartor referred to by the Premier. Former Labor leader Paul Keating got it right in last Saturday's *Sydney Morning Herald* when he said:

The Labor Party has given up the middle-class, sole-employer, self-employed—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: This is a Dorothy dicer and the Deputy Premier cannot even fill up the time for his answer.

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

Mr Michael Daley: The point of order is under Standing Order 129. Paul Keating is not relevant to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier is being relevant.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Maroubra said that Paul Keating is not relevant. Those opposite hate hearing this stuff:

The Labor Party has given up the middle-class, middle-ground, sole-employer, self-employed, small-business voter that Bob Hawke and I generated for it.

That was the ever-humble Paul Keating. New South Wales Labor is even worse: it has given them up for middle managers. Unlike those opposite, this Government has a strong plan to engage with the entire business community, including the multicultural business community, to unlock our great State's enormous potential and make this State number one again.

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

POLITICAL LOBBYING

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Department of Premier and Cabinet training modules clearly state that all government officials must satisfy themselves that any lobbyist they meet with is on the Lobbyist Register, will the Premier outline on how many occasions he has failed to do this?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I struggled to understand the question because the member for Canterbury was struggling to read it.

Ms Linda Burney: Do you want me to repeat it?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: If the member can read it sensibly I am happy for her to repeat it.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Canterbury is happy to repeat the question, that is up to her. The House will come to order so that we can all hear the question.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Is the Premier listening? Given that the Department of Premier and Cabinet training modules clearly state that all government officials must satisfy themselves that any lobbyist they meet with is on the Lobbyist Register, will the Premier outline on how many occasions he has failed to do this?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I assume the member for Canterbury is referring to a meeting that was held with the Australian Hotels Association in July. That is the only meeting I can assume she is referring to. I note that peak bodies are exempt from the rules. But perhaps the real import of her question goes to the appointment at the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority. Applicants replied in response to the advertisements which, I believe, appeared in the *Australian* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* and online in June. The applications in response to that call for expressions of interest closed on 1 July. The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing assessed those applications and Cabinet made a decision on that basis.

NURSES EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. What is the New South Wales Government doing to support nurses in public hospitals across the State?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Swansea for his excellent question.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The member for Swansea knows the issues confronting nurses because two members of his family are nurses, including his wife who is a nurse at Belmont Hospital. I acknowledge the Hunter members of Parliament who have been instrumental in changes being made to the balanced rostering system. I acknowledge the Minister for the Environment who represents the electorate of Maitland, the member for Charlestown, the member for Newcastle and the member for Port Stephens. I also acknowledge the work done by Chris Dolan, a nurse in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at John Hunter Hospital. When he first raised his concerns with me, he was so passionate that he said he wanted to nominate as a Liberal candidate. He won that right and stood for us in the electorate of Wallsend. I am sure the member for Wallsend will agree that he gave her a run for her money. The goal he set out to achieve was to end balanced rostering in the Hunter, which would then prevent the system being rolled out across New South Wales.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Upon immediately being appointed Minister for Health I was pleased to put an end to balanced rostering. On 19 August 2011 I accepted an invitation from nurses at John Hunter and

Belmont hospitals to celebrate the final completion—the end, kaput, no more—of balanced rostering across the State. Another interesting aspect was that the administrators wanted an end to balanced rostering. Thirty extra bureaucrats had been employed to administer this one program in the Hunter.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Middle managers.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: They probably were middle managers. They were not providing any assistance to nurses at all.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The balanced rostering system took away the role of nurse unit managers to determine rosters and the role of ward nurses to have a say in how they could best serve their patients through ward rostering. It took away the capacity of nurse unit managers when rostering to consider, for example, family obligations of nurses. The outcome was that experienced nurses quit. During the period of balanced rostering under the former Labor Government experienced nurses quit.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: When I was in the Hunter on 19 August 2011 Nola Scilinato, a representative of the Nurses Association from head office, made a public statement:

The nurses and midwives in the Hunter welcome the rollback of balanced rostering and thank Mrs Skinner for keeping her pre-election promise.

She went on:

Nurses are pleased to return to a rostering system that offers flexibility and supports a skill mix that provides safe patient care.

Since March the Government has recruited almost 600 extra nurses. I repeat: The Government has recruited 600 extra nurses since March.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The Minister does not need any assistance.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The budget has allocated an extra \$80 million to employ more than 900 extra nurses this year. I am pleased to support nurses in the wards because they are the heart of the hospital system. I know that doctors do not mind my saying that because they tell me that themselves. I am the daughter of a nurse and I know the value of nurses. I do not mind showing my prejudice in that regard. Nurses are wonderful in the way they run our health system. The Government is currently recruiting newly registered nurses for 2012. My local health districts have advised that following the first round of interviews they are planning to offer more than 2,000 positions to first-year registered nurses. Is the Government meeting its election promise to employ more nurses? Yes, it is because nurses are fundamentally important to the running of our hospital system.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will come to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The memorandum of understanding that was signed in February this year with the union in the Industrial Relations Commission relating to nursing hours per patient day is currently being implemented by 63 boards across New South Wales. There is more to come.

LOCAL HEALTH DISTRICT BOARDS

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My question is directed to the Minister for Health.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will place Government members on calls to order if they continue to interject.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Why has the Minister broken her promise to depoliticise the running of local hospitals by appointing local National Party identities to the board of Northern NSW Local Health District in place of local clinicians?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister may choose to answer that question, but it is contrary to Standing Order 128.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am happy to answer the question because it enables me to set the record straight. If the shadow Minister for Health had been a little bit more diligent he would have gone onto the website and found that the online *Sydney Morning Herald* story added the two paragraphs that were dropped off earlier and he would have seen that I am quoted as saying that I have not reneged on my promise: I have agreed that extra clinicians will be appointed to the board, as will an extra doctor from the Tweed. On 5 May this year, speaking on the Health Services Amendment (Local Health Districts and Boards) Bill 2011, the shadow Minister for Health said:

I understand and accept the need to possibly increase expertise in some areas, especially as part of financial management.

On the same date and in the same debate the former Minister for Health, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, said:

The Minister may wish to appoint additional people—that would make sense because the boards will take on some new responsibilities.

On 2 August this year the shadow Minister for Health said:

The boards that were mentioned by the member for Port Macquarie are in fact the boards that we instituted, with a few people added mainly because of their financial skills, a change that I foreshadowed would be necessary in my speech on the bill.

The Opposition was calling for this. Of the 158 members of these boards 33 are new appointees and the balance is made up by the people the former Minister for Health, the Hon. Carmel Tebbutt, appointed. The majority of the members is exactly the same.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The new people we put on the boards are people who have the skills to ensure responsible financial governance.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance. I am unclear as to whether the Minister for Health has appointed Dr McPhee to the board. Will the Minister for Health clarify whether Dr McPhee has now been appointed?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister does not need to answer an additional question. The Minister should continue to be relevant.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The shadow Minister for Health is asking me whether we are appointing a person who sent in a curriculum vitae but who has not actually applied to be on the board. We are going through the due process that the former Minister for Health went through. The shadow Minister for Health is sitting next to the former Minister, he should ask her. The shadow Minister for Health was a Parliamentary Secretary and he knows that there is a formal process to go through to appoint people to boards, such as police checks into their backgrounds, and that process has been gone through. I can assure the House that the doctor from the Tweed who will be appointed to the board will know about it in the next few days, as was always the intention.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order and listen to the answer.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The question was about political appointments to the boards. I will run through the names of those serving on the boards: the Hon. Morris Iemma—he was appointed by the former Government and I kept him.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Another person appointed to a board was Paul Gibson. Why did I appoint Paul Gibson? I appointed Paul Gibson because he was such a strong advocate for Blacktown Hospital. On 22 October in this place he said:

It does not give me any joy to have a go at the Australian Labor Party—a party that I love and respect—but I love and respect also the people whom I represent and who vote for me in the Blacktown electorate.

He went on to say that for years and years the Government had totally ignored his requests for attention to Blacktown Hospital. I thought he would be a very vocal advocate for that board.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Of the two new people that we have put on the Tweed board, one is a fabulous clinician—Dr Sue Page Mitchell, who is a visiting medical officer at Lismore and Ballina hospitals and a visiting medical officer at St Vincent's Private Hospital in Lismore. She is a general practitioner with Jali Primary Health Post, Cabbage Tree Island, Wardell, and she is a former head of the Rural Doctors Association. Is there anyone with greater expertise? Malcolm Marshall is a director of corporate services at Southern Cross University and a member of a former local health board. They are great new appointees. Watch this space for the new Tweed doctor.

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

AIR QUALITY

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. How is the Government delivering on its election commitment to improve air quality for communities around New South Wales?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I thank the member for Camden for his question because those opposite are too embarrassed to ask me a question about the fantastic \$1.4 billion Environment and Heritage budget. All they are interested in is the politics of fear and smear. I know the member for Camden takes a keen interest in air quality matters in his electorate; he is also chair of the Committee on Environment and Regulation. Air pollution, even at low levels, can have significant health impacts and adversely affect one's lifestyle and quality of life. New South Wales faces major air quality challenges, not only in Sydney but also in regional areas. For instance, as a community that exists alongside the mining industry, the people of my electorate of Maitland have raised concerns about dust and particle pollution, which is largely attributed to coalmining.

The students from my electorate who were present in the gallery today know that that is something we have to balance, and the member for Upper Hunter knows it all too well. The O'Farrell Government is committed to protecting the health of our communities. That is why we made stringent air quality monitoring one of our key environment priorities. The expansion and upgrade of our air quality monitoring network, in which we are investing \$250,000 per annum, and actions to reduce particle emissions from coalmines, are both commitments under our New South Wales 2021 Plan.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: This was our initiative.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Do not talk about your initiative; you shut down air quality monitoring.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: We have committed new funding for monitoring across New South Wales to expand the network cut by the Opposition when it was in government in one of its mini-budgets, which cut back environmental programs. Already we have delivered seven of the 14 air quality monitoring stations promised for the Hunter. Monitoring sites are now operating at Singleton North West, Bulga, Camberwell and Mount Thorley—

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: —adding to existing sites at Singleton, Muswellbrook and Maison Dieu, which were already up and running. That means we now have seven sites providing real-time data on air quality in the Upper Hunter region—

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: —and we are on target to have all 14 sites operating by the end of the year.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: The O'Farrell Government will keep all environment election commitments, including tackling the Rutherford odour issue. Regrettably, that has been a longstanding issue in the community

and the former Government did nothing about it. I have been approached by residents who have experienced discomfort as a result of offensive odours emanating from the Rutherford Industrial Estate. As the member for Maitland and as the Minister for the Environment I take a keen interest in air quality at Rutherford. The establishment of the Rutherford Air Quality Liaison Committee is an integral part of the O'Farrell Government's election promise to address the issue of odours at the Rutherford Industrial Estate. I am pleased to say that last week I announced the commencement of a \$400,000 Rutherford Clean Air Pilot Program, which begins with the establishment of the Rutherford Air Quality Liaison Committee. The committee will provide advice to the Office of Environment and Heritage and feedback to the community on the design of the program and strategies to address the odour.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will cease shouting across the Chamber and the member for Baulkham Hills will cease responding.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: It will comprise members of the local community, health and water representatives, council and local industries. The Rutherford Clean Air Pilot Program will be transparent and consultative. The first stage of the program will involve comprehensive monitoring, sampling and an analysis campaign to identify sources of odour, and that will inform the best course of action to address the findings and reduce or eliminate odours. Members opposite do not want to listen to this because they did nothing while in government. The residents of Rutherford complained for years but their complaints fell on deaf ears.

The community in Rutherford—which no doubt includes the dwindling membership of the Australian Labor Party in Maitland—is applauding this measure because they have lived with the odour for too long. They want to get to the source of the problem. They applaud our initiative in this election commitment, which has now been committed to in the budget. We will be working with Maitland council to ensure that new industries established in the estate have adequate odour control measures from the outset. We have reinstated the air quality monitoring that Labor cut in its mini-budget. We are on track and I look forward to updating the House.

ELECTRIC VEHICLE RECHARGING BAYS

Ms CLOVER MOORE: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport representing the Minister for Roads and Ports. Could the new Roads and Maritime Services urgently issue a technical direction allowing on-street parking bays to be reserved for the recharging of electric vehicles to support this emerging technology?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Sydney for her question and I am pleased to respond on behalf of my colleague in the other place the Minister for Roads and Ports. I am pleased the member asked me about the issue of electric vehicles: It allows me to also direct some energy towards those opposite because their performance in government was not electrifying, but it was shocking. Judging by their lethargy and laziness, they have not yet recharged themselves after the election. They were booted out of power and now they have run out of power. They are as flat as an electric car without a charger. But I digress. I will come back to that at the conclusion of my answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I apologise to the member for Sydney for digressing, but I could not resist. I am pleased to inform the House, particularly the member for Sydney, that the Roads and Traffic Authority, which will soon be Roads and Maritime Services, has agreed to form a working party with council representatives to consider the issue of on-street charging of electric vehicles with the aim of releasing technical guidelines for councils. I am pleased that we have done so. I assure the member for Sydney that the city of Sydney will be involved in this process. The Government looks forward to informing her on the progress of this matter.

I have to digress again because it may well be that in the future there is an opportunity to use electric cars, but it is a shame that the only thing that Opposition members are interested in is power for power's sake. In 16 years they forgot about governing for the good people of New South Wales and instead resorted to doing whatever they could to stay in power. As I said, they love power. They can generate leadership tensions no matter how few of them are in the Opposition. Several of them want the power of being the leader, but there is nothing green on that side of the House.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: The Minister is reading a scathing attack but the question is a serious one. The Minister should be drawn back to the question rather than reading out an attack on the Opposition.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will return to the leave of the question. The point of order is upheld.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know that now and then there are a few bright sparks that come up. I will return to the question asked. The member for Sydney is keenly interested in protecting the environment in her electorate and beyond. We congratulate her for that. She is keen on sustainability, as we are on the Government side of the House. Regrettably there is nothing sustainable about the Opposition side of the House. They will say and do anything to score a cheap point without concern for the future. On the Government side of the House, we are concerned about the future, not only about the issues regarding sustainability raised by the member for Sydney. We have put our plans into action by building the North West Rail Link, the South West Rail Link, extending the inner west light rail, establishing Transport for NSW and franchising the ferries. Labor members squandered their power. They are in the dark when it comes to knowing what the community wants.

Mr Bryan Doyle: They're unplugged.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Exactly. But Labor unplugged was not a pretty sight for the people of New South Wales and the electorates switched off in droves. Labor members lit the fuse that sparked their historic election loss. The sparks flew on 26 March: their negative energy met our positive energy and the community hit the trip switch. The community flicked the switch and put Labor on the opposition side of the House. The Government will keep delivering on its energy initiatives.

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

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Fair Trading.

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the question. If members do not come to order, I will have no hesitation in placing them on calls to order.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: What warnings and risks relating to the Solar Bonus Scheme were raised, and when?

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order so we can hear the answer.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: That is a good question. I am thankful I have only two minutes and 55 seconds because the member for Willoughby may have taken all our lines for the next two years. I commend her.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister actually has five minutes.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for Tamworth for his question and interest in the matter, and I congratulate him on the wonderful work he is doing in Tamworth, particularly with Fair Trading, to make sure that the consumers of Tamworth are well protected. As I informed the House last month, investigations by Fair Trading of solar installations made under the Labor Government's bungled solar scheme have revealed similar problems to those exposed during Federal Labor's Building the Education Revolution and pink batts roof insulation scandals. An audit was conducted of 658 grid-connected solar panel systems installed in homes in north-western Sydney, Baulkham Hills.

Mr David Elliott: What?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I knew the member for Baulkham Hills would be shocked. The audit was conducted during June this year and included Blacktown, Kellyville and surrounding suburbs. It discovered 122 major defects, which is an 18.5 per cent rate of major defects, and one in five installations had major issues. Our egocentric resident conspiracy theorist, the member for Blacktown, espoused a crackpot theory at the time

that somehow Fair Trading chose those suburbs to be audited all because of him. I must say that if there is a conspiracy here, it is not with Fair Trading; it is with the Labor caucus. I note the member for Blacktown quickly scurried away when the results came out. As the member for Terrigal would say, the great silence descended upon him.

Unlike Labor members, we released the results. The Leader of the Opposition knows as well as we do that the disgraceful rate of major defects was because of the botched and bungled scheme that he designed. I have previously advised the House of the seven times that the previous Government was warned about problems with the scheme. Seven is the same number of leadership votes that the member for Toongabbie currently has in the caucus. It gives me no pleasure to inform the House today that I am now aware of at least two more occasions when the previous Government was warned that its scheme was spiralling out of control and it did nothing. Two is the number of votes that the current Leader of the Opposition has in caucus.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Coincidence? I don't think so.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: No, it is a conspiracy. That brings the total number of ignored warnings of which we are aware to at least nine, which is the number of votes that the member for Maroubra has in caucus. Last year the previous Government was warned about the safety issues arising from the distortion in the market caused by the bungled scheme. The report of the Statutory Review of the Electricity (Consumer Safety) Act 2004 noted that "Electricity distribution network operators have reported figures that demonstrate the rapid increase in the installation of grid connected solar panels across NSW ..."

Mr Nathan Rees: Point of order: There are still 16 votes unaccounted for.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order, as the member for Toongabbie well knows. The member will resume his seat. The Minister has not concluded his answer.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: It is good to see that somebody on the Opposition benches is actually working. The report noted that "Electricity distribution network operators have reported figures that demonstrate the rapid increase in the installation of grid connected solar panels across NSW, most notably since January 2010." More concerning is that the National Electrical and Communications Association specifically warned in its submission to the review that "the installation and ongoing maintenance of these systems by unlicensed and unqualified persons presents a real risk to owners and occupiers." Here we have it stated very clearly. The former Government was warned about the increased risks associated with the Solar Bonus Scheme, but again it did nothing.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: There are dodgy installers out there.

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

Mr Michael Daley: When is the Minister going to answer the question? The point of order relates to relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. The time for questions has expired.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I ask that the Minister be granted an extension of time.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has a further two minutes to provide additional information.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for Maroubra. He referred to 40 installers, which is about twice as many members as Labor has in this House. I have noticed a spring in the step of the member for Maroubra. There is a glint in his eye, he has lost a bit of weight and had a haircut, and is looking very good. That is where my money is.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The statutory review was finalised in 2010 but it was never tabled. I am pleased to inform the House that we tabled the report this week. Unlike members of the Opposition, we know the importance of tabling reports and of transparency. Why did we have to do it? Why did the previous

Government not do it? The reason is simple. Even though they were not prepared to act, they could join the dots and they knew that by their own hand and through their own policies and incompetence they created a very large problem for the people of New South Wales. What did they do? They sat on the report and hid it. Because they knew about the problems, they never tabled the report. They knew about the dangers. They knew it was a failed scheme and that it was out of control. They did not want the public to know that prior to the election. It was like sweeping an elephant under the carpet. That is exactly what they did instead of being up-front with the people of New South Wales. That is not surprising. All the members of the previous Government's Cabinet, including Captain Solar, were well aware of the problems.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toongabbie will resume his seat. The Minister does not need his assistance.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: They stand condemned for their failure. The previous Labor Government was well aware of the safety concerns with solar panel installations under their bungled scheme and it was well aware of the financial calamity that was unfolding on the taxpayers of New South Wales. I am proud that the Government is making the tough decisions now to make New South Wales number one again.

Question time concluded at 3.24 p.m.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Report

The Speaker, in accordance with section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, tabled the report of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption for the year ended 30 June 2011.

Ordered to be printed.

PETITIONS

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

Nerriga Public Facilities

Petition requesting the construction of public toilets in the village of Nerriga, received from **Mrs Shelley Hancock**.

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Pet Shops

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

Mental Health Services

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

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

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Central West Medical Retrieval Services—lodged 23 August 2011 (Mr Andrew Gee).

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**State Budget and Western New South Wales**

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.26 p.m.]: My motion states:

That this House supports the Government's budget commitments to Western New South Wales.

The Government is committed to delivering the fair share of services and infrastructure that regional areas deserve. The Government's budget has been designed to rebuild New South Wales with record infrastructure spending and enhanced front-line services, from roads to hospitals and other services that improve the quality of life in regional New South Wales. I know members opposite are not interested in regional New South Wales because for 16 years they failed that area miserably. If members want reasons why this motion should be accorded priority they need look no further than the representation in this Chamber by members from the west, north and south of the State.

Unlike members of the Opposition, the Government side of the House understands that New South Wales consists of more than that which Labor used to represent. We understand clearly that this House and this Government represent the north, south and west of New South Wales. This budget delivers key transport priorities. For the first time in a long time, western New South Wales—I am proud to join with the member for Tamworth, the member for Bathurst, the member for Orange, to give a few examples—is now part of Government again. For 16 years members of the Opposition had their hands on the throat of communities in western New South Wales.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: For 16 long years western New South Wales was never given an opportunity to contribute to the State's economy.

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

Mr TROY GRANT: This budget changes that. It turns the tide in favour of people in western New South Wales and we are ready, willing and able to contribute to this State's prosperity and play our part in rebuilding this wonderful State. I will give some examples of the key transport projects delivered in this budget that western and regional New South Wales will prosper and benefit from. I could talk for four or five hours and 49 minutes if necessary to highlight the benefits of this budget, but I will leave that to the lunatics in the other place. The budget includes a massive \$4.2 billion investment in regional and rural roads. I cannot remember the last time that happened for regional New South Wales.

Mr Nathan Rees: Last year.

Mr TROY GRANT: This Government's allocation represents an increase of \$700 million over last year's Labor budget. Over the last 16 years the people of regional and western New South Wales were let down. We waited nine long years for our hospitals, which were promised by Carr and Iemma. I am not sure whether the member for Toongabbie promised them or just ignored us totally. The Government has delivered on its election commitments through this budget. In our first budget we are delivering on hospitals in western New South Wales. I am pleased that my electorate will be benefit from a hospital at Dubbo, one at Parkes and one at Forbes.

Yet what do we hear from members of the Opposition? The shadow Minister for Health appeared in the *Parkes Champion Post* two days ago to tell my constituents in Parkes that they should be unhappy with this deal. The Government has given them the money to plan their new hospital, but that is not good enough. I find that quite amusing. For nine long years Labor did not give them a single dollar, but when we announce funding of \$3 million, that is bad news. If Labor thinks that is bad news, there is a lot more bad news on its way for regional New South Wales. A member of the other House, the Hon. Steve Whan, who is a former member of this place, said in regional New South Wales that there would be job losses in the Department of Primary Industries—"Hide your kids, the jobs are gone." Mr Whan is wrong. He has been recycled, but that is not good enough for him—he wants to be wrong as well. This is why this motion should be accorded priority.

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

Government Performance

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.31 p.m.]: My motion deserves priority because we have a Premier who promised honesty in government but has come a cropper at a pace that has amazed even the most seasoned observers. The man who said the public were sick of spin has become the "Sheik of Tweak" and the "Earl of Twirl" all rolled into one. In the words of the devastating *Daily Telegraph* editorial this week—"Barry, it's time to tell the truth." We had the Premier's spin for months about an alleged budget black hole, only to be given his marching orders by the independent umpires—the Parliamentary Budget Office, Standard and Poor's and his own Michael Lambert. We had the Premier's now infamous Lithgow declaration in which he promised he had "no plans" to sell off electricity poles and wires. Of course, a promise that seemed clear as a bell at the time has now become drenched in fine print after the Premier's tricky evasions all week in Parliament.

Be scared stiff whenever this Government says it has "no plans" to do something. It has become the equivalent of the Premier's googly—delivered out the back of his hand and one side of his mouth. It is the most bamboozling delivery in his arsenal, designed to pretend to the people of New South Wales he is going one way when he is going the other. It is his version of John Howard's non-core promise. This House recalls the Premier had no plans to privatise ports and prisons and no plans to hike mining royalties, yet when it came to reversing his position he had no shame. Professor Tony Owen—that well-known privatisation zealot—has been appointed to the Tamberlin inquiry because when it comes to selling off electricity generators, poles and wires, this Government is going to do the people slowly.

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

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The Minister for the Environment has been taking public relations lessons from John Mangos to spin her way out of the Orica debacle, the Eliza Doolittle of Parliament pathetically off to see her Henry Higgins. And now the Premier has been caught red-handed misleading the people of New South Wales about the impact of carbon pricing on public transport fares.

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

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: This motion deserves priority because there is a well-known saying on the other side: never let the facts get in the way of a good story. As reported in today's *Australian Financial Review*, the Premier was offered a front-page story—and, in response, what did he do? Like the hapless environment Minister, his first impulse was to spin. He tricked up the figures to fit the headline. At midday on 15 July, the Premier issued a press release with the outrageous claim that public transport fares would increase by 3.6 per cent.

[Interruption]

It is true if you gouge them, Gladys. But we know the Premier was sitting on clear advice from the Department of Transport that a carbon price would have "no measurable effect" on transport choices. He also possessed an indignant email from NSW Treasury, sent at 10.48 a.m., that the Premier was quoting a back-of-the-envelope estimate using extreme assumptions and that the real impact on public transport fares was "miniscule". NSW Treasury modelling has since confirmed an average fare increase of less than one-half of 1 per cent. Yet the Premier has not had the decency to correct the record, to admit he tricked up the dossier from the Department of Transport. This Premier always throws one too many eggs into the pudding. The people of New South Wales now know they are led by the hollow man who will say and do anything for a cheap headline.

Ms Robyn Parker: What about the carbon tax?

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: You ought to talk, the invisible woman. This motion deserves priority so the record can be set straight. The Premier should stop the spin, throw out the spin doctors and start telling the people of New South Wales the truth.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order—

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I have finished.

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the Leader of the House still taking a point of order?

Mr Brad Hazzard: Under Standing Order 73 there is nothing in this motion that allows the Leader of the Opposition to attack an individual member. If he wants to talk about the Government generically, he may do that, but he cannot embark on a full-scale attack on an individual member.

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand what the Minister is saying, but the Leader of the Opposition has completed his contribution.

Question—That the motion of the member for Dubbo be accorded priority—put and resolved in the affirmative.

STATE BUDGET AND WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.37 p.m.]: I move:

That this House supports the Government's budget commitments to Western New South Wales.

I am pleased that the House supported this motion being accorded priority because it highlights the reversal of fortunes that has come across western and regional New South Wales. We were well aware during the election campaign that western and regional New South Wales wanted a voice in government. What underpins that is the opportunity to have the hopes and aspirations, as well as the needs and services, of our communities realised. The people in western and regional New South Wales often are asked to do more with less and to travel that bridge too far. They are fed up with that attitude. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government and the first budget by Treasurer Baird have renewed their faith and hope in State government. People in regional New South Wales hold very strongly to the view that if you give your word on something, you keep it. For too long, as I outlined when I was giving reasons why this motion should be accorded priority, for nine long years just in my electorate alone, the previous Government promised hospital upgrades for Forbes and Dubbo and a new hospital for Parkes.

Mr Kevin Anderson: For Tamworth too?

Mr TROY GRANT: I will get to Tamworth. For nine long years that Government contributed nothing until its last budget when it included some money for the Dubbo upgrade. That was the extent. The new shadow spokesperson on health, Dr Andrew McDonald—

Mr Ryan Park: A fine member.

Mr TROY GRANT: I disagree with that description. He is a fine man and I thank him for helping my colleague the member for Myall Lakes in the House the other day. No doubt the member for Macquarie Fields is a man of high character, but his political ability reflects the misfortunes of those with whom he associates. He told one of the local newspapers in my electorate, the *Parkes Champion-Post*:

If the Government is going to give you a new hospital, they've only given you \$3 million to plan it with, so that's really bad news.

That is an astonishing comment. The member for Tamworth highlighted that the Dubbo electorate is not alone in suffering. My friend the member for Wagga Wagga knows only too well about unfulfilled promises for health investment, infrastructure and service delivery. Tamworth quite rightly is a hub of regional New South Wales. I called this wonderful community home for about 14 years. Tamworth is a major centre that holds an annual major event.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Wollongong are not taking part in this debate yet. They will listen to the member for Dubbo in silence.

Mr TROY GRANT: The behaviour of those opposite is a little like an Austin Powers movie except it is not that funny. If the member for Charlestown could bring a cat into the Chamber and give it to the Leader of the Opposition, the House would have a dead ringer for Dr Evil. We will not treat this State like a joke as those opposite do. We have provided significant investment through this first budget. The House should support the commitments to western New South Wales. The lists are long and endless, but I shall draw the attention of the

House to just a few. The budget has provided \$160 million for the Great Western Highway, which, of course, does not apply to all of western New South Wales. We are part of this State and do not believe everything should centre on us.

All our western communities work together to contribute to the State's economy, from our food bowls to our tourist routes—through the wonderful Monaro area or to Tamworth to experience that major event every January. Western New South Wales needs infrastructure—roads and links—to help make this State prosperous. The Great Western Highway is just one example of the good news in the budget. The budget has provided my electorate with an injection of funds totalling \$1.4 million in infrastructure for the Golden Highway and Ballymore Road. This was an election commitment and again honours a promise made by the then Opposition, now the Government. Twice a day this diabolical intersection places schoolchildren at significant risk.

Unlike those opposite, we can deliver on our promises because the Coalition shadow Cabinet visited western New South Wales twice during the election campaign. Now in government, that Cabinet represents regional and western New South Wales through the Minister for Western New South Wales, who is doing a terrific job of addressing the diverse issues we face. This budget focuses not just on health and road infrastructure but also talks about front-line services. The Treasurer has delivered a budget that underpins the important issues. As I described in my local press, this budget is a fantastic first step in turning around this State. Despite the economic peril in which we found ourselves, this budget will make sure we are able to realise front-line services in health, nursing and police.

Ms Noreen Hay: Tell that to the public sector.

Mr TROY GRANT: You're no Liz Hurley; just be quiet. This budget is an absolute commitment to front-line services, infrastructure and all the things that western New South Wales needs to be a major contributor to our State's economy and to regional New South Wales.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [3.44 p.m.]: The last comment from the member for Dubbo proves that he is no Tony McGrane or Dawn Fardell. I have an amendment to the motion. I move:

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

"this House notes that the budget:

- (1) provides neither improved services nor infrastructure for western New South Wales, nor for anywhere else in New South Wales;
- (2) attacks the most vulnerable in our community;
- (3) provides for sacking of government workers and cuts to services; and
- (4) foreshadows that the Government will fund its forward capital program by selling government assets, including the electricity poles and wires.

As offensive as some comments in this debate may have been, they do not alter the fact that the Illawarra received zero from the budget.

Mr John Barilaro: The members didn't work hard enough.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Monaro has not been here long enough to warm his seat. As the member for Keira said, the budget did not provide a dollar for Bulli Hospital in his electorate.

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

Ms NOREEN HAY: Bulli Hospital did not receive a dollar from the budget even though funding was promised.

Mr John Williams: You got more nurses.

Ms NOREEN HAY: How many more nurses did we get for Wollongong Hospital? Let us see. As of today, that hospital got almost zero as far as commitment of dollars to health; the only new commitments were

those of the previous Labor Government. The Illawarra region received a commitment in the lead-up to the election to maintain the free shuttle bus, but received zero for any new services. In the Illawarra's hour of need, facing the axing of many hundreds of jobs by BlueScope, this State Government has provided only \$5 million to match BlueScope's \$5 million. That is a paltry amount of money considering the impact of those job losses on the Illawarra community. The Government gives \$300 million plus to clubs and \$400 million in payroll tax cuts but provides only \$5 million to assist an entire community that will be seriously impacted by many job losses, including some of the foreshadowed 5,000 public sector jobs to be cut.

Mr Troy Grant: Point of order: My point of order is that the amendment is not relevant. The amendment of the member for Wollongong notes:

- (1) the budget provides neither improved services nor infrastructure for western New South Wales ...

Wollongong is not in western New South Wales.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have received similar amendments over the past three days. The member for Wollongong clearly is speaking to her amendment.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Is it Dumbo or Dubbo?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Murray-Darling will cease interjecting.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Many of the 5,000 public service workers set to face the sack will be from the Illawarra region. It is unacceptable that in its first budget the Government delivered almost zero to the Illawarra at a time of need when it promised to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of the Illawarra. This budget gives nothing to the people of the Illawarra.

Mr Kevin Anderson: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The member for Wollongong is speaking to the Federal issue of the carbon tax and related job losses.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order. The amendment says, "nor for anywhere else in New South Wales."

Ms NOREEN HAY: Wollongong pensioners are also set to be hit hard by the \$10 weekly increase in social housing rents, effectively decreasing their hard fought for \$30 pension increases. The O'Farrell Government is ripping off our pensioners, including ex-service men and women and war widows, to pay for its election promises that are sending the budget into the red. First home buyers—young families—will miss out on stamp duty concessions worth tens of thousands of dollars. The Government does not care about young families, but we do. You may not care about pensioners and returned service personnel, but we do.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wollongong will direct her comments through the Chair. I call the member for Murray-Darling to order.

Mr Troy Grant: Sit down.

Ms NOREEN HAY: You and I are going to have words. There will be a \$12 increase in electricity bills on top of the Government's decision to increase electricity prices by 18 per cent on 1 July. Water prices are likely to increase as a result of the privatisation of Sydney's desalination plant, and parents will be forced to pay fees for State-run preschools. It is offensive to suggest that those opposite have done anything for regional Australia. [*Time expired.*]

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [3.51 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak to the motion about the forgotten land—forgotten by the former Labor Government and left out to dry. We had an organisation called Country Labor: Country by name but not by nature. Nothing came our way in western New South Wales under the previous Government. As a member of Parliament, the greatest honour that can be bestowed on you is when the Broken Hill branch of the Australian Labor Party writes to the paper and declares—

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order is in relation to the use of props.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Murray-Darling is referring to an article from a newspaper for which he will give a citation.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: It is the *Barrier Daily Truth* published on 13 September 2011. The local branch of the Australian Labor Party was complementary as to what Broken Hill has received under this Government. As members of the House will be aware, the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Bill 2011 was introduced less than six months ago. The Government announced that 62 new jobs had been created in the Murray-Darling electorate. That never happened under you. In Broken Hill 44 new jobs were created. The local Labor branch is very pleased with those 44 jobs.

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

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: The local branch is very happy with those 44 jobs and complimented the Government on that achievement. It also showed concern about the 5,000 jobs that would be lost but recognised that that would translate into front-line—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The comments of the local Australian Labor Party branch said are not relevant to this debate.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order. The member is referring to comments made in relation to the budget.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: This is about the budget, buddy. It is lost on you because you do not understand this—it is way above your head. The fact is the local Labor branch recognises that the 5,000 jobs that will be removed from middle management will translate to front-line jobs in the west. We will see more teachers, nurses and police out in western New South Wales. Poor old Noreen is bitter because she represented Wollongong when Labor was in government and did not receive funding and now she represents Wollongong on the opposition benches and has received nothing from this Government. The member for Wollongong should go out and start talking to her constituents and representing her electorate.

I am happy about the Government's confidence in putting together a budget that will do good work. The previous Government talked about a triple-A credit rating that was created by not spending any money. The fact is that the expenditure in this budget will hit the ground; it will not be rolled over again and again—the money will be spent. Western New South Wales will certainly be the winner as a result. Jobs are very important in western New South Wales. Under the previous Government the fisheries in Broken Hill were shut down, Roads and Traffic Authority jobs were removed, they took jobs out of the courthouse, and there was a continual wind down of public sector jobs in the electorate of Murray-Darling. Some 110 jobs were removed from Deniliquin and the former Government did not care. They were middle-management jobs that it moved back to the city. I am glad that we are going to see some front-line staff replace them. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [3.56 p.m.]: I bring to the House today the budget of the lowest common denominator. I refer to it as a budget of the lowest common denominator because in this document—members are welcome to read it—there are two sets of figures for the preceding year. The first is what is budgeted for, anticipated, planned or targeted, and the other is what was achieved. The Government has gone through both sets of figures and picked the lowest on each occasion. Government members have approached the task with a mindset of, "What is the easiest one for us to get to?" And the Government's answer is, "The low one. Let's pick the low one, even if that means we are going backwards". This is certainly the budget of the lowest common denominator—let us put that on the record now.

Given that the member for Dubbo has raised the issue of the west, I think it is important to talk about a matter that is important to all members of the House—although some may care more than others—and that is water catchments. Water catchments are a fairly relevant topic across the State and the country as a whole. What has been done with regard to water catchment budgets? The Border Rivers-Gwydir water catchment area will receive \$7 million less; the Central West will receive \$500,000 less; the Hawkesbury-Nepean will receive \$5 million less; the Hunter and Central Coast will receive \$2.6 million less; the Lachlan is going to go up—

Mr Matt Kean: There is some creative accounting there.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: No, they are all in here.

Mr Matt Kean: You didn't read the paper.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: The funding for Lachlan is going to increase.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: I remind the member for Cessnock that he must direct all comments through the Chair and, in doing so, must not mislead the House in relation to budget figures.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the member for Cessnock that he should direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I agree entirely with the point of order. Funding for the Lachlan is going to increase. It will get an extra \$800,000. Funding for the lower Murray-Darling catchment is minus \$150,000.

Pursuant to standing and sessional orders business interrupted and motion lapsed.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2011-2012

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [4.01 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the first O'Farrell-Stoner budget, which sets the framework for New South Wales to start moving forward financially and to deliver on our commitment to make New South Wales number one again. On 26 March 2011 the people of the Hunter voted overwhelmingly for change. This budget is part of delivering that change. I will refer to initiatives in the budget for my electorate. In the budget papers for Health the first allocation I come to is half a million dollars for the Wansey Dialysis Centre, which is one of the key deliverers in our area of treatment for people suffering from renal disease. This tremendous facility, which is located in my electorate in a lovely bushland setting away from the main campus of John Hunter Hospital, has been grossly underfunded for many years.

I commend the hard work of the Hunter and New England Kidney Association, which has devoted a good 20 years to fundraising for Wansey. It has raised money for equipment by having lamington drives and holding trivia nights. It even contacted the Paul Newman Foundation—believe it or not in a first world country—to obtain money for the centre. The Wansey Dialysis Centre is symbolic of the neglect of local health infrastructure and services. I am not necessarily making a political comment because treatment for renal disease is part of the Health budget that traditionally has been ignored. It is not one of the, to coin a phrase, sexier diseases and it is difficult to fundraise for it. But the Minister for Health saw a need and delivered half a million dollars.

Some of the money has been spent already to deliver a new electrophoresis machine, which is located at John Hunter Hospital. This benefits not only dialysis patients but also patients suffering from related diseases. The second allocation I come to is \$887,000 for renovation works at Cardiff fire station. The O'Farrell Government supports our firefighters, as we support all our public servants. Our firefighters deserve to work in a quality environment and surroundings to enable them to do their jobs as effectively as they can. Flicking over the page, I come to funding for sewerage works in my electorate. Funding of \$4.65 million has been allocated for an upgrade of Windale sewerage treatment plant.

This is the major treatment works in the area and the upgrade will particularly benefit my electorate on the low side of the hill from Charlestown, as well as Windale and Tingira Heights. That gives me the opportunity to mention the suburb of Windale and the great work of two local organisations. The Windale Interagency and Community Alliance consists of local people who get together to advocate for their community. They provide tremendous support to their local community. Currently they are trying to find new premises. I look forward to working with them over the coming months to make sure they have suitable facilities. The other organisation is the Windale Men's Shed. Like all men's sheds across the State, the Windale Men's Shed provides tremendous benefits for men in the area, particularly in relation to mental health.

The budget papers for Housing contain funding for the completion of works on a Federal stimulus project in Tingira Heights. Funding for this project has not been well spent and has led to a bad result for future tenants, the neighbours and taxpayers. I have been working with surrounding residents to get remediation works,

which will provide them with a degree of privacy. For the information of members, the project has been built in classic suburbia—three- and four-bedroom homes in a bushland setting. The previous Government planted a 12-bedroom unit block in this suburb. No-one doubts the need for social housing; we all support the need for extra social housing. But in this case it has been built in the wrong spot. The project was designed for aged care but has been built well over 400 metres from the nearest bus stop.

Ms Robyn Parker: No footpaths.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: As the Minister says, there are no footpaths. It is another example of failing to manage a project properly. The neighbours rightly have been upset. They have been patient but vocal about the issue. Unfortunately, by the time we came to government it was too late to turn it around. We are trying to help residents make the best of a bad situation. Going through the budget papers further, I see that \$973,000 has been allocated for Mercy Community Services and Lake Macquarie Community Transport. This organisation provides community transport to assist frail, aged and younger people with disabilities and their carers. Another \$88,000 has been allocated to the same organisation for people who are disadvantaged physically, socially or geographically.

Moving through the budget papers, I come to the line items for my electorate. The first is an allocation of \$1 million for the construction of a new bridge at Pennant Street. The Federal member for Charlton was on NBN news last week claiming that the Federal Government's failure to provide additional funding from Regional Development Australia was not his fault. This project has always involved collaboration between local, State and Federal governments. Lake Macquarie City Council has committed \$10 million to the project. The project was on again and off again under the previous Government. The Labor Government, towards the end of its term, committed half a million dollars to the project—although it was a Tony Kelly special and there was no paperwork to back it up. We have fulfilled that commitment. I have looked at the scope of works required to commence the project and see that we have actually committed \$1 million it.

Our total commitment to the Pennant Street Bridge project is \$15 million. Last Friday on radio the member for Wallsend questioned where the money is. The money is there and ready to be spent. But this \$50 million project is contingent on the Federal Government providing additional funds. By way of background, the money in Regional Development Australia has been stripped away because much of the funding was used to pork-barrel the seats of Lyne, New England, Denison and O'Connor. This project offers tremendous economic multipliers. Various figures have been bandied about, but the most consistent estimate is that the project will create an additional 600 jobs and potentially unlock more than \$100 million worth of development at the nearby Stockland development. I appeal to the Federal member for Charlton to use his position of influence within the Federal Government and speak to Simon Crean about making this project a priority.

Although it is not located in my electorate, it will benefit my constituents. It sits between the electorates of Wallsend and Lake Macquarie, but it is a regionally important facility. I appeal to Greg Combet to use his influence within the Federal Government to ensure that we do well out of the second round of funding towards the end of the year. Another item in the budget is a \$4 million allocation for repairs to the Pacific Highway at Adamstown Heights, which was damaged in the storms of June 2007. The road has been undermined by the amount of rain that fell in one night—about 300 millimetres fell in about five or six hours. I note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Maitland, whose electorate is another area that was badly affected in those floods. For us in the lower Hunter the damage was very much to do with the storm; for Maitland it was very much to do with the creeping flood that came through the electorate later.

Some \$500,000 has been allocated for the main street in Cardiff. Cardiff is one of the oldest communities within the electorate. It boomed in the 1880s with the opening of the nearby coalmine and it has a population of around 10,000. Cardiff has not had a dime spent on it in well over 60 or 70 years. The main street is dilapidated and an ambulance is called to the area every week to assist someone who has tripped over broken paving. We made an election commitment of \$2.5 million to assist Lake Macquarie council with the project, and the initial \$500,000 will ensure that planning and works commence in a timely fashion. I look forward to working with my colleagues on Lake Macquarie council to ensure that the residents of Cardiff get the best possible result for this money.

Another \$241,000 has been allocated for school crossing supervisors in the electorate. I recently had the pleasure of visiting St James Primary School in Kotara South. St James Primary School does not quite fit the Roads and Traffic Authority's criteria for a school crossing supervisor, but the intersection is dangerous and I look forward to working with the Minister for Roads and Ports to try to get an outcome for the students of

St James Primary School. Another \$1 million has been allocated for local roads, \$800,000 of which is for the intersection of Hillsborough Road and Crockett Street—the major intersection out of Cardiff South. That intersection is dangerous and \$800,000 will certainly get work commenced, but we will need to consult further with the Roads and Traffic Authority to ensure that the improvements to that intersection fit with the long-term plan for the duplication of Hillsborough Road. About eight weeks ago I made representations to the Roads and Traffic Authority and I look forward to a response as to how we can progress this project.

Another \$200,000 is committed to Ocean Street, Dudley. Due to a number of factors—including being historically undermined every time there is light rain or, according to some of the residents, even heavy dew, and potholes appearing—that road needs repair. Because of cost-shifting over many years, local government has struggled to get money to repair the road. Our \$200,000 commitment will certainly go some way to helping improve that road for the residents of Dudley. The budget contains some fantastic announcements on a statewide basis. Over four years the budget will deliver another 990 teachers, 2,475 more nurses and 550 additional police officers. That will certainly benefit the State, particularly my area. We are very fortunate in the Hunter to have a world-class hospital—the John Hunter Hospital—but its services are stretched and it is constrained by a lack of space.

Delivering more nurses will enable the hospital to provide a better service to the residents of the Hunter and, down the track, because of our election commitment for hospital funding at Maitland, hopefully some of that pressure on John Hunter Hospital will be relieved and the workload of our local hospitals can be spread across a greater area. I also note that an additional \$1 billion will be spent on the Pacific Highway. Even though the Pacific Highway does not run through all of our electorates—although it runs through my electorate—it affects everyone in this House. The Pacific Highway is used by people going on holiday and by trade vehicles, and there would not be a person in this Chamber who has not been affected in some way by someone they know being injured or killed on that road. The road is a major thoroughfare and the Government has made an important commitment. It has been very wise to structure the budget to link in with the privatisation of Port Botany. It is very sensible to spend money on replacing one piece of infrastructure with another.

Overall, New South Wales has done very well out of the budget. About \$888 million will be invested in Hunter roads, and some \$570 million will go into the Hunter Expressway. That project was made shovel-ready by the Howard Government, and I acknowledge the work done over many years by the member for Paterson, Bob Baldwin, who fought hard for that road. The project has had a slightly chequered history because whilst it was an election commitment by both the Howard Government and the then Opposition leader Kevin Rudd on 24 November 2007, on Monday 26 November it suddenly went off the radar for the then Federal Government.

Ms Robyn Parker: It was Sunday morning.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: That is exactly right. It was in the newspapers, then within 24 hours it was no longer a priority. It was only when the global financial crisis hit and the Federal Government fired every piece of ammunition it had and saved nothing for a rainy day that the project suddenly came back on the radar. The Hunter Expressway will change the way the Hunter Valley works. The road will link the Pennant Street Bridge with the Cardiff Industrial Estate, providing a direct link for people to work locally in our region without having to commute a long way to work. People can go straight up the Hunter Expressway to the mines. The expressway will link the workforce and skill set within the lower Hunter with the industrial powerhouse that is now the upper Hunter. I commend the Treasurer and the Premier and I commend the hard work of all the Hunter members—the member for Maitland, the member for Port Stephens, the member for Swansea and the member for Newcastle. The hard work of local members has brought our Hunter commitments to the fore and I thank the Treasurer and the Premier for their attention to this matter. I commend the budget to the House.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [4.16 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak on this take-note debate for the Budget Estimates 2011-2012. As Don Watson so brilliantly pointed out in his biography of Paul Keating, the offices of our political leaders are often ideological battlegrounds. On the one side we have his "pointy-heads"—the economic rationalists who rule with certainty and for whom the bottom line is the bottom line. The economic agenda defines it all and, to quote Watson, "everything else is decoration". On the other side we have his "bleeding hearts"—those interested in vaguer concepts such as social fabric, community and equality of opportunity. A budget is all about forging an agreement between these two opposing sides. And nowhere do we see the lines drawn more distinctly than in my shadow portfolios of Family and Community Services, Disability and Ageing, and Aboriginal Affairs.

The battles can be fierce and the wounds can cut deep, sometimes affecting whole communities. Caring for the vulnerable and helping families who are locked in a complex cycle of disadvantage and hopelessness will

never be simple and it will never be efficient. The starting point and, I believe, the uniting point, for the pointy-heads and bleeding hearts must always be a focus on policies that ultimately lead to long-term gains. That focus on prevention and early intervention. It makes economic sense to do so. Over and over again the research shows us that universal support for families, for example in areas such as health and education, will benefit our most vulnerable. As Dr Philip Mendes from the Social Policy Research Unit at Monash University points out with respect to his area of expertise on leaving care:

As numerous cost benefit analysis studies show, greater social investment in care leavers in the short to medium term is likely to prove both socially and economically productive by reducing the degree of dependency and Government costs in the longer term.

But in a number of areas of this budget the pointy-heads have had the upper hand and they have gone for short-term gains. Just at a time when Federal Labor has recognised pressure on pensioners and has taken steps to alleviate that pressure, the Premier's pointy-heads have taken away increases gained by the 70,000 pensioners who live in public housing. This \$17 pension gain will be drained by a rent hike of \$11.90. The Federal Government's National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children shows that child abuse and neglect has almost doubled in the past 10 years. Each year more than 30,000 Australian children are officially listed as abused or neglected. In relation to my shadow ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, the sickening reality is that the figures for Indigenous children are eight times the national rate.

The number of children in care nationally has also almost doubled in a decade. Patrick Parkinson's report "For Kids Sake", released last week, says "the canary in the coalmine" is the fact that almost 35,895 children nationally are now in out-of-home care compared with 15,674 in 1998. Approximately 17,900 children in New South Wales are in out-of-home care and a review by Boston Consulting Group has warned that the number could rise to 24,000 by 2013-14. I note the budget projection for numbers of children in out-of-home care for 2011-12 is 18,700.

Yet remarkably, in the face of this increased need, the Family and Community Services budget remains flat for 2011-12. It is Minister Goward's contention that a gap of between \$1.3 and \$1.9 million exists in the budget between demand and services. The question is: How is this Government going to deal with increasing demand on a static budget—a budget that in real terms that has not grown? Minister Goward has said consistently that her policy aims are to reduce the number of children and young people entering into and staying in out-of-home care in New South Wales and to increase the number of children restored to their families as soon as possible. These are indeed excellent policy aims, but there is a problem. In order to uphold these policy aims the Government must look at the research, which shows that significant investment into early intervention and family support is required.

Sweden and Canada have made serious investment not only in prevention and early intervention programs but also in the provision of intensive therapy groups. Both countries also provide for highly trained social workers to move in with struggling families. I do not see reflected in this budget the sort of investment that is needed to uphold the Minister's stated aims. For example, funds for Labor's early intervention Brighter Futures program have been increased by only 6 per cent. Minister Goward's figures do not match her policy aims. She gives a guarantee that case workers will not be affected by changes. Will this continue past 2012? Will she be able to guarantee that care and protection for vulnerable children will not be compromised on a flat budget?

But where the pointy-heads have really moved in is in the area of foster care. In the face of increased need we have a number of brutal cuts. This is despite Minister Goward's 11 March 2009 press release arguing for an increase in payments to foster carers in line with the Wood report recommendations. We have a decision to reduce the allowance for new carers who adopt children and young people in out-of-home care. Carer allowances will be cut by the amount of the Youth Allowance when young people turn 16. Dr Marilyn McHugh from the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales says this about the decision:

This is a retrograde step as research evidence from Australia and elsewhere indicates that older children in care need strong support systems in place. If financial support from the carer is reduced this can lead to placement instability. The importance of adequacy in carer payments cannot be underestimated.

Dr McHugh's research was used by the former New South Wales Government in a major review of all carer allowances. It found that payments were inadequate to support and attract foster carers—those doing some of the toughest and most important work in our society. This is why in 2006 the former Labor Government decided that carer allowances should not to be affected by Commonwealth benefits such as Youth Allowance. Research undertaken by Patrick Parkinson into child support as well as the Henry Tax Review noted that children become

more expensive in their teenage years. The Federal Government has listened to this research and it has influenced their recent changes to the family tax allowance. But the New South Wales Government is cutting allowances just as children turn 16.

It has also been found that it is important that payments go to the families, rather than to the children. Are carers going to have to ask children to hand over their Youth Allowance to provide for children in their care? It is hard enough to find carers for older children in out-of-home care. This Government has just made it that much harder. Turning now to my Aboriginal Affairs portfolio, I am concerned at the decision reflected in the budget to charge fees for children who attend publically run preschools, as many of these preschools service disadvantaged areas. Twenty-four of around 100 government-run preschools serve Aboriginal communities. Tony Vinson from the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney said about the decision:

If a policy of charging market prices for enrolment in public preschools were to be applied universally, it will perpetuate educational disadvantages. I cannot think of a more destructive or short sighted policy.

When the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs was asked about the effect of these charges for public preschools on Aboriginal communities he said:

On this side of the House we believe in the politics of aspiration.

Let me tell the Minister for Indigenous Affairs that all the aspiration in the world will not substitute for sustained early intervention in disadvantaged children's lives. Aspiration will not make up for children starting school without the basic building blocks needed to start a formal education. I remind this House of the mountains of evidence that show us that the early years set us up for life, and that disadvantages suffered in the first six years of life are compounded later. I note Minister Piccoli's response in Question Time on 8 September 2011 was that for "those disadvantaged families, nothing will change."

I will hold the Minister to account for this statement and look forward to hearing how the Minister will consult with disadvantaged families and Aboriginal communities on this new fee policy. I will wait to see how his reassurance fits in with his statement that "parents will have plenty of time to have a look at the new fee policy and consider what they might do with their children next year". For me, this issue is where the pointy-heads must listen first to the bleeding hearts and consider long-term economic benefits, not short-term cost-recovery measures. As the Minister has noted, the "priority is to support disadvantaged students by encouraging them into high-quality early childhood places."

My concern about this is increased when I note this budget's lack of information regarding all expenditure for Aboriginal programs—something the former Labor Government provided through the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. This makes it difficult to analyse and compare expenditure from previous years and ascertain whether overall funding has decreased. I note that the service group for supporting Aboriginal Culture and Community Resilience—effectively the budget for the Office of Aboriginal Affairs—has dropped from \$26,853 million to \$22,872 million. Is there a declining commitment to Aboriginal persons and communities in this State by the new Government? Given the lack of transparency on whole budget figures, one would be entitled to conclude that this may be the case.

But if you really want to know where the biggest damage has been done—where the pointy-heads have run amok—it is in this Government's failure to support and budget for Fair Work Australia's increases for underpaid community service workers. These are workers, many of them female, who care for society's most vulnerable—children, the disabled and the elderly. These workers do some of the most important and demanding jobs in our community in a sector already struggling to attract and retain workers. Failing to support the Fair Work Australia case will be far reaching. There will be even more pressure on community service workers and disability workers in the non-government sector. Not being able to attract staff puts in jeopardy the gains that have been made by Stronger Together 2 and undermines work towards the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This is the most short-sighted pointy-headed decision of all.

Turning to the area of disability, I am pleased that the Government has chosen to continue with the previous Labor Government's innovative Stronger Together program. This 10-year plan was born out of some serious work and intensive stakeholder consultation by the former Government. It began in 2006 with the Stronger Together second phase planned for 2011-2016. Labor's plans represented the largest increase in funding for disability services in New South Wales history with a planned \$5 billion additional injection into the sector by 2011. It allowed those with a disability the opportunity to exercise more choice and control through

the expansion of person-centred approaches and individualised funding models across the sector. Stronger Together is a Labor legacy and with bipartisan support, and it will be an important platform on which to build towards a National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Mr Constance used Question Time on 9 September to ask why he had not heard from the Opposition on Stronger Together 2. This is because it was our policy. I note also that this Government is adopting the previous Labor Government's election commitments to exempt payroll tax for employees employing people with a disability, as well as our commitment to introduce Social Impact Bonds. I will aim to hold this Government accountable to continue our work and make sure that the projected spending of Stronger Together 2 is maintained over the next five years.

The budget is a mixed bag for Auburn constituents. Increased water and electricity prices will be felt heavily, particularly amongst the aged and self-funded retirees. The axing of the first homebuyers' stamp duty concession will hit hard, as Auburn residents are the ninth-highest users of the scheme. As far as I can see there are no capital works budgeted for schools in the Auburn electorate, although I note that the Lidcombe TAFE campus will be upgraded.

I am pleased the Government is continuing Labor's commitment to continue the work already in progress for the co-location of Auburn ambulance station, as well as to continue the former Government's work to provide new playgrounds, a car park and other works for Blaxland Riverside Park. I note two stages have been completed already at this park. The former Labor Government had an ongoing program of construction and renovation of fire stations, and Chester Hill fire station will be renovated in this financial year.

However, during the election the Liberal candidate for Auburn promised to upgrade the Regents Park Bridge and provide a police and community youth club. I note the budget provides for major capitalised maintenance, including bridge renewal, in my electorate. I make the assumption that part of this money relates to Regents Park Bridge, but that it was money that was not used in last year's budget—some \$600,000—to build construction barriers on Regents Park Bridge, as the council is currently in negotiations with RailCorp. I have not found funding for a Police and Community Youth Club for Auburn either.

There is much that is unknown and much that has been left unsaid in this budget. One thing we do know is that \$800 million of savings will be made in the next four years with no indication as to where that will come from. This Government has made some big promises, but ultimately what counts in government is implementation. What matters is what works, as Tony Blair so famously said. As Professor Peter Craven wrote, healthy Oppositions produce healthy Parliaments. I will play my part in making this a healthy Parliament by seeking to keep this Government accountable in its responsibility towards the most vulnerable in our community.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [4.30 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the budget delivered by the O'Farrell-Stoner Government and to participate in this take-note debate. It is important to understand that this year's budget is a fundamental realignment: it lays the foundation that turns the finances of the State around. A big part of the story of the past 16 years has been that recurrent expenditure in State budgets has exceeded expectations year in, year out and prevented sufficient money being available for capital expenditure. Because recurrent spending consistently ran ahead of budget expectations the aspirations of people in many parts of New South Wales could not be met. The basic infrastructure and essential services that people rightly expect their governments to deliver have not been delivered on time or in nearly sufficient quantity to meet the needs of a growing population.

In response to the previous speaker, I point out that the member for Auburn set up a false dichotomy between pointy-heads and bleeding hearts. Nowhere is it more obvious that that dichotomy is false than in the very area that she spent some time talking about: the funding of Stronger Together 2. The previous Labor Government introduced Stronger Together with bipartisan support from our side of the House, but it would have been in no position to fund it in the coming years given the direction in which the budget was heading. The expenditure lines across the board would have precluded the money from being available to fund Stronger Together. It is precisely because this Government has had the fortitude to find savings in the budget to make structural readjustments that we can invest in something as important as Stronger Together. It is not that we are not bleeding hearts and only pointy-heads but rather that to do good things in the community you have to be disciplined in the way you run your budget. We have been disciplined and we have found savings.

Much has been said about the wages policy that this Government has adopted. It was founded, as we all know, on the wages policy that the previous Government enunciated but would not deliver. The wages policy

we have put in place means we are exercising discipline with our expenditure. Our recurrent expenditure will no longer race ahead of our income. Therefore, we are in a position to reposition our priorities and put money into those things we said we were going to do, and which we will do. We certainly were right to end the rot of the unattached list to find savings, and not continue to pay people year in, year out who had no position in the public service. The community was outraged at that continuing scandal and, rightly, it has now finished.

The voluntary redundancies contained in this budget, unpalatable as they are to the shadow Minister for middle management, are essential to get this State's finances in order so that resources can be provided where they are needed. They are voluntary redundancies; nobody is being sacked, despite the rhetoric we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition and other members. Those voluntary redundancies will occur over time and there will be natural attrition in various areas as well, but nobody is being thrown on the scrapheap if they have useful work to do. If their program is meeting community needs and they have a role to play in the public service they will continue to be employed.

It is a point of pride with this Government that we are increasing front-line positions in service areas. We said all along that we were not about reducing services; rather we are about refocusing on front-line services and delivering better services for the community. It is because we have been able to find those savings and have had the fortitude to make them that we are able to direct energy into better services. The other area of financing we have found is in the utilisation of assets such as the desalination plant at Port Botany where we will be able to free up resources to put into areas where we need to invest.

Because we have done those things there is a long list of positives in this budget that the community needs to hear about and will be very pleased to hear about. In this term of Parliament we will employ 900 more teachers to provide better services to kids in schools so that they have a better future. There will be 2,475 new nurses. That is a magnificent improvement. Because we have had the fortitude to redirect resources we can now start to provide the nurses that the community has been saying it needs. There will be 550 additional police over the next four years. These are front-line services that would not have been possible had we continued the budget trajectory of the former Labor Government.

We are delivering 662 extra hospital beds and purchasing 261 new buses, including 64 additional to the fleet, to provide services in new and developing areas such as in my electorate of Riverstone where people at Stanhope Gardens, Kellyville Ridge and The Ponds are desperate for more bus services. I am pleased we will be able to deliver them. Some \$102 million will be spent on more express train services and \$131 million on better police stations, including \$5 million in this budget for a new police station at Riverstone. These things are all possible because of the fortitude and determination of this Government to get its budget house in order.

I have already spoken about the \$2.8 billion for disability services that we are investing over the four-year term, including Stronger Together 2. That is money we will be able to invest because of our fiscal discipline. It would have stayed in the wish list if the former Government had remained in power. I am pleased that money is going to the twenty-first century Neighbourhood Watch eyewatch project, which is being progressed by the Minister for Police and which has taken root in my electorate with two groups up and running at Glenwood and Riverstone.

Richmond Road will benefit from upgrading during this term of Parliament. In this budget there is \$4 million for preconstruction works on the Townson Road intersection and \$500,000 to continue planning for the upgrade between Bells Creek and Grange Avenue. There is \$1.4 million to rebuild pavement on Richmond Road from Rooty Hill Road to South Creek. In the budget there is \$2 million for a very important project to replace the 130-year-old Windsor Bridge, which will deliver on a commitment after years of delay by the former Labor Government. This bridge is currently in poor condition and is regarded as unsafe by the Roads and Traffic Authority and requires replacement. It is a project that the former Labor Government continually delayed.

The refurbishment of Nirimba TAFE at Quakers Hill is a very exciting project. I had the good fortune to be out there this morning to attend its opening day before Parliament began. Students were looking at all sorts of things that were on offer for senior students if they choose to go to TAFE. The director, Foonghar Chong, is to be congratulated on the range of offerings at that TAFE. The refurbishment of that facility can only be an asset for the future of the young people of the district. There is a funding boost of over \$1 million for Blacktown Community Transport and about \$500,000 for Peppercorn Services Community Transport to enable disadvantaged people in the two council areas in my electorate to move around free of the restrictions that would otherwise tie them down. It is a wonderful thing to invest in.

New flashing lights will be installed at school zones at Glenwood High, Barnier Public School, Mary Immaculate Catholic School, Marsden Park Public School and Windsor Public School. They will also be

delivered in the first year of this new Government. There is over \$17 million to fund the upgrade of Schofields Road, construction of a railway bridge at Schofields where the road will in future go under the railway line, and planning for the extension of Schofields Road to Richmond Road.

Across western Sydney there are a number of very positive projects. I mention particularly the \$125 million commitment the Government made to upgrading Blacktown Hospital that is similar to the commitment made by the Government to Stronger Together 2. The similarity is that at the death knock the former Labor Government promised to put money into Blacktown Hospital, despite having had 16 years to do so and not having done it. It had no money in the works to deliver on that promise. It was Monopoly money; it was never going to be delivered, given the trajectory of Labor budgets in recent years. It is only because of the discipline of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government and its commitment to redirecting resources to areas of need that we will be able to deliver on the commitment to upgrade the Blacktown Hospital.

Works are being carried out in Nurranginy Reserve worth \$1.9 million. Local communities will benefit from \$345,000 to develop Bungarribee Park in Blacktown and various other works across western Sydney of that type. The biggest ticket item benefiting north-western Sydney is the commitment of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government to the North West Rail Link. This year's budget allocated \$314 million for commencement of that project. That is serious money for serious work by a Government that is serious about delivering the project. More money will be made available in future years, so we will see that project take shape and the rail line serve the people of the north west, which is what it should already have been doing, if past Labor governments are to be believed.

I commenced my speech by saying that this budget lays the foundation for meeting various needs as a result of the Government's commitment to redirecting resources. I will mention a few aspects of the budget that perhaps have not received the widespread publicity they warrant, but which are important to somebody with my interests—a former schoolteacher who is interested in serving the community in the education field. I already have mentioned the 900 additional literacy and numeracy teachers, but let me also point out that from January 2012 50 new student counsellors will be funded from an allocation of \$10.6 million over four years to meet that commitment. That funding will ensure that school students have the support they need. The issue of children at risk will be addressed by additional funding of \$2 million for the Ombudsman to conduct a review of child deaths. Lifeline will receive additional support of \$8 million over four years. The Government is also funding 3,300 students from western Sydney to attend the Western Plains Zoo to enhance their education in a way that might not otherwise have been possible for some people in our community.

The commitments I have outlined will all be made possible because this Government has the courage, the discipline, the fortitude and the foresight to redirect resources from areas in which funding perhaps has not been well spent to areas where the community is demanding that they be spent. The Government is moving resources from featherbedding, window-dressing media stunts and re-releases of projects that never happen and applying them to delivery of real services and real infrastructure for the community. By aligning income and expenses and shifting priorities to support front-line services, the budget lays the foundations of an era of responsible government that will result in delivery of long-awaited infrastructure and vital services that the people of Riverstone and New South Wales expect.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [4.43 p.m.]: The 2010-2011 budget delivered on 6 September presented Premier O'Farrell with an opportunity to do something very special for the Illawarra region. Instead, it was a case of a fresh new Government showing contempt for the people of New South Wales and, in particular, the people of my electorate who are screaming out for desperately needed funding and investment. The budget provided few sweeteners for the people of my electorate. The budget was an opportunity to deliver jobs and job-creating programs to boost certainty and confidence in our economy.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Monaro and the member for Orange will have an opportunity to take part in the debate shortly. The member for Shellharbour will be heard in silence.

Ms ANNA WATSON: In an economic climate in which the Illawarra faces unprecedented job cuts and a manufacturing downturn, the O'Farrell Government failed to deliver in the Illawarra region, which encompasses Shellharbour, Kiama, Heathcote and Wollongong. The Premier trashed his own credibility by plunging New South Wales into a \$1 billion deficit after hypocritically having asserted the existence of a fictional budget black hole during his election campaign. We all know it is fictional. Premier Barry O'Farrell famously claimed that the previous Government left a "black hole" in the New South Wales budget but his

statement contradicts Treasury's own figures, which showed a \$2 billion surplus as at May 2011. While the previous Government successfully weathered the global financial crisis, Barry O'Farrell and his Government managed to engineer a \$3 billion plummet in the budget position from May 2011 to June 2011.

The O'Farrell Government's first budget will hurt the most vulnerable people in our community who include pensioners, carers and young families. For example, first homebuyers will miss out on the opportunity to enter the property market as a result of this Government's abolition of stamp duty concessions that are worth tens of thousands of dollars to young families, particularly young families in the Illawarra region. Approximately 70,000 pensioners will suffer an increase of almost \$10 per week in their public housing rents, with Barry O'Farrell unashamedly taking one-third of their hard-won pension increase. Government members should hang their heads in shame. This is a disgraceful budget. Families are being set up to struggle as a result of a further \$12 increase in electricity on top of the O'Farrell Government's decision to increase electricity prices by 18 per cent on 1 July 2011.

Mr Jai Rowell: You guys cannot talk about electricity prices.

Ms ANNA WATSON: The Coalition is now in government and is now responsible for electricity prices in New South Wales. Labor is no longer in government. Government members should own this and take some responsibility.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Shellharbour will direct her comments through the chair and not across the table.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Thank you, Mr Deputy-Speaker. Increased electricity prices should be coupled with the Government slugging households with an increase in water prices as a result of the privatisation of Sydney's desalination plant. Foster carers' allowances will be cut by more than \$212 a fortnight when a child turns 16. New carers who adopt children and young people in out-of-home care also will have their allowances reduced. Further budget cuts have been identified in key agencies, including Family and Community Services and in Education. In true Liberal form, the Government's answer to repairing the State's finances is to destroy the livelihood of the average New South Wales household. This budget is nothing more than a kick in the guts for ordinary people who are living ordinary lives while trying to make ends meet.

After five minutes in Parliament, the O'Farrell Government took a swipe at public sector workers by capping wage rises at 2.5 per cent each year for four years. Now the Government has unveiled what it refers to as a cost-cutting plan, with public sector workers again firmly fixed in its sights. The Government has revealed a plot to slash approximately 5,000 jobs. How does the Government intend repaying New South Wales voters for their show of confidence? By stripping back their wages and conditions, denying them negotiating powers, and robbing them of access to an independent arbiter of the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission. The O'Farrell Government seems intent on making job security a thing of the past.

I draw members' attention to consistent increases in government expenditure and investment by the former Labor Government in all key areas across the Shellharbour electorate. The 2009-10 budget handed down by the former Labor Government was an example of sound financial management with a strong balance sheet. It meant we could continue to spend on the provision of vital services in our communities. Labor met its commitment to improving and expanding public services that families rely on. The former Labor Government's record spending and investment in the Shellharbour electorate was aimed at creating and sustaining local jobs and improving the economic strength of the local area. We promised, and we delivered.

I will provide some examples of investment in the Shellharbour electorate when Labor was in government—just in the last four years. These include major infrastructure investments, such as a \$26.5million interest-free loan to the Wollongong City Council to alleviate traffic concerns in west Dapto, which is a project under construction and a Labor Government initiative. Under Labor the \$130 million four-lane upgrade of the Princes Highway between Oak Flats and Dunmore has opened; the \$17 million police station at Oak Flats is complete; \$6.8 million of rail maintenance and capital works are underway; the \$1.4 million upgrade of the F6 freeway between Yallah and Kembbla Grange is complete; the Tallawarra Power Station is open; and a \$10 million upgrade to TransGrid's Dapto substation is underway.

Mr Stuart Ayres: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I have examined the budget papers closely and none of the items to which the member is referring is identified in the budget paper.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! That is not a point of order. I ask the member for Shellharbour to return to the leave of the take-note debate.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I am referring to major infrastructure that the previous Labor Government provided for the Shellharbour electorate and relating those examples to this Government's budget, which has delivered nothing for the people of the Illawarra. I am making a clear comparison between the Labor Government's budget and the current budget. The previous Labor Government opened a \$6.9 million, 20-bed non-acute care mental health facility; opened the \$3.2 million child and adolescent mental health day unit; opened the Family Care Centre at Shellharbour Hospital; expanded the midwifery clinic at Shellharbour Hospital in a renovated facility; and commenced the Home Birthing Service, which delivered its first baby.

In addition, six new clinical support officers commenced employment at Shellharbour Hospital. The previous Labor Government provided funding for four full-time equivalent midwives based at Shellharbour Hospital and two junior medical officers. Doctor numbers have increased at Shellharbour Hospital from 83 in 2007 to 95 in 2010. Labor provided funds for the construction of the six-bed child and adolescent mental health inpatient unit at Shellharbour Hospital, as well as funding to construct the new renal dialysis unit, thereby doubling the number of chairs from six to 12. Both projects are due to commence.

Mr Richard Amery: Have they said we did nothing?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Shellharbour does not need any help from the member for Mount Druitt.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I could continue at length to relate what the previous Labor Government provided for the health sector, but I shall now refer to what it provided for education and compare that to what Government members have failed to deliver. Labor gave a commitment to keep Warilla North Public School open with an investment of \$4.5 million in remediation. Labor opened the Trade School at Shellharbour TAFE providing access to pre-apprenticeships and traineeships in health and mechanics to local high school students—12 students have completed their mechanical pre-apprenticeship course—and provided for 40 new children's services training places from 2011 at Shellharbour TAFE. The Labor Government provided funding for and completed construction of science laboratories at Lake Illawarra, Warilla, Oak Flats and Kanahooka high schools; provided \$3 million for capital works that are well underway at Oak Flats High School; and opened the Jayde Hickman Butterfly Garden at Oak Flats High School.

As well, Building the Education Revolution works are underway at all primary schools; a school fence was completed at Mount Warrigal Primary and one was committed for Shellharbour Public School. I now compare the good work for police by the previous Labor Government to what the current Government calls a budget but which really is a nightmare. The O'Farrell Government has delivered nothing for the people of the Illawarra, and particularly nothing for the people of Shellharbour. Labor provided \$17 million for the Lake Illawarra police station, which is under construction. Labor increased the authorised police strength by 59 to 228, which represents an increase from 169 under the former Coalition Government, with 20 systems applications and product [SAP] positions being allocated in 2007.

Four domestic violence liaison police officers were employed at the Lake Illawarra Local Area Command and a pilot project was funded and commenced for two domestic violence community case workers, together with the provision of 10 domestic violence evidence kits. Two domestic violence community support workers were based at the Lake Illawarra Local Area Command and the second New South Wales mobile police van was delivered to that command. A random drug test van was delivered to the southern region. Crime has fallen and remained stable in all 17 major crime categories in the Shellharbour area. The Labor Government gave a clear commitment to increasing police numbers in addition to purchasing two trail bikes, which have been delivered.

The previous Labor Government provided support to families and the community with the construction of four independent living villas for people with a disability in Barrack Heights. Labor opened a group home at Conway Crescent and a Teen Time respite and vacation care program at Peterborough for teenagers with a disability—something that the O'Farrell Government failed to address. The Labor Government approved two autism classes for Dapto High School and funding for two computers. The autism classes at Dapto High School have proven quite successful, with a number of children from my electorate attending. Under Labor, new offices and services at Cram House were opened in Shellharbour, and construction was completed on 14 social housing homes in Warilla—a record construction of social housing from both State and Federal funding. Labor provided record spending on maintaining public housing properties, all of which is underway.

The Lake Illawarra Police and Community Youth Club was allocated \$140,000 for a commercial kitchen; Southern Youth and Family Services was allocated \$100,000 to purchase a property to run a youth outreach program in Shellharbour; \$400,000 was allocated to local community groups through the Community Building Partnership program, with a second allocation round now underway; and \$350,000 was allocated to the Shellharbour Surf Club to complete extensions. Much more for the environment was provided by the previous Labor Government, with the Lake Entrance works now complete and \$850,000 being allocated to the Coastline Cycleway connecting Reddall Reserve to Shellharbour village.

[*Interruption*]

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Hansard is having difficulty hearing the member, as am I.

Ms ANNA WATSON: A shark net was installed at the entrance to Reddall Reserve swimming lagoon. A block of lake-frontage Department of Housing land has been handed over to the Lake Illawarra Authority to be used as green space and a shared path. Labor allocated \$100,000 for improvements to boat ramps and the installation of jetties at Yallah Bay, Oak Flats Ski Club and Reddall Reserve, and \$242,000 to Barrack Point cycleway, taking the total contribution of the New South Wales State Labor Government to \$848,000 just for the environment. In respect to transport, the Labor Government abolished the \$10 CountryLink booking fee for pensioners. Pensioners can now use the regular economy class CountryLink service free of charge up to four times a year. Labor introduced the MyZone ticketing system, which reduced the weekly ticket from Dapto to Central to \$56, but that will not be maintained under the current Government.

The Labor Government upgraded Dapto railway station and extended the \$1 fare deal for children travelling with adults to a year-round offer. This was a great win for country communities. Labor also implemented an extra 41 weekday services on west Dapto bus route 31, and 366 OSCar train services now operate on the Illawarra line with on-time running at 96.9 per cent. We stand by Labor's record—a record that speaks for itself. I seriously doubt that the O'Farrell Government's budget speaks for itself. Make no mistake: Commuters in Coalition electorates will hear all of this. Government members will have to face those commuters.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [4.57 p.m.]: At the outset I thank the member for Shellharbour for that wonderfully bizarre journey into the twilight zone—more great memories from yesterday's heroes. I congratulate the Treasurer on a great State budget for the Orange electorate. Members will agree that the Treasurer really does have the ball on a string at the moment. The member for Wollondilly and the member for Monaro liked the budget. We all liked the budget. Of course, in the lead-up to this budget the Orange electorate was subjected to the big scare campaign that 25 per cent of jobs would be lost from the Department of Primary Industries. For the benefit of members who are unaware of the relocation, the Department of Primary Industries headquarters are based at Orange. Mr Whan from the upper House was on the airwaves and in print media saying that the Department of Primary Industries would suffer 25 per cent in job losses.

Mr John Barilaro: Who was this?

Mr ANDREW GEE: The member for Monaro asks who it was. It was another yesterday's hero—the vanquished Mr Whan, who was punted out of the Monaro electorate.

Mr Stuart Ayres: Where is he now?

Mr ANDREW GEE: He got dropped back into the upper House when Tony Kelly departed. Mr Whan really is the gift to New South Wales that keeps on giving. I will simply state that Labor members were out there in the Orange electorate working hard and over egging the omelette. We had the unionists out there, the master chefs were at work, Mr Whan was out there, and they were egging up the omelette a treat. But we all know what happens when an omelette is over egged.

Mr John Barilaro: What happens?

Mr ANDREW GEE: The omelette can explode. People can get egg on their faces and end up needing one of these—an egg lifter—to get rid of that egg.

Mr Jai Rowell: To scrape the egg off.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Yes, to scrape the egg off. The egg lifter has had a lot of airplay, thanks to yesterday's hero, Mr Whan. Mr Whan's campaign really hit high gear when he came to Orange. The member for Wollondilly will remember that because it was certainly a point of interest to him. "Second Chance" Steve came out and announced that there would be a public service rally outside the Department of Primary Industries office. All the workers from Department of Primary Industries offices near and far were going to assemble and protest about 25 per cent cuts in the department.

Mr Jai Rowell: How many got the sack?

Mr ANDREW GEE: That is the funny thing. Would you like to hear what happened on the rally day?

Mr Jai Rowell: Tell us what happened.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Informed sources told me that they turned up at the Department of Primary Industries at midday and one of the union representatives ran in to the Department of Primary Industries office and announced, "Hey, Steve's out there. Come on out and protest. He's going to save our jobs. Everyone gather around." Guess what happened? The member for Monaro knows what happened. Some of the Department of Primary Industries workers kicked the carpet and I heard that one said, "Oh, look, I'd like to come out, Steve, but I've got to count the pens in my pen drawer". One of the other hapless Department of Primary Industries workers said, "I'd like to come out to support Steve, but I have to wash my computer." Another said "I have to go and audit the paper clips. I'm sorry, I'd love to." Do you know how many they got out there to greet Steve on that sunny day?

Mr Jai Rowell: How many?

Mr ANDREW GEE: Half a dozen. Six of them came out. Why did Steve only get six? It was because they knew about "Second Chance" Steve. They knew he had form. Since 2005, 300 jobs had disappeared.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: I have been very patient with references to the member in the other place by anything other than his title.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Clayton Barr: I cannot cite the standing order, but I know it is just bad.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr Clayton Barr: I will find it.

Mr ANDREW GEE: I thank the member for Cessnock for that interjection. Even though he probably does not know it, the people in the Cessnock electorate supported our campaign and we know we have the support of the Cessnock Goannas. But I digress. Six people turned up for the rally and they had six only out there because since 2005 Labor had axed 300 Department of Primary Industries jobs.

Mr Jai Rowell: How many?

Mr ANDREW GEE: Three hundred jobs.

Mr Jai Rowell: That is outrageous.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Oh, yes. Labor had been sending a wrecking ball through that department for the past decade.

Mr Jai Rowell: They don't care.

Mr ANDREW GEE: As the member for Wollondilly rightly points out, they do not care. All those officers of the Department of Primary Industries knew that the former member for Monaro had form, so they were not going to rush out in hoards to support him. But it gets better than that. They had the rally, six people turned up and guess what happened. As quickly as it came, the carnival left town and no-one was on the landing outside the Department of Primary Industries office, except the union representative. We felt sorry for him

because "Second Chance" had cleared out, the six protesters had gone, and the media had all gone. We went up to the union representative and said, "Look, you seem a little lonely. What are you up to?" They had been planning to hand out at this rally thousands of counterfeit \$50 bills—which is a whole other story.

Mr John Barilaro: He did not do it with a credit card?

Mr ANDREW GEE: No, it was not the credit card from the Central Coast, but it was on that scale. They had thousands of counterfeit \$50 notes printed, but only six people turned up to receive a counterfeit \$50.

Mr Jai Rowell: That is only \$300.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Exactly—\$300 in bodgie \$50 bills. That was all that was handed out on that fateful day. It was amusing. It was appropriate for Labor to be printing counterfeit \$50 notes because, after all, the boys in Sussex Street had been offering counterfeit promises to the New South Wales electorates for years. It was only right and proper that they had the printing machines cranked up on that fateful day. So we hit up the union representative who seemed like a nice enough bloke. He was lonely, he did not have any friends there, so we befriended him and said, "Come on, pony up a couple of \$50s". We got one, and I now show members one of the bogus \$50 bills.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 76. Counterfeit money really has nothing to do with a discussion of the budget.

Mr Jai Rowell: Budget means money.

Mr Clayton Barr: Government members are talking about union counterfeit dollars when we are debating the Coalition's budget.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I accept the point of order. The member will come back to the matter at hand.

Mr ANDREW GEE: I will, Mr Acting-Speaker. The counterfeit \$50 note is relevant. I will read from it to demonstrate its relevance. The \$50 note very disrespectfully displays a portrait of Leader of The Nationals—they were getting ready to put the slipper into everyone—and ascribes the image to the Leader of The Nationals. The note states:

Before the election The Nationals said that they would lift the profile of the DPI. Now in Government they are standing by as the North Shore Liberals slash up to 25 per cent of DPI jobs across country New South Wales.

The counterfeit \$50 is authorised by the union. I point out to members that the counterfeit \$50 bills now stand as a monument to Labor's failures over the years. By distributing those counterfeit \$50 notes, all Labor has done is highlight that they have been sending a wrecking ball through the Department of Primary Industries for the past decade. I will circulate this to Government members now so they can see firsthand Labor's duplicity on public sector cuts.

Mr John Barilaro: That is the leader on there.

Mr ANDREW GEE: It is very disrespectful, but typically Labor—at the end of the day, it came to nothing. The Coalition was very pleased with that. So much for "Second Chance" Steve and what happened on the big protest day. The irony is that no-one seems to be able to sack Mr Whan, as the current member for Monaro well knows. The voters of Monaro punted Steve Whan out of his seat on 26 March, but he keeps coming back. We cannot get rid of him.

Mr Jai Rowell: And he keeps his superannuation pension.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Let us not go there. That is a whole other story, and so much for yesterday's hero. I draw to the attention of the member for Cessnock that the counterfeit \$50 bills serve to highlight and emphasise only one thing: That in this budget, the Coalition Government allocated \$1.1 billion for the Department of Primary Industries across New South Wales.

Mr John Barilaro: How much?

Mr ANDREW GEE: That is right, \$1.1 billion, which is an outstanding and shining commitment from this Government. I notice the member for Hornsby is nodding in agreement. He loved that allocation because he loves the Department of Primary Industries.

Mr John Barilaro: We are defenders of the Department of Primary Industries.

Mr ANDREW GEE: We are defenders of the Department of Primary Industries.

Mr Matt Kean: I am very excited.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The member for Hornsby is very excited and the member for Wollondilly can hardly contain himself. The member for Swansea is very excited too.

Mr Jai Rowell: He has another grey hair.

Mr ANDREW GEE: No. Members should not accuse the member for Swansea of living in the seventies because he is on board with this. He loves the Department of Primary Industries and he supports country New South Wales. The point of all I have said is that this year's Coalition budget is the first time in a decade that the Department of Primary Industries budget has not been slashed. The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals are the ones that stand up for agriculture in this State. We stand up for agricultural research and for regional communities. The member for Wollondilly is nodding in agreement.

I have recounted the wild and heady days in the lead-up to the budget. I intended to present this counterfeit \$50 note to Mr Whan. I also intended to present this egg lifter to him. I did sneak up behind him when he was giving a press conference and he would have accepted it, but we are getting much more value from the egg lifter, which is also a gift that just keeps on giving. I present the egg lifter to the member for Monaro because very soon he might be able to pass it on to someone we know. Speaking of gifts that keep on giving, recently there was another Labor gift that keeps on giving in the Orange electorate. I refer to the duty member of the Legislative Council for Orange, Ms Fazio.

Mr Jai Rowell: Did she turn up to Orange?

Mr ANDREW GEE: She has been there once, not to Orange but Mudgee. I will tell the member for Wollondilly about it.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind the member for Orange of Standing Order 73, which states:

Imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on Members of either House are disorderly other than by substantive motion.

Mr ANDREW GEE: I take that on board. I will recap what happened at Mudgee last week. The duty member from the Legislative Council was in the Orange electorate—in particular, Mudgee and Gulgong—spruiking about health matters. The people of Mudgee and Gulgong would not take advice on health issues from a Labor member. That would be like taking personal grooming tips from Shane Warne. No-one would do that, or would be very careful about doing so. The residents of Mudgee and Gulgong remember the duty member from the Legislative Council because she was the one who turned up when Gulgong Hospital was closed. The member for Monaro remembers those dark days—we all remember them. Again, it was another failed attack out in the bush from one of yesterday's heroes. In the budget this Government has allocated \$5 million for the Gulgong multipurpose service. Many members will remember the October day last year when Labor closed Gulgong Hospital.

It was a great moment when we saw \$5 million in the budget for Gulgong—\$4 million in this financial year and a further \$1 million later. I congratulate the Federal member for Parkes, Mark Coulton, and the Minister for Health on their fine work. I give credit where it is due and also give a shout out to the Federal Health Minister for providing funding for aged care beds. I congratulate all those members. I also give full credit to the Treasurer. He and the Minister for Health saw a need and answered the call, and we are delivering on a key election commitment. Not only Gulgong Hospital benefited from the budget, but \$400,000 has been allocated in the budget for a further upgrade at Gulgong High School.

Mr Jai Rowell: The people of Orange are very happy.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The people of Orange are very happy. Time is getting away, so I will talk about roads. The member for Swansea is very interested in roads in regional New South Wales.

Mr Charles Casuscelli: I am interested in roads.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The member for Strathfield is interested in roads, even though many people walk in Strathfield—and they walk very quickly, as the member said in his inaugural speech. The member for Swansea will be pleased to know that the Orange electorate has received a boost of more than 30 per cent in road funding. That is an outstanding achievement. I look across the Chamber and I believe even the member for Keira knows in his heart of hearts that this is a good budget. He is very excited about it. He knows how important this budget is for the people of the Central West. Regional New South Wales is back on the agenda under the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government. We are standing up for the people of regional New South Wales. I congratulate the Treasurer and the Government on this fine budget.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [5.12 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the Appropriation Bill 2011, which appropriates various sums of money from the Consolidated Fund for the 2011-12 financial year for recurrent services and capital works and services. The New South Wales Government is expected to receive \$59 billion in revenue this coming year. It is a relief that this State finally has a Liberal-Nationals Government at the helm to manage this level of expenditure. It was the mismanagement, wasteful spending, heavy taxes and red tape imposed by the former Labor Government that saw New South Wales stagnate and lose investment. New South Wales businesses struggled and many closed, and people struggled to buy a home.

A historically resounding election victory was handed to the Liberal Party and The Nationals on 26 March 2011 by the good people of New South Wales. I believe this historic election victory was delivered to us for two reasons. First, during our election campaign we acknowledged the current state of New South Wales. We acknowledged the heavy shackles, the level of red tape, the mismanagement and the lost opportunities. We saw it, we recognised it, we acknowledged it. Secondly, we countered that difficult situation with a believable, practical and workable plan to fix the problems, address the red tape, release the shackles on our economy and bring proper management back to this State. We want to see New South Wales soar once again to be the number one State in Australia.

Although previous speakers have referred to our five-point plan, I also want to put it on record. Our five point plan is: one, rebuilding our economy; two, returning quality services; three, renovating infrastructure; four, restoring accountability; and, five, protecting our local environment and communities. The number one goal for the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is to grow the economy. It is crucial that the economy builds at a fast and furious rate to make New South Wales the number one State again. From a growing economy flow increases in revenue to the State, which has a direct influence on additional works, services and facilities that we can provide to support New South Wales. In the housing boom of the 1990s and early this decade record revenue flowed into the then Labor Government's coffers.

What did we see from that record revenue? When I have been doorknocking and at street stalls, both before and after the election, people have asked me: Where has all the money gone? They know that record revenue came into the State Government's coffers but nothing was seen to be done with it. People ask me where all the money has gone because nothing has changed in their electorates over the years. The M4 freeway is still congested. Nothing changed over the years. The congestion on our trains is worse because the former Labor Government cut rail services. The stress levels of our overworked nurses have worsened because the former Labor Government cut nursing positions.

In contrast, I am pleased that the O'Farrell Government has commenced an audit of New South Wales finances, expenditure and management to examine the situation and make recommendations for positive changes. The O'Farrell Liberal-Nationals Government will apply strong fiscal discipline to our budget. If and when surplus moneys are received by our Government—and I believe they will come—they will be allocated to Restart NSW. They will be set aside for funding the critical infrastructure projects that are needed to further boost and increase our economy. Just as families and individuals must live within their means, so too must their governments. Responsible fiscal management is crucial to ensure that our economy and our State grow and flourish.

The spending spree for nil tangible results and the budget abandonment displayed by the former Labor Government ceased on 26 March 2011. I want to highlight key initiatives in the budget and speak about their implications for the Mulgoa electorate and their impact on the people of Mulgoa. It is good news for transport

and roads, which are critical to my electorate. About 63 per cent of the people in the Penrith local government area leave the region to travel to work. So roads and rail infrastructure are critical issues. Some \$6.3 billion has been allocated for transport infrastructure in the coming year. That is an increase of 9.5 per cent on last year's Labor Government budget. We are spending more on transport and roads.

We have delivered a record Health budget of \$17.3 billion, which is a 50 per cent increase in spending on health capital works over the next four years compared with actual expenditure over the past four years. We are spending more on health than the former Labor Government spent. There is an increase in the Education budget of \$1 billion compared with last year. Those opposite wax lyrical about how they are a party for the workers, a party for the nurses, a party for the teachers and a party for our emergency service workers. But this budget demonstrates that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition is the party for the workers—the nurses, the teachers and the emergency service workers—because we are delivering more in the budget to those critical sectors.

Mr Ryan Park: I don't think that's what 40,000-odd said out there.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: Forty thousand? The Opposition claims that there were 40,000 people at the rally; clearly, those opposite still cannot count. Our Government is delivering the biggest infrastructure commitment in the State's history—\$62.5 billion, which is 12.4 per cent more than the former Government spent in the past four years. In Disability Services we are delivering nearly \$2 billion, which is the most significant investment in the nation's history. I see the fantastic work done by the workers and volunteers of the Nepean Area Disabilities Organisation at St Marys and I am aware of their dedication and strong commitment not only to people with a disability but to their families and carers. So this investment in disability services is indeed welcome news to the disability sector. We will see an increase of 47,000 new places in the disability sector over five years. This side of the House is fervently targeting an increase in jobs and employment for the people of New South Wales with an extra 100,000 new jobs provided through our Jobs Action Plan.

The Government has promised that it will deliver increased express services on the western Sydney rail line. With thousands of people from the Mulgoa and Penrith areas using trains and the M4 freeway, increased express services on the Western Sydney train line are absolutely essential. It is good news to report that we are already delivering cost savings to the people of Mulgoa by offering reduced train fares for monthly, quarterly and annual tickets. One of the highest uptakes of that offer occurred at the train station at St Marys. Clearly the people of Mulgoa have acted quickly to take up the offer to save money, and it is a Liberal-Nationals Government that is putting money back into their pockets.

Another issue that has been raised with me by families in St Clair and Glenmore Park is the inadequacy of bus services through those suburbs, particularly the lack of services late at night. The last bus to Glenmore Park leaves Penrith train station at 7.01 p.m. Clearly, with so many thousands of people travelling from western Sydney to the city for work, more frequent bus services are needed into the night to enable people who work late, shift workers and students who are studying at universities and TAFE colleges to get home safely using the bus network. Transport for NSW will be looking very much at the integration of train and bus network timetables. I am pleased to say that the focus for Transport for NSW will be customer service.

In relation to the Health budget, Nepean Hospital will get additional nurses. Nepean Hospital is located in the Penrith electorate but it is the main hospital for people in my electorate of Mulgoa. Through lots of doorknocking and meeting nurses, doctors and allied health professionals, and from the personal experience of taking my daughter to the emergency department at the hospital when she had asthma attacks, I became aware of their concerns. I spoke to lots of nurses and doctors. When they found out that I was a candidate for the Liberal Party in the upcoming election they pleaded with me, albeit under their breath, "Please win the election. We have to change the government. We cannot continue going the way we are with the number of nurses being slashed."

The O'Farrell Government is delivering more support to our front-line services. By abolishing the cluster management framework that existed in the health system under the former Government we are delivering \$80 million extra to front-line services. Delivering more nurses to improve patient care will enable the working conditions of existing nurses to improve. I am pleased to see that we are allocating \$15 million to provide 11,750 more enrolments in the Connecting Care program to strengthen out-of-home care. Prevention of ill health and long-term chronic illness is critical because it is far more costly to treat and try to cure illnesses.

Moving to the Education budget, I was pleased today to host a number of senior school captains from schools within my electorate, representing Colyton Trade High School, Wollemi College, St Clair High School,

Penrith Anglican College and Glenmore Park High School, for the inaugural Mulgoa Senior Schools Leadership Forum. The Minister for Education, the Minister for Transport and the Hon. Matthew Mason-Cox, MLC, attended the forum and discussed leadership issues with the students and shared their personal stories. The feedback from those students was very positive and moving. I am pleased to say that the O'Farrell Government is delivering \$261 million over four years for the Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan. I firmly believe we must help our youngsters.

We need to help our young children learn the basics of language and literacy and to identify problems before they begin their schooling years. When children reach years 2 or 3 it is often too late to identify learning problems. It is critical to identify potential learning problems earlier in life. I also commend the O'Farrell Government for its focus on ensuring that as many children as possible attend preschool in the year before they begin their formal schooling. The statistics are woeful of children attending preschool in New South Wales compared with every other State in Australia, with New South Wales having one of the lowest preschool attendance rates in Australia. We have allocated \$2.2 billion to vocational education and training.

As a former TAFE trainer at the Western Sydney Institute of TAFE, Penrith campus, for approximately eight years, I believe strongly in the TAFE and registered training organisations sectors and their contribution to the education of not only young people but adults who are undertaking courses in order to change their careers. We have made an investment of \$2 billion in disability services, which is the most significant in the history of Australia. A number of members of my family have a disability and I see firsthand, day to day, the additional challenges that these family units face. I am pleased to be a member of a government that has a strong focus on and commitment to supporting the disability and ageing sectors of our community. *[Extension of time agreed to.]*

I want to focus on a couple of other areas that impact Mulgoa in relation to protecting our local environment and supporting our communities. It was an absolute joy during the election campaign to see the Liberal Party and The Nationals work with ClubsNSW and sign a memorandum of understanding last year. In government we have delivered on that memorandum of understanding. We will see a reduction in the rate of tax that clubs pay to the State Government, which will instantly release more revenue and provide more financial support for local communities.

There are a number of clubs in the Mulgoa electorate, and I have had the privilege of meeting their chief executive officers and presidents. They were eager for the State election to arrive because they knew that the Liberal Party and The Nationals would win the election and the clubs would receive a direct increase in the amount of money they can put into their local communities. St Marys Rugby Leagues Club has just celebrated the first anniversary of a brilliant facility for the local community called Go Bananas, which is the biggest indoor climbing gym and activity centre in the Southern Hemisphere. This club, in the western suburbs of Sydney, has invested more than \$1 million in building this facility to support the local community and local families. This side of the House, with our commitment to work with ClubsNSW and the clubs industries, will deliver even more money back to local communities.

I am also thrilled that the Premier has announced that the Community Building Partnership program will continue this year. That will see an additional \$300,000 invested in the Mulgoa electorate. In my role as a Penrith city councillor and member of Parliament I meet a lot of presidents of sporting clubs and members of community groups. A small amount of money goes a long way for these sporting and community groups. The Colyton and St Claire Little Athletics Centre only want a couple of thousand dollars to fix their long-jump pit. They want to see fences built around that park so they can prevent damage caused by vehicles. The St Marys BMX Club is looking forward to raising money for a proper canteen, rather than having those services delivered out of a shipping container. Glenmore Park Soccer Club wants to see changes to its sports field to prevent flooding and to install extra seating.

I could talk for many hours about the wonderful work that this side of the House will finally deliver for our community. This Government is focused on the people. This Government is accountable to the people—something that those opposite refuse to even consider. They hate the word "accountability". It touches a sensitive nerve to remind those opposite of their failures and how they mismanaged the State's finances. They cannot stand accountability. But this side of the House is committed to being accountable to the people of New South Wales. We have enacted legislation to allow political donations to be made only by individuals. Those opposite have been very silent about that. It almost sounds their death knell because their affiliated union mates will no longer be able to fund their election campaigns.

We have introduced legislation to ban success fees by lobbyists and to strengthen whistleblower protections and the power of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. We have also introduced legislation to eliminate the taxpayer-funded political advertising that was used so appallingly by the former Labor Government prior to every election to try to sell to the electors how good a job it was doing. What a waste of good taxpayers' money. It is wonderful that New South Wales finally has a government that will be responsible and accountable with its finances and that has the vision, direction and determination to deliver its plan. I say to the people of Mulgoa: Look out, more is coming.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [5.32 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak on the Appropriations Bill 2011 and related papers. I congratulate Treasurer Mike Baird on his budget. While we all acknowledge it is a tough budget, it is tough because the Liberal-Nationals Government takes governing seriously. It makes wise and fiscally responsible decisions. It is tough because under the previous Government spending was rising faster than revenue. It is tough because we need to control spending to keep our triple-A credit rating. It is tough because the world's economy is far from certain, which will be compounded if the carbon tax legislation passes through Federal Parliament. The carbon tax will be detrimental to businesses and individuals in New South Wales. Constituents are concerned about the cost of living and the carbon tax will be another nail in the coffins of businesses and residents.

Again, I congratulate the Treasurer on his budget. It is a budget that strikes a balance between front-line services—delivering more police, nurses, service staff and a record amount of infrastructure spending—and fiscal responsibility. This Government is different from the failed Labor Government because, like any household, we understand the need to curtail expenses to fit the revenue that comes in. The budget is fiscally responsible because it makes the tough decisions that must be taken to make New South Wales number one again. This budget is investing in the right things, such as the economy and targeted programs. I will speak more about that shortly.

Road users, healthcare consumers and people with disabilities are the main local beneficiaries of the first budget delivered by the O'Farrell Government. This budget is about repairing the economic damage left by Labor, enhancing service delivery and building the infrastructure needed in Parramatta and across western Sydney. I note that the budget offers members from rural areas some fantastic opportunities after 16 years of neglect by the Labor Government. We have seen examples overseas where governments that have lost control of their budgets have been forced to borrow excessively. The Liberal-Nationals Government is determined to rein in expenditure to ensure it can keep on delivering the services on which the people of Parramatta rely. Without that fiscal control we would expose the State to the threat of losing its triple A-credit rating.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals first budget delivers on our commitments and starts the process of rebuilding the State. The budget delivers 900 more teachers, 2,475 more nurses, 550 police officers and record infrastructure investment to address the building backlog left by Labor. Spending on hospitals and health capital works over the next four years is \$4.7 billion, which is 50 per cent higher than that over the past four years. That proves again that the Liberal-Nationals Government is performing well and looking after the people of New South Wales.

The three biggest issues for the people of the Parramatta electorate are: crime, getting more police resources; health, getting more resources for doctors and nurses; and the economy, easing cost of living pressures. This budget responds to those concerns. An amount of \$19 million has been allocated to improve administrative systems and upgrade Parramatta police station. The Parramatta electorate contains the Rosehill and Parramatta local area commands. The Parramatta command is led by the very competent Superintendent Peter Marcon and Superintendent Robert Barnett is the Rosehill local area commander. The money allocated to improve the administrative systems will increase police efficiency and free resources for other tasks.

Parramatta police station in Marsden Street is the public face of policing in the area. Funding in the 2011-12 budget is part of a multi-year project to upgrade and modernise the station. I was privileged to be given a tour of the station and to see those fine, hardworking police officers who serve the second-largest legal precinct in Australia and the whole of the Parramatta area. The cells and the reception area are antiquated. The staff are crammed into small areas. There is a need for higher security and better working conditions. That is what we are committed to delivering.

The second area of concern is health. This budget, unlike those of the previous failed, incompetent Labor Government that members opposite still try to support, will provide 14 new acute care beds for Westmead Hospital. There will also be \$25 million for the Westmead Millennium Institute and a further \$20 million for the

Children's Medical Research Institute. Jillian Skinner and I recently toured Westmead Children's Hospital and saw the wonderful nurses and doctors working hard to look after the small babies in the neonatal care unit. Their dedication was inspirational. More beds for Westmead Hospital can only be a good thing. The Westmead Millennium Institute, headed by the Executive Director, Professor Tony Cunningham, is one of the largest medical research institutes in Australia.

We are supporting this vital research through a \$25 million budget allocation. The institute conducts research into a wide range of important human disorders affecting both adults and children, and that benefits people not just in my electorate but across the State and Australia and around the world. The research spans infectious and immune diseases, cancer and leukaemia, liver and metabolic diseases, eye and brain related disorders, and heart and respiratory disorders. Their "bench to bedside" approach enables greater translation of research from biomedical discoveries into practical application. I look forward to seeing their internationally recognised research being applied to the health care of the people of Parramatta and those elsewhere in New South Wales and the rest of Australia.

The Children's Medical Research Institute, under director Roger Reddel, conducts genetic research into understanding the underlying causes of disease. Research areas include embryonic developments and birth defects, cancer, nerve cell signalling, and gene therapy. The budget contribution of \$20 million will go a long way towards the institute's development. The institute is planning a much larger development costing more than \$100 million, which will enable 100 researchers and a couple of hundred staff to carry out research work at the facility. That sum of \$20 million is noteworthy because the previous incompetent Labor Government promised to give the Children's Medical Research Institute \$20 million but failed to deliver. This budget delivers on our pre-election commitment.

I refer now to the cost of living in the Parramatta electorate, which is of prime importance. The reduction in rail fares for the nearly 30 per cent of commuters who travel to work by public transport is indeed welcome. The reduction in fares for monthly, quarterly and annual tickets was particularly well received by people in the western suburbs, especially at the Parramatta, Westmead, Wentworthville and Harris Park railway stations. The cost of living is having an impact on the people of Parramatta. They are sick of governments announcing grandiose transport plans with no follow through. Instead of wasting money on failed projects such as the \$500 million Rozelle Metro, with no benefit to the public, or \$100 million on a ticketing system that has never been delivered—in fact the dispute is in court at the moment—we are getting on with the job. The Minister for Transport will deliver the Government's plans on budget, on time and to specification.

We are not wasting money. This Government is all about putting money into the pockets of the people of Parramatta. Public transport commuters should be rewarded for taking pressure off our roads during peak times. Rail fares have been reduced by up to \$150 on ticket prices from Parramatta to the city and the constituents of Parramatta have openly embraced those cost reductions. I have been referring to the highlights of the budget as they affect Parramatta, but I know members will be very excited to hear about some of the State highlights. There will be 900 more teachers, 2,475 more nurses, 550 extra police officers, \$102 million for express train services, 261 new buses, \$289 million for school maintenance and a five-year \$2 billion program for disability services. It must be noted that that is the largest funding commitment to disability services in the nation's history. I commend the Minister for Disability Services

I know members on this side of the House are intent on looking after not just the people of Parramatta and Sydney but also those in the rural areas that are especially important to a Liberal-Nationals Government. Other budget highlights for Parramatta that people will welcome include \$25 million in capital funding to the Roads and Traffic Authority for roads improvement. This includes \$6.8 million for bus lane works on Church Street between By Street and Pennant Hills Road. Work is already underway and motorists will certainly appreciate that. There is \$2 million to widen the Cumberland Highway between the Great Western Highway and the M4. We have also been fortunate to receive \$45 million for a new bus depot in the electorate. That shows the further commitment of the Liberal-Nationals Government to making public transport accessible and easy, and to improve efficiency.

There is more money for people with disabilities and I again thank Minister Andrew Constance for his commitment of \$3.4 million for new disability services infrastructure, including a new four-bed drop-in facility, a new five-bed group home and two new villas for people with high support needs. We have not left the sporting community out of the budget. We have delivered \$510,000 to improve access to Parramatta Stadium for people with disability. Those people will welcome that and it will make Parramatta Stadium the jewel in the crown of

New South Wales. I commend the venue director of Parramatta Stadium Trust, Luke Coleman, for his continued hard work to deliver a facility for the mighty Eels. The Parramatta Eels are a football team that is in the process of rebuilding and it is expected to go forward rapidly. Let us not forget the money for community services.

There is an additional \$204,000 for the Lifeline office in Parramatta, which provides a sensational service on behalf of Parramatta Mission, another excellent service. That delivers another pre-election commitment. In transport we are funding 29 new NightRide services between the city and Parramatta as well as 12 services a week on a new route between the city and Carlingford that will stop in the wonderful areas of Dundas, Telopea and Rydalmere. I am sure that people who go out for a good time at night will appreciate being able to travel home in safety and conveniently on these new NightRide bus services. Westmead Hospital will receive an additional 14 acute care beds this year, which contrasts with the former incompetent Labor Government's history of cutting hospital beds. We are delivering more beds for health care.

Some \$45 million will be spent on redevelopments in the Westmead health precinct, including \$25 million for the Westmead Millennium Institute and a \$20 million investment in the Children's Medical Research Institute. Again that was a promise made by the previous incompetent Labor Government that it did not fulfil but the Liberal-Nationals Government delivers on its commitments. The budget provides an additional \$25 million capital funding to the Roads and Traffic Authority for road improvements in Parramatta. Over the past 10 years of the incompetent Labor Government, Victoria Road and Parramatta Road were coming to grinding halts because of a lack of investment in infrastructure. Throughout the election campaign one of the biggest concerns of the electorate was the lack of infrastructure—

Mr Nathan Rees: Point of order: I draw the member's attention to the fact that the Federal Labor Government at the time had to use legislation to get Askin to build Westmead Hospital.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! That is not a point of order.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Some interjections were coming from the rabble on the other side of the House. In summing up the budget, I will review some of the comments I made earlier. Westmead Hospital is receiving an additional 14 acute care beds this year. That is in contrast to what occurred under those on the other side who closed beds in our hospital system, especially in rural and remote areas where they are needed desperately. We are also investing \$45 million in the redevelopment of the Westmead health precinct, including \$25 million for the Westmead Millennium Institute and \$20 million for the Children's Medical Research Institute. It is also interesting to note that we are delivering on that \$20 million, in contrast to the promises of the failed and incompetent Labor Government.

The budget provides an additional \$25 million in capital funding for road improvements in Parramatta. That is welcome news to those who sit in vehicles every day on Victoria Road, the M4 and Parramatta Road and who saw the congestion get worse over 16 years of incompetent government. This \$25 million includes \$2 million to widen the Cumberland Highway between the Great Western Highway and the M4 to reduce congestion. That will be welcomed by road users, not only in my electorate but in the wonderful electorate of Granville. Public transport users are also set to benefit from a \$102 million investment in more express train services, 261 new buses, and restored and expanded ferry services.

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

Dr GEOFF LEE: When one stands on railway stations as many times as I have, whether it is Parramatta, Westmead, Wentworthville or Harris Park, one sees people being jammed into trains. It is appalling what these people have been putting up with for the past 16 years. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I was commenting on the difficulties faced by train commuters due to the lack of investment and services by the previous failed Labor Government. Those commuters will certainly appreciate the new and expanded express services going right through to Parramatta. The new buses will get cars off the road and free up our road network. We are also committed to ensuring that the school maintenance backlog is brought under control with a \$289 million commitment to ensure an audit of school maintenance requirements every two years. Only last week when I was at Melrose Park Public School with the Minister for Citizenship and Communities we saw some of the shocking conditions at the primary school. The principal showed us all the repairs the school had to undertake because of underfunding in the past 10 or 15 years.

In one block the termites had stripped all the internal structural framing. The building was locked up, unable to be used, which meant that children with special needs at the school had nowhere to play when it rained

and no quiet area. It is insightful when one goes to these places and faces the principals. The Parramatta electorate has the best principals in the whole of Australia, and that is not anecdotal. Not two weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend Rosehill Public School to celebrate its 125th anniversary. The kids put on a wonderful display. There were dance performances and a drama performance. I commend Mr Wood for his great stewardship as a principal. I wish that school all the best for the next 125 years.

The budget also includes a five-year, \$2 million program for disability services, something the Labor Government was unable to do in its 16 years in office. It is the largest funding commitment to disability services in the history of the nation. I commend the Minister for Disability Services for his lobbying of the Premier and the Treasurer to get such a commitment. The additional expenditure in the Parramatta electorate includes priority bus lanes in Church Street at \$6.8 million. That is welcome news for bus commuters travelling from Castle Hill to Parramatta and for road users. Putting more buses on the road will enable us to remove some cars and relieve congestion. The North West Rail Link will remove thousands of cars off the roads.

Parramatta police head office has been given a \$19 million commitment to improve and upgrade systems. We are certainly delivering on our commitment to support the police. Parramatta has the best police service in New South Wales. Superintendent Peter Marcon, the local area commander, would attest to the fact that it is the best in the State. We have made a commitment of \$45 million in 2011-12 for a new bus stop in the Parramatta electorate. That is another commitment by the Minister for Transport: to build essential infrastructure that will deliver to the people of western suburbs reliable, convenient transport so that they can get to work and home in the minimum possible time, and spend more time with their families. This Government is concerned about that work-life balance. We also have money for disability services in Parramatta with another \$3.4 million for new facilities, including a new four-bedroom drop-in facility, a five-bedroom group home and two new villas for people with high-support needs. One difficulty is the limited budget for those sorts of programs.

Parramatta Stadium has had an allocation of \$510,000 to improve access for people with disabilities. This will give everyone the opportunity to see the mighty Eels play next year. This year the team is rebuilding, and next year it will have a fantastic stadium. The Eels players have promised that they will work hard in the off season. The Parramatta Lifeline office has received an additional \$204,000—its work is carried out by the sensational and committed people of Parramatta Mission. Finally, our NightRide services have received funding for 25 new services between the city and Parramatta. Commuters will appreciate a safe, reliable and convenient way to get home late at night. The Opposition may not like to hear this, but the budget is tough. It strikes a balance between improving front-line services and the commitments we made prior to the election on infrastructure and fiscal responsibility.

Pursuant to standing and sessional orders business interrupted and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

VETERINARY PRACTICE AMENDMENT (INTERSTATE VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS) BILL 2011

BUSINESS NAMES (COMMONWEALTH POWERS) BILL 2011

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

[During the giving of notices of motions]

Mr Troy Grant: Point of order: The motion is way too long. This is not the purpose of the giving of notices of motion. The member for Shellharbour should not debate the motion but rather should state the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member for Shellharbour that Private Member's Statements are a far better way in which the member could cover that issue. In reality it was more a mini-speech than a notice of motion. I suggest to all members that notices of motion actually give the notice of motion, and not contain the content of the debate that may ensue.

PERFORMING CIRCUS ANIMALS BAN

Discussion of a Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [6.15 p.m.]: I have tabled a petition calling for a ban on forcing wild animals to perform in circuses. The petition has been signed by more than 10,000 New South Wales citizens. The petition was created by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Animals Australia and Animals Asia and the ban has wider support from Voiceless, Animal Liberation, the Humane Society International, Young Lawyers Animal Law Committee, the World League for the Protection of Animals, Pals@Pilch, Sentient and the Animal Societies Federation of New South Wales.

Most people think that wild animals are no longer forced to perform in circuses because this practice is inherently cruel and archaic, but a small number of circuses in New South Wales still use monkeys, lions and, until only recently, elephants—Stardust and Lennons Bros are two such circuses. Wild animals are not meant to live, travel and perform in circuses, and circus life causes them immense psychological and physical suffering. Wild animals have natural instincts and they need to socialise and carry out natural behaviours that are impossible in a circus. Elephants live in herds and roam grasslands, travelling tens of kilometres on any day. They cry, laugh and play and grieve the loss of a family member. Lions typically live in grasslands in prides of related females with their offspring and a small number of males. They spend most of their days resting and socialising by rubbing heads against each other and grooming. They then hunt at night.

Monkeys are intelligent and live in social groups in which they help and care for each other. They spend hours taking bugs and debris out of each other's fur. Their facial expressions show love, fear, anger and sadness that create strong bonds. The life of these animals in the wild is in stark contrast to the regimental training, constant performance, confinement, and road travel in cages, which is a regular part of a circus routine. Circuses deny exotic animals the opportunity to maintain instinctive social bonds, making life sad and painful. Wild animals need a high level of stimulation and most wild animals in circuses display stereotypical behaviours that show their stress and boredom, such as repetitive pacing and swaying. In 2009 the journal *Animal Welfare* published the article *Are Wild Animals Suited to a Travelling Circus Life*, which concluded that circuses could not meet the essential animal welfare needs of exotic animal species.

The report found that circus animals spent most of their day in confinement, some time performing or training, and the rest of their time in exercise pens that were significantly smaller than minimum standards for outdoor zoo enclosures. Their social groups are artificial and cannot meet their social needs. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals states that no matter how well a circus is managed, even if all legal requirements are surpassed, circus life always will be cruel to exotic animals because it is absolutely incompatible with their physiological, social and behavioural needs. This level of cruelty has no place in modern entertainment.

Forcing wild animals to do tricks serves no educational purpose. It teaches children nothing about the life of animals in the wild. Such circuses encourage children to disrespect animals and sentient beings in general, encouraging them to believe that animals exist solely for human entertainment. Wild animals in circuses also pose a dangerous threat to staff and patrons. In 2008 Arna, the circus elephant, who had been the subject of a very famous court case where it was argued that she suffered psychologically due to her solitude, attacked and killed her handler. In 2001 a lion tamer was attacked by three lions at a Lennons circus performance in Penrith. In 2004 a toddler at Ashton's circus tragically lost his arms when he stuck them through bars of a cage containing two tigers. There are many other examples.

A number of councils have banned circuses that use wild animals on their land, including Parramatta, Lismore, Wingecarribee, Newcastle, Blue Mountains, Warringah, Woollahra, Hornsby, Pittwater, Manly, Randwick, Ku-ring-gai, Lake Macquarie, Liverpool and Camden. However, it should be the State Government that ends this cruel practice, following the example of the Australian Capital Territory. The United Kingdom recently imposed a ban. I understand that bans exist in Portugal, Bolivia, Austria, Costa Rica, Hungary, Finland, India, Israel, Singapore and China, with nationwide bans on all animals in travelling circuses under consideration in Brazil, Colombia and Peru. The people of New South Wales want to move on from this archaic and cruel practice. I call on the State Government to take the lead and commit to banning the use of wild animals in circuses in New South Wales.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [6.20 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Government on the petition before the House. Like the people of

New South Wales, the New South Wales Government is adamant that appropriate levels of housing and care are provided to animals irrespective of whether they are in circuses, zoos, homes or on farms. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government takes animal welfare very seriously and is committed to further improving the already high standards of animal welfare in this State. Before I go to the specifics of this debate, I reassure the people of New South Wales that we already have very high standards for the exhibition of circus animals in New South Wales and excellent compliance with those standards.

Since becoming the Minister for Primary Industries earlier this year, I have taken a number of steps to improve the welfare of animals in our State. I want briefly to outline a couple of those steps. Last month, together with the Minister for Local Government, I established the State's first Companion Animals Taskforce to address the high rates of animal euthanasia in New South Wales. Andrew Cornwell, the member for Charlestown, is chairman of this important task force, which brings key animal welfare groups together with government to progress animal welfare in New South Wales. This task force has been set up to provide an organised and constructive method for industry and interest groups to interact with and advise the Government on ways to improve the care of companion animals.

The task force was set up in response to statistics showing that in the past five years more than 150,000 dogs and cats have been euthanised in New South Wales pounds. New South Wales is negotiating with other jurisdictions to develop new Australian animal welfare standards through the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. The aim is to develop and implement a number of national standards under the umbrella of the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy, including standards for exhibited animals and the land transport of stock. This week I met with the Veterinary Practitioners Board to obtain a better understanding of how they contribute to the health and welfare of animals through the registration of veterinary practitioners, the licensing of veterinary hospitals and the regulation of veterinary conduct and standards.

In relation to the petition, which calls for exotic animal circuses to be banned in New South Wales, I draw to the attention of members that under the Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986 New South Wales has had prescribed standards for the exhibition of circus animals since 1996. I understand that these standards were adapted and adopted at the national level by all States and Territories and that, in fact, New South Wales has some of the toughest standards in the world. I am advised that there have been no prosecutions of any circuses in New South Wales for cruelty since the introduction of the standards. The standards, which were introduced in 1996, cover a wide range of requirements such as animal suitability, animal housing and management, transport, performance and training, animal dignity and public safety.

Inspections of circuses are carried out by the Department of Primary Industries animal welfare branch, which assesses and enforces compliance with the Exhibited Animals Protection Act and its standards for the exhibition of circus animals. I wonder why the RSPCA has not taken any action to address the concerns raised by the people who signed the petition. If the allegations are shown to be correct, the RSPCA has the power to investigate and take appropriate action. Reports of non-compliance with the tough New South Wales standards are taken very seriously and are promptly investigated. The conclusions of overseas research upon which the RSPCA is relying should be assessed by the Exhibited Animals Advisory Committee to ensure that any conclusions reached are scientifically sound and applicable to the circuses that operate in New South Wales.

The Exhibited Animals Advisory Committee is an independent statutory committee established under the Exhibited Animals Protection Act 1986. This committee assesses the validity of evidence and provides advice to me on whether there is agreement among animal welfare scientists that is objective and reaches scientifically sound conclusions. I encourage everyone to follow due process. The issue of whether a ban should include all animals or specific species must be canvassed and a consensus reached before a ban can be considered. Although the petitioners are motivated by a well-meaning concern for the welfare of circus animals, the petition is flawed by its sweeping statements and lack of detail.

There is no place in New South Wales for circus operators who do not comply with our intentionally high standards, nor is there a place here for any operator involved in animal cruelty. Incidents of cruelty should be reported to enforcement agencies such as the RSPCA so that the incidences can be investigated and, if warranted, prosecuted under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act. I stress that a world of difference exists between acts of animal cruelty and failure to meet the standards for circus animals. Since the introduction of the exhibition of circus animal standards in 1996, the Department of Primary Industries animal welfare branch has conducted numerous inspections at circuses and investigated a small number of reported incidents. Inspections have shown that compliance levels are very high. The few incidents reported were resolved with the cooperation of the circus operators.

Circuses have existed for centuries and remain a highly popular form of family entertainment in New South Wales. Performing and exhibited animals are a very important attraction for some circuses that tour New South Wales. Without animals, those circuses may not survive. Compliance with our strict standards ensures that circus animals in New South Wales receive an appropriate level of care. While incidents of poor standards and cruelty elsewhere may be used to justify the call for a blanket ban on exotic animals, circuses in New South Wales are complying with our tough standards.

I remind members that prior to the election the Premier committed to providing a one-off grant of \$7.5 million to RSPCA New South Wales to assist in the rebuilding of the Yagoona animal shelter. That grant is in addition to the Government's annual contribution to RSPCA New South Wales to assist this charity organisation to carry out its important activities involving the care and protection of animals at risk. I certainly do not accept, and I hope no member in this House would accept, animal cruelty of any kind. New South Wales has very strict standards for the exhibition of circus animals and excellent compliance with those standards. The New South Wales Government does not tolerate the mistreatment of animals.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [6.27 p.m.]: I congratulate those who were able to obtain more than 10,000 signatures for a petition to debate this sensitive issue in Parliament. To be fair, it would not be difficult to get a petition signed on matters relating to animals and animal cruelty because most of our society takes a keen interest in and has great passion for these issues. Like most people, I respect animals. I regard myself as an animal lover. However, I do not believe that because an animal is in a circus or a zoo that *prima facie* the animal is being treated cruelly. If the petition called for more improvements in the codes of practice for managing animals in circuses and zoos in this State, I would be pleased to support it, so long as the shortcomings in any allegations were clearly identified.

The Labor Government, which was elected in 1995, had a record in animal welfare of which I am particularly proud. I had a person dedicated to animal welfare issues in my former ministerial office and the then Department of Agriculture had an animal welfare unit, which the Minister for Primary Industries has indicated is still in operation. We gave the unit plenty of work. Labor always takes animal welfare seriously. I am pleased to highlight some of the outcomes that we achieved. We rewrote the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, doubling in some cases the penalties for acts of cruelty to animals. We banned the use of steel-jawed leg traps and required the tethering of dogs on the back of open vehicles. We changed the practice of passing koalas around to tourists at animal parks and other locations throughout the State. We changed the laws relating to the docking of tails on dogs, we banned fire-face branding and we banned the tethering of pigs in feedlots, to name just a few improvements.

The issue of banning certain classes of animals from pet shops and circuses is complex. However, the petition relates to the circus and I will confine my comments to that. Whether any political party would vote for a ban is uncertain. From my conversations with other members, it appears there are a wide variety of views on this issue in the Labor Party—just as there is, I assume, in the Government party room. It is a matter of record that as a Minister I opposed a campaign to stop the Stardust circus from owning Arna, the elephant. Years later, the elephant was involved in an incident at the circus when one of its handlers was killed. The circus then made the decision to give the elephant to a zoo, which I believe was the Western Plains Zoo. The many reviews carried out indicated that the circus was looking after the elephant well. The animal had been with the circus for years. I understand the circus was an organisation registered in Queensland.

The role of the circus has changed much since I was a child and attended circuses. Ashtons Circus often came to the Fairfield area and was greatly supported. This form of entertainment has declined but circuses still get great support when they come to town, especially in rural towns. While there may be varying views on this issue I would be more inclined to support a continual improvement in and regulation of how animals are treated rather than just an outright ban. Circus owners have invested substantial resources in their animals and they employ many people who love the lifestyle. I hope that any moves to further legislate in this area are done with full consultation and contributions from those in circuses, and a political position is not taken on whether exotic animals of any kind can be part of the circus.

The Minister raised the issue of exhibited animals. Changes in that regard are being worked through by State governments through ministerial council meetings. Those meetings have made recommendations and ultimately, after much debate, changes were made by many State governments and the Federal Government in relation to national standards for exhibited animals, the prevention of cruelty to animals and so on. I have already pointed out that some of the circuses involved are registered in other States. They travel from Queensland, northern parts of New South Wales, Victoria and other places. I believe that any changes to the

involvement of animals of any type in a circus should be nationally regulated. If we are to move in that direction, which I think will probably happen eventually, I urge Ministers who are responsible for issues relating to animal cruelty and the management of circuses, zoos and so on to raise those matters through ministerial council meetings. By doing so, any changes to the law on whether an exotic animal can be used in a circus will be made on a national basis. I do not think it is workable, certainly on the east coast of Australia, if one State goes it alone.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [6.32 p.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I speak in support of a statewide ban on exotic animals performing in circuses. The detailed issues in relation to the use of exotic animals in circuses have been covered very well by the member for Sydney, and I wholeheartedly support her comments. It is very disappointing that both the Opposition and the Government have said that they will not support this proposal.

All circus tricks are unnatural behaviour for animals. Therefore, animals must be trained with the use of bull hooks, whips, metal spikes, hotplates, electric prods and other devices. Animals learn to obey out of fear of punishment. Wild animals used by circuses include elephants, lions, tigers and monkeys, which spend almost their entire lives in chains, cooped up behind electric fences or in boxes—sometimes for up to 20 hours a day. Circus animals are intelligent and social, yet they are kept in close confinement in artificial social groups for long periods of time. They spend much of their lives being continually transported between circus venues and they suffer stress, pain, fear and loneliness.

Animal welfare organisations in New South Wales have done fantastic work lobbying on these issues. I commend them for their capacity to have 10,000 signatures brought to the House today. In particular, I mention Animals Asia, Animals Australia, the RSPCA, the Animal Welfare League, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the World Society for the Protection of Animals, Animal Liberation, the World League for the Protection of Animals, Voiceless, the Animal Societies Federation and many other organisations that are dedicated to protecting the welfare of animals.

The Greens share the view of the RSPCA that no circus, no matter how well managed, can provide an appropriate environment for wild animals. I respect the fact that the Minister came to address us in the House during this debate, but we heard the Minister say that the conditions in the existing regulations are strenuous enough to ensure that the standards defend animal welfare. We can see by the new evidence and by the issues that the member for Sydney, the petition and I have raised that that is simply not the case. Scientific studies show that animals require a high level of stimulation and when held in captivity they become stressed and bored, which often leads to abnormal repetitive behaviours, such as swaying and pacing.

In 2009 the Animal Welfare journal published a review of the suitability of wild animals to live in a travelling circus. The review found that species of non-domesticated animals that are commonly kept in circuses appear to be those least suited to life in a circus. Moreover, scientific studies show that circus life leads to stress, boredom and often results in the abnormal behaviour I mentioned. This is not a political issue; it is a practical issue. The new evidence, particularly the Animal Welfare journal's evidence, demonstrates that steps must be taken by this Government. I am very disappointed that we have had such a negative response from both the Opposition and the Government. But I am sure that will not stop those of us who are committed to animal welfare.

I am proud of the fact that many local councils have defended the welfare of animals. The Greens were very proud to have joined with many activists to support animal welfare groups and local residents who successfully lobbied councils to refuse to let circuses with wild exotic animals perform on land operated by the councils. I will continue to work to defend animal rights and promote animal welfare. This issue is the tip of the iceberg, as we saw with the live cattle export issue. There is a huge majority in our community who want more action on animal welfare. There is a whole range of animal welfare issues that governments need to address, such as the confinement of pigs in crates, puppy farming, many of the practices around farming chickens for meat and the banning of live exports.

We support the worldwide abolition of all cruel and inhumane treatment of animals used in sport, recreation or entertainment, such as steeplechasing, dogfighting, cockfighting, bear-baiting, bullfighting and other practices involving the killing or torture of animals. We need to undertake this ban to protect animal welfare. As Cirque de Soleil, Circus Oz and many other popular non-animal circuses have shown, the success, quality and economic viability of a circus does not require the use of animals. It is clear that there is an ever

increasing majority of Australians who are committed to animal welfare. I call on the Government to take this matter seriously and review its opposition to the ban. I thank the member for Sydney and those who generated this petition.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HUNTER ACADEMY OF SPORT AWARDS

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [6.37 p.m.]: I congratulate the Hunter Academy of Sport on its annual awards night held on Monday 5 September but, more importantly, I congratulate the winners of awards in the various categories. The purpose of the Hunter Academy of Sport awards night is to acknowledge the efforts of staff, volunteers and athletes over the past 12 months. The award recipients, whose names were announced during the presentation, have continued the Hunter Academy of Sport's proud tradition of excellence. The academy and the athletes who attend the academy are to be congratulated on another very successful year.

The Hunter Academy of Sport is the largest regional academy of its kind in Australia, offering 28 different sports to some 600 able-bodied and disabled athletes. With specialised coaching, education and sport science services available, the Hunter Academy of Sport continues to assist talented local children in their quest for sporting success. Regional academies of sport play a vital role in the development of sporting champions by providing a pathway for young athletes on their way to State and national representation. As well as celebrating the achievements of academy squad members, I also acknowledge the efforts of the staff and volunteers who support them. More than 200 volunteers are involved in the academy—a testament to its respected place in the large Hunter community.

On the night of the ceremony I had the pleasure of presenting awards to the most outstanding squad members, including the following: 22-year-old leading Australian male trampoline gymnast Ty Swadling; 19-year-old triathlon champion Scott Llewellyn; 15-year-old world silver medallist BMX rider Rachel Jones; 16-year-old New South Wales country representative basketballer Daniel Barbajo; and, finally, 17-year-old clay target shooter Teegan McCloy, who is currently competing in the world champions in Belgrade. I sincerely congratulate all the 2010-11 squad members and award winners, and I look forward to seeing more exciting achievements from the Hunter Academy of Sport over the coming year.

SUNRISE READING PROGRAM

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [6.41 p.m.]: One of the true joys of my job as the member for Wallsend is having the opportunity to tell people stories about why Wallsend is such a fantastic place in which to live and telling stories of the wonderful people who, in their daily lives, help to make our community a better place in which to live and work—the people who ask themselves not only what it is in it for them, but what they can do to help the next generation to lead more successful and productive lives. Today I will talk about a special group of people who ask for no recognition or remuneration; people whose sole aim is to bring to young people in their community the joy of learning—surely that is one of the greatest gifts that one person can give to another—in particular, the joy of reading.

We know that reading is a fundamental building block of education and that the better the education children receive, the better their prospects in all areas of life will be. They have greater opportunities in relation to employment, improved engagement with the community and better parenting skills, and they become better citizens. Who are these people of whom I speak? I am talking about the tireless volunteers who go into our schools to assist with school reading programs. For the past 20 years Elmore Vale Public School has run a volunteer reading scheme. It is a program known as the Sunrise Reading Program. This program is coordinated by Mrs Ruth Purvis, the support teacher in learning.

Mrs Purvis believes the program helps the students in a number of ways. It provides contact with a grandparent figure who is often missing from the student's life. This creates a special bond, allowing the student to tell the tutor of their joys and concerns. The program creates an environment that allows the student to master reading skills in a quiet, supportive environment. At present there are four special volunteers. For six years retiree Phillip has been volunteering one day a week. Another fantastic volunteer is music teacher Helen, who has been with the program for three years. Daphne, also retired, is a life member of the school. She resides in the Wallsend area and has been a great supporter of the school.

Daphne's children and grandchildren attended Elmore Vale Public School. Although the grandchildren are now at high school, Daphne continues her relationship with the school to help our children and the children of future generations. Kath, another volunteer, has been helping with reading at the school for more than 20 years. Kath started in the classroom as a reading helper and graduated to the Sunrise program. Kath has been confined to a wheelchair for more than 15 years, but that has not stopped her giving three days a week to the program. When asked what volunteering means to these invaluable workers, Phillip responded by saying he "enjoys giving one on one help to consolidate what the child is working on. It is so exciting watching the children grow week by week and achieve their goal. I am glad to be given an opportunity to help and do something purposeful."

Daphne thinks it is wonderful to see the improvement in the children with one-on-one tutelage. She said, "It makes you feel proud to see them move on to high school and be able to read well. I've done Sunrise reading since it started and have been honoured to help so many students." Helen spoke of the joy she gets from working with children, especially on a one-on-one basis. Kath added that the program gives her a sense of belonging to the school community and a great sense of achievement on behalf of the students. They all agreed that Mrs Purvis has organised a wonderful reading program. This program has, without doubt, helped change many lives for the better—and I am sure it will continue to do so. We all know and understand how vital education is to the prosperity of the individual, and consequently to the broader community and to the nation. To the volunteers who give their time to the program, Daphne, Helen, Kath and Phillip: on behalf of all members of Parliament, I thank you.

VIENNA COTTAGE, HUNTERS HILL

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [6.44 p.m.]: As members would be aware from a previous private member's statement I gave, Hunters Hill council is celebrating its 150th anniversary. As such, I will highlight one of those buildings that epitomise the cultural and historical tones of Hunters Hill, and indeed most of Australia—Vienna Cottage. I take this opportunity to share a bit of the history of Vienna Cottage. Situated in the heart of the Hunters Hill peninsula, it is within easy walking of many heritage buildings and private residences of historic interest located in my electorate. Vienna Cottage is one of many local landmarks—others include St Joseph's College, the historic old Gladesville Hospital, Kelly's Bush and the old ship repair dock at Clarke's Point. The cottage is not far from other foreshore sites, such as Woolwich Wharf, Gladesville Reserve and Boronia Park Reserve.

The cottage was built by a couple who migrated to Australia in search of a better life. Ann O'Donnell and John Hillman were able to complete their family home in 1871. Ann had come to Australia from Ireland, fleeing poverty and famine, and John from Germany, fleeing conscription. Indeed, Ann and John prove a point I have long made that Australia's multicultural heritage did not start after 1945 but has been an ever-present part of Australia's history. After arriving in the colony of New South Wales, the O'Donnells joined a group of Irish artisans and labourers and contributed, through masonry and construction, to help develop the architectural character of Hunters Hill.

The Hillman family lived comfortably in their family home, with ownership passing down to their children. However, the cottage was to be rented out by their youngest son, Fred, during the 1920s. Because of its age, size and lack of modern facilities, Vienna attracted low-income occupants. The cottage's most famous owner, George Anderson, lived there for 50 years, from 1941 to 1991. This tenancy was not without its problems, however. The Andersons were on welfare assistance through the government of the day's Protected Tenancy Act. This barred the landlord's right to raise the rent or even evict an occupant. This led to a massive degeneration in the quality of the cottage through general neglect and lack of maintenance.

By the end of the 1980s Vienna was almost unliveable. George had stopped using the rooms that had become so dilapidated they posed a risk to his health and safety, and he was confined to living just in his bedroom, bathroom and garden shed. This is one reason Vienna Cottage has remained such a historical item. While all the surrounding properties were renovated and modernised, the cottage remained, even in its dilapidated state, a piece of the past. During the late 1980s limited public access was granted, with George's consent, to raise awareness of the conservation challenge. In 1988 the cottage and adjoining orchard block was purchased through government grants, sponsorships and local fundraising, and given to the National Trust. This building provides an "unusually honest" look at the past, as the National Trust states in its advertising of the cottage.

Vienna Cottage is now a wonderful museum: simple, basic and reflective of what is now truly another era. During this celebration the cottage has been host to art and craft exhibitions, as well as being a vital stop on

the Hunters Hill Heritage Walk. Vienna Cottage lives because of its volunteers, who give of their time and expertise to ensure that we all have the opportunity to revisit the past. I pay tribute to and acknowledge the chair, John Birch, the deputy chair, Mike LeHany, Susan Elle, Brad Poe, Marlene Arditto, Annie Howe who also maintains the garden, Phil and Gloria Jenkins, Margaret Christie, who is a former Hunters Hill Councillor, and Graham Percival, who makes the famed Vienna Cottage marmalade as well. I thoroughly recommend the marmalade to anyone in the House who visits the place.

Vienna Cottage acts as a time capsule, revealing the heritage and culture of Hunters Hill over a period of 100 years through its unique condition and appearance. The cottage has been used quite a bit recently for movies and documentaries. I encourage all members of the public, as well as members of this House, to visit this amazing landmark and experience it for themselves. Once again, on behalf of members in the House this evening, I place on record that we pay tribute to the volunteers across New South Wales who do so much to ensure that our historical homes and landmarks are kept in good repair.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [6.49 p.m.]: This week is Parkinson's Awareness Week. As part of the week's events an important seminar for people living with Parkinson's disease was held today at Parliament House. It was officially opened by the Hon. Jillian Skinner, the Minister for Health. Approximately 160 people, including partners, families and carers, attended from across the State, including from my electorate of Tamworth. This is the first time that people from the regions have had an opportunity to attend. I pay tribute to those families and carers who play a critical role in the life of someone who is suffering from Parkinson's disease. It is a shattering experience to be told one has Parkinson's. Sadly, every hour of every day someone in Australia is diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Uncertainty and enormous challenges lie ahead. Part of the challenge with Parkinson's—like any disease—is seeking information and, ultimately, treatment. In terms of seeking information a number of groups, including Parkinson's NSW and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, post easy-to-read and up-to-date information on the web from which some of the information in this brief was sourced. Parkinson's disease occurs as a result of the loss of dopamine-producing brain cells. The primary symptoms of Parkinson's disease are tremor, or trembling, in the hands, arms, legs, jaw and face, as well as rigidity or stiffness of the limbs and trunk, and slowness of movement including impaired balance and coordination.

As these symptoms become more pronounced, patients may have difficulty walking, talking or completing simple tasks. Parkinson's disease usually affects people over the age of 50. However, a staggering 10 per cent are under the age of 40. Early symptoms are subtle and occur gradually. In some people the disease progresses more quickly than in others. As the disease does and will progress, the shaking or tremor that affects the majority of patients may begin to interfere with daily activities. Other symptoms may include depression and other emotional changes, difficulty in swallowing, chewing and speaking, urinary problems or constipation, skin problems and sleep disruptions. Quality of life is severely affected.

At present there is no cure for Parkinson's disease. However, worldwide research is being conducted into new and improved treatments and medications that offer good reason to be optimistic about the capacity to minimise the impact of Parkinson's disease in the future. Those attending today's seminar in Parliament House were updated by a number of leaders in the field of research and development, including Dr Bryce Vissel, on his work at the Garvin Institute, and Dr Paul Silberstein, who provided the latest on deep brain stimulation for Parkinson's disease. The Health Minister advised that approval has been given for the establishment of a short-term scoping study with NSW Health to look at a range of areas, including asking that the scoping study give special consideration to the neurological nurse educator pilot program based at the Nowra Community Health Centre, how the position has worked, and the role of integrating and enhancing existing services.

Reports today from Parkinson's NSW indicate that neurological nurse educators provide support and services at the front line and, importantly, closer to home. Regional communities are hardest hit due to the lack of available specialist clinicians. When they are available, the distance travelled to reach them is often vast. That is an endemic problem and many regions, including the Tamworth electorate, are working hard to turn that around. Today's seminar heard that neurological nurse educators can and do play a vital role not only for Parkinson's but also for motor neurone disease. They become a vital link. They provide the connection and pathway to acute services and clinicians that over time ease the pressure on hospital emergency departments.

Nurses provide much-needed support and education in homes and aged care facilities. Independent living is a priority. It is a major bonus for people to be able to remain in the community because it reduces the

anxiety associated with the treatment of Parkinson's, with the neurological nurse educator overseeing medication in the light of the limited access to specialists. I look forward to the outcomes of the scoping study. There is no doubt a primary community service such as this is much needed in the Tamworth electorate. If I can be so bold: The time to begin the push to have a community neurological nurse educator in our region is now.

ARNCLIFFE SCOTS RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [6.54 p.m.]: It gives me a great deal of pleasure to recognise the Arncliffe Scots, who this year celebrate their fiftieth anniversary of calling Cahill Park, Arncliffe, their home. This year also marks the Arncliffe Scots' eighty-fifth anniversary playing rugby league in the St George district. The history of the Arncliffe Scots can be traced back to 1913 when Arncliffe Presbyterian Church members formed their cricket club. Some years later, in 1926, members also formed a rugby league club. In light of the Scottish heritage of many members, the Scots became the team name, with the Scottish thistle on the team's emblem.

In their inaugural season of 1926, the Scots fielded one B-grade team and two C-grade teams. The original colours worn by the Scots were black and gold, which are still on their jersey today. In 1928, just two years after their first season, the club fielded A, B and C grade teams. Both the A grade and C grade teams claimed the competition. During the World War II the club did not operate, but it re-formed in 1947 due to the hard work and commitment of Percy Davis, who could rightly be called the founder of the club, serving 40 years as president. Between 1953 and 1961, the Scots won six out of eight A grade premierships.

The club continued to grow, and in 1960s the junior grades were formed. The first junior premiership was the under-12s, captained by Mark Schulman. The Arncliffe Scots Junior Rugby League Football Club holds the record for the most junior club championships. The Arncliffe Scots Junior Rugby League Football Club, having played rugby league since 1926 in the St George district, is one of Rockdale's most respected clubs and has seen many rugby league talents. The Scots have seen Australian representative players Ross Kite, John King, Pat Jarvis and Matt McCoy emerge from their ranks. The club has been a breeding ground for talent and has supplied players for both St George and the St George Illawarra Dragons.

Over the past five decades, Cahill Park has witnessed some of the most memorable victories seen by the Arncliffe Scots. On 30 July the club celebrated its rich history with a celebration day at the field. The day included mini and mod competition games, a kids fun fair, a circuit walk of the oval by past and present players, afternoon tea for past players, a touch gala, and a celebration barbeque at the end of the day. Special mention must be given to club secretary, Glenys Ellis, who ensured that the day was a success. The Arncliffe Scots are a valued part of our local community and I congratulate them on their 50 years at Cahill Park and 85 years playing rugby league in the St George district.

I take this opportunity to wish the St George Illawarra Dragons a successful game in Brisbane on Saturday evening. This season will be the last for coach Wayne Bennett at the Dragons, who has guided the team to successive minor premierships in 2009 and 2010, a world club championship and a National Rugby League premiership in just three years. I have not given up hope of winning another grand final in a few weeks' time. I also extend my best wishes to retiring club legend Mark Gasnier, who I had the pleasure of meeting at the Gasnier Foundation Blue Tie Ball at Doltone House on the 31 August. I thank these two men for the contribution they have made to the Dragons over the years and for the entertainment they have brought to residents of the Rockdale electorate.

MAXPOTENTIAL PROGRAM

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [6.59 p.m.]: I rise in the House to commend an outstanding initiative called MaxPotential, a mentoring program for young people aged between 16 and 25 years. A mentor is typically defined as a trusted friend, a counsellor or teacher, or a wise and influential sponsor or supporter. The MaxPotential program exemplifies the very definition of mentor. A personal leadership and coaching program for young people, it is excellent to see a one-on-one intensive program that facilitates accelerated growth in our up-and-coming leaders. A true leader inspires, teaches and nurtures. A true leader understands that success is not measured by a dollar value, a position or title, or by comparison with peers and colleagues.

A true leader recognises individuality, that each person has their individual strengths, weaknesses, skills and abilities. MaxPotential is a program that offers young people a chance to maximise their potential by encouraging individual growth and providing opportunities to get a solid grasp on leadership skills and create an

attitude for a life of success. I was honoured to attend the MaxPotential showcase at Tuggerah Westfield on 17 August this year and see firsthand the final results of the 14 students from local schools who went through the program, and congratulate them on graduating from the program.

The innovative community projects undertaken by the students were very impressive. One student raised awareness of emergency call 112, which can be dialled from any phone, anywhere, at any time, and the call will go through to the emergency line, even if a phone is locked or out of range. Another student undertook a project called Surviving Year 7. He returned to his primary school to speak to year 6 students about transitioning to year 7, and gave some helpful advice on bullying. Some other projects were lunchtime cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid lessons, coordinating volunteer groups for community organisations, and running a donation drive for the local opportunity shop. I was inspired by the projects undertaken by the young people. Their capacity to dream big, work hard and achieve their goals is commendable. These young people are the managers, entrepreneurs and community leaders of our future.

The MaxPotential program, as well as the people and organisations behind the program, recognise this, and recognise that nurturing and maximising their potential now creates strong leaders of tomorrow. Working through ClubsNSW, the MaxPotential program is facilitated by local clubs which aim to maximise their engagement with young people in local communities. I acknowledge Mingara, along with over 20 other local clubs statewide, for facilitating and supporting this very worthy program. We as a State Government recognise and support the enormous community contributions made by our local clubs each year, by providing facilities, funds and grants to a long list of community organisations and groups. Mingara, as one of the biggest clubs on the Central Coast, contributes significantly every year to the community in health and special needs organisations, sport and recreation, education and child care, service and other affiliated clubs, and especially our local schools.

The opportunity presented to the 14 students should be commended. MaxPotential offered them a chance to accelerate their potential, outwork a community project and set a foundation of leadership that will launch them forward into a successful life. The end of the MaxPotential program was not a conclusion; rather a platform from which a lifetime of learning can continue. I thank each of the coaches who gave their time and imparted their experience and knowledge as a mentor for these students. To the students who completed the MaxPotential program I offer my sincere congratulations and wish them all the best for a successful future. The projects they undertook and completed were innovative and community focused. I look forward to hearing about their future endeavours.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.02 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for The Entrance for bringing to the attention of the House the great work that MaxPotential is doing in fostering leadership among the young people of the Central Coast. I also endorse his efforts in encouraging leaders. The Central Coast is in desperate need of more young leaders and it is terrific to see such great grassroots programs being supported by the club movement on the Central Coast.

RALLY AUSTRALIA

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [7.03 p.m.]: I commend tonight the organisers of the Australian rally, Rally Australia as part of the World Rally Championship in Coffs Harbour from the 9 to the 11 September. Michael Masi, who was the local organiser, Andrew Papadopoulos, the chairman of the Confederation of Australian Motor Sport and Ben Rainsford, the chairman of Rally Australia, really should be commended for the way this event was organised and how well it went over the three days. The event was eventually won by Mikko Hirvonen from Finland with Jari-Matti Latvala coming second and third was Petter Solberg, one of the few international drivers who runs his own team and is privately funded. It was, to say the least, a phenomenal event. We expect somewhere in the vicinity of \$18 million plus to come into the local economy. To see the crowds at the super special stages of the Coffs Harbour jetty was just heart warming.

I have been following motor sport and especially world rally championships and rally championships in Australia and New South Wales for probably 35 years or more. I think I was about 17 when I did my first control at the Southern Cross Rally at the back of Raymond Terrace. That rally used to run right up the coast and finish in Port Macquarie. This event is probably one of the best events you would ever see. It was broadcast to 140 countries and watched by about 53 million viewers. In fact the Sunday afternoon stages just north of Coffs Harbour in the electorate of Clarence were televised worldwide. The way the World Rally Championship showcases an area is second to none and 53 million viewers worldwide saw the Coffs Coast. In today's *Coffs Harbour Advocate* there were some complaints that local businesses, restaurants mainly, did not feel they got

enough out of the World Rally Championship as they had expected. I suggested to the council and the restaurateurs and hoteliers that wanted extended licences during the championship that rally crowds get up early—5.00 a.m. in most cases—and finish late, probably at 9 or 10 o'clock at night, and they tend to eat food on the run.

They tend not to sit down at restaurants during the event but they do patronise the restaurants before and after the rally. Many visitors came a week before the event and are still in Coffs Harbour. In fact, Steve Gooley, who is the general manager of Bachrach Nominees which owns the Park Beach Plaza, was in Alice Springs the week before the rally and he phoned me to tell me that he had bumped into 48 German tourists who were looking at Ayres Rock and Alice Springs and were on their way to Coffs Harbour to take in this event. We had something like 3,000 international visitors that we know of in town for that week. After the rally I received this message from Steve and Carol Cleary, who have the Ulong General Store:

From the very beginning, the effect of the World Rally Championships for us was nothing but positive. Whether it was beautifying our villages or to the financial effects of 'outside money' flowing into the businesses and community groups on the mountain, the effects of the WRC to this area was, and will be huge.

The days of the WRC was very successful and it was wonderful to personally meet so many of the teams and visitors from all over our country and the world.

Our visitors book reflects their first impressions with comments such as "A 'find' in the middle of the countryside"—Team Abu Dhabi, and, "lovely place, great people, see you in two years"—World Rally TV.

This is the kind of publicity that is hard to measure. The excitement that this brings to a sleepy little village like Ulong is awesome.

Just today, we were serving visitors from Victoria who stayed over on the Coffs Coast and decided to travel to Dorrigo via Ulong (something that normally doesn't happen), to see what it is like up here—how do you measure that kind of flow on effect and exposure.

Well done Rally Australia and all those hard working volunteers.

What an effort, what a success.

Julie McDonald from Lowanna sent a similar message to my office. In the electorate of Oxley, there was a street stall right in the middle of Bowraville. When I drove through there at about 7 o'clock on Saturday morning chasing the cars, there were thousands of people in the main street. They were waving banners and welcoming all the visitors who were there to spend money in the Coffs Harbour electorate. I appeal to the Minister for Major Events to make sure that we get this rally back in 2013 and continue to fund it.

MOOREBANK INTERMODAL FREIGHT PROPOSAL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [7.08 p.m.]: When I was first preselected some 12 months before the election I met with local residents in Wattle Grove, and Roy Carter, John Anderson and Peter Langsam gave me a comprehensive background including the development of the estate and its military history. They showed me that Wattle Grove is not just a suburb name, it is a true community. They also shared their concerns about two possible intermodals being built at Moorebank. One is a Federal Government initiative that I know Federal member for Hughes, Craig Kelly, is fighting against and the other is a private consortium SIMTA or Sydney Intermodal Terminal Alliance, comprising Stockland, Qube Logistics and QR National. When I refer to Moorebank I also refer to the neighbouring suburb of Wattle Grove and the rest of the western side of my electorate as I believe it could all be subject to a negative impact should this proposal go ahead.

I begin with the location. It is near the M5, close to the M7, and a rail freight line can be fairly easily built. That is where it sits on a map, but as the local member I raise my concerns about the location from the perspective of the locals. Should it go ahead, it is likely to sit 490 metres from the nearest homes in Wattle Grove—homes lovingly cared for by their owners in a relatively new and vibrant community. Should it go ahead in its current form, and with current infrastructure, it will disrupt and add to local traffic. Our roads are already gridlocked at peak hour and pushed to capacity. Without doubt and regardless of mitigation measures, it will cause noise pollution with trucks and freight trains operating 24 hours a day. It is probable that it will cause light spill from its operations. It is likely to cause airborne pollution, especially from the diesel emissions of the trucks and trains.

I am especially concerned about this because, as I mentioned, the closest houses are just 490 metres from the site. I have been briefed by Liverpool Councillor Ned Mannoun, who travelled to the United States to

see the impact similar operations had on the community. I acknowledge his hard work in structuring the argument and informing the community. Councillor Mannoun has since advised me that impacts on health are a real concern to the community, especially within a 2.5 kilometre radius of an intermodal terminal. I stress again that the nearest house is 490 metres away. In a 2.5 kilometre radius from the Moorebank intermodal there are 19 childcare centres and 10 schools. This part of south west Sydney already has a high level of asthma: the geography is such that the Sydney basin keeps pollution in far longer than it does in our coastal areas.

The easing of pressure at Port Botany should not be at the expense of the enviable lifestyle of my community, who do not see Moorebank as being the appropriate place. This is not a NIMBY—a "not in my backyard"—issue, but for the sake of the health of people of this area other options should be investigated. The terminal was not planned when people invested their lives in this area. It was not planned when they decided to raise their children and build their community. Their choices were made on information they had, in good faith and with an eye on the future of their families and friends. We need to consider the health impacts and we also need to consider the environmental concerns. Unfortunately, I am concerned that the progress of New South Wales and the need for Port Botany to have a longer lifespan may completely override the concerns of this area.

The local residents are trying to be heard. They held a community protest last August and a Community Angry Day in June this year. They are currently circulating a petition, and I expect this matter to be debated in the House once 10,000 signatures are collected. Should the petition come to Parliament, I ask the members of this Chamber to consider it and to speak to it as if this project were proposed in their area. I ask that they consider the concerns, the health impacts and the fear that my local residents are facing. There are alternatives and it is only right that they be investigated. Moorebank might tick the planning boxes and might commercially look like the right alternative, but there is also the maxim of "do no harm" to live by.

As the local representative I am not convinced that building this intermodal less than 500 metres from residential homes passes this test and I am here today to stand up for the local residents. I want to make sure that the residents of Wattle Grove and the surrounds are heard. I want to make sure that they are consulted and that their contribution is respected and taken into account. I am actively collecting signatures on a petition to bring this matter to the Parliament to ensure transparency and to give local residents the opportunity for their voices to be heard.

TRUNDLE BUSH TUCKER DAY

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.13 p.m.]: A witchetty grub starter, a lemon myrtle crusted crocodile entree and a paperback-wrapped barramundi fillet and warm salad. Does that sound good? I had the pleasure of attending with my beautiful daughter, Taylor, the Trundle Bush Tucker Day in early September where I got my fill of all sorts of tempting traditional bush tucker. In the world of the bush tucker chef, berries, bugs, grubs and various forms of game are standard ingredients. Bushwalks and trips to the park can take the place of supermarket outings. These days the art and traditions of bush tucker are not restricted to the Indigenous community, with a growing number of contemporary Australian chefs also trying their hand at homegrown cuisine. The cuisine has a long history which I had the opportunity to learn about when I visited the vibrant and welcoming community of Trundle.

The twenty-fourth annual Trundle Bush Tucker Day is all about creating culinary delights in traditional camp ovens over open fires that are judged by guest chefs. The day is a testament to the community's ability to empower themselves, to show off how colourful and exciting their little town is and to inspire and promote an ancient type of cookery—bush tucker. Situated approximately 65 kilometres north west of Parkes, Trundle has a population of 600, which more than doubles during Bush Tucker Day. It is a rural community with production consisting mostly of wheat, sheep and cattle farming. What impresses me about this little gem in my electorate is that it is the ideal place to get away from the hustle and bustle of the highway and experience the Australian bush, fair dinkum Australian hospitality and the leisurely way of doing things.

The heritage-listed Trundle Hotel was built in 1909 in three stages over three years. It is two storeys high and built out of pisé mud then rendered with cement. The hotel has the longest wooden veranda in Australia. Trundle is also home to the widest main street in Australia, which means members should not have any problems with angle parking. The showground is home to Bush Tucker Day, providing entertainment for the whole family with music, camp food cooking, damper tasting and old swag stories. This year's guest judge was Fast Ed from *Better Homes and Gardens*, who also gave cooking demonstrations throughout the day and whom I had the pleasure to meet once again.

For 24 years the locals of Trundle have worked tirelessly to hold Bush Tucker Day and I recognise their dedication year in, year out to this outstanding event. Their hard work this year led to the staging of an absolute cracker of an event. The festival, which showcases all things Australian from the bush cooking competition to the best decorated bush hat, a tug of war, a billy boil sprint and the iconic national damper throw, is indicative of what a community can do when it works together. I had a ball at the Trundle Bush Tucker Day and I love the fact that it reminded me how much I cherish being an Australian, particularly a regional Australian. If members ever get the chance I recommend that they set aside some time next September to duck out to Trundle and see what all the fun is about. Members can rest assured they will not be disappointed.

What inspires me about Trundle is that it is a small regional community that has undergone extreme exposure to the effects of drought and economic downturn at the social level as well as complete disdain from the previous State Government with regard to the delivery of services. But does that knock this community down? No, it does not. This community has resilience by the bucket load. This community has used its initiative through the Tree Change program and will be featured in an Andrew Denton production about the resilience of the bush. It is an opportunity to demonstrate that if people are committed to their community they can empower themselves and show people from other areas the opportunities that exist in small and regional communities. I commend every citizen of the Trundle community. They are a wonderful example of what it truly means to be an Australian and a proud New South Welshman.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.18 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Dubbo for informing the House of the wonderful work of the Trundle community in supporting Bush Tucker Day. It is a tremendous innovation for a town of only 600 people that has obviously gone through a difficult period of transition. It is great to hear of vibrant regional towns exploring various tourism opportunities. I was left wondering what Gordon Ramsay might say about the menu, and I am a little worried about whether WorkCover might have any concerns about the damper throw. Nevertheless it was a great story about real people doing real things in a real place.

AVALON SAILING CLUB

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.19 p.m.]: I inform the House of the proud heritage and exciting future of Avalon Sailing Club, at idyllic Clareville and adjacent to the aptly named Paradise Beach on the sylvan and sublime Pittwater, named by Arthur Phillip in honour of the British Prime Minister. Phillip marvelled at this incredible waterway as being "the finest body of water I ever saw". What an extraordinary exclamation from a senior naval officer who had seen so much of the ocean and its shores. And what an amazing endorsement of the Pittwater and our need to protect it, preserve it, and enjoy it. And enjoying the Pittwater is a big part of what the Avalon Sailing Club is all about. Since 1938 it has been teaching children and adults how to sail. It has been refining top sailors such as Harold Vaughan, Grant Simmer, Phil Bate, Tony Bellingham, Glen Attrill and James and Katie Spithill. And more than all of this, it has been bonding families, creating happy memories, and building a resilient and confident community. And it is open to all.

While the clubhouse, a classic weatherboard building built in the late 1950s, is on a site worth millions, and while the view across to the western foreshores—which remain virtually unchanged since they were home to the Garigal people—is timeless, and while the value of the experiences of members is priceless, anyone can join the club. Prince or pauper, old or young, anyone can be a part of it. How uniquely Australian and how precious it is that our coast, our waterways and Avalon Sailing Club are open to everybody. A sport that in other nations is often a symbol of wealth and exclusion, in little Avalon it is a sport for the people—no ceremony, no nonsense, no airs and graces, no fuss, a simple place but a rich heritage.

After James Stokes started making boats at Clareville in the 1840s the area became popular with sailors, first commercial, then commuters, and then recreational. By the 1920s Clareville wharf had been built just next to where the clubhouse now stands. In the 1930s the Vaughan family, with three young boys, decided to build some VJs—Vaucluse junior sailing boats, specially designed to be built at home—and before long the Vaughan family had established a sailing course between Taylors Point, Paradise Beach, and Longnose Point off Clareville. Other families joined in, such as the O'Connors and notable Pittwater families such as the Lingards and the Brogans. Despite some early setbacks, such as the closure of the nascent club by the ever-vigilant Royal Australian Navy, which was concerned about accidentally hitting dinghies with torpedoes from its Clareville base during the war, the club prospered.

By the late fifties, following the intervention of Sir Robert Askin in securing the site, a clubhouse was officially opened by no lesser a personage than Admiral Buchanan, CBE, DSO, aide-de-camp to both George VI

and the present Queen. The club has continued to grow and prosper. Young sailors have grown into men and women whose children and grandchildren are now sailors—building on a wonderful heritage of family, competition, salt air, sparkling waters and freedom. After so much use, the clubhouse, a rustically beautiful building supported by many stories and memories, is also pretty tired out. More recent commodores and executive members such as David Lyall, PSM, Brett Stapleton, Ross Trembath and Richard Rasdall, have developed a modest, sympathetic and practical plan to enhance the club's facilities to breathe new life into the building and its wharf.

I was delighted to be able to support a grant of \$75,000 under the Community Building Partnership program to help realise these renovations, and was honoured to officially open the new pontoon last Sunday. I look forward to helping the club as it continues its renovations to make the Avalon Sailing Club an even better asset for our community. It is no wonder that Iain Murray, AM, is such a proud patron. I also applaud former commodore Norm Field for his excellent history of the Avalon Sailing Club between 1932 and 1963, and I look forward to the next chapter in the story of this wonderful community club.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.24 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Pittwater on that very passionate history of the Avalon Sailing Club, at Clareville. He is fortunate to have probably the second-most beautiful electorate in New South Wales after Port Stephens. We share a great love of sailing. Sailing normally takes place in the port of Port Stephens, but a few years ago Williamtown Rotary set up a sailing club at Grahamstown Dam. It is now one of the largest Sailability set-ups in New South Wales. It is a fantastic port. I congratulate the member for Pittwater. I always thought Pittwater itself was named after the electorate. I did not realise it was named after a Prime Minister. Congratulations, and well done.

PORT STEPHENS COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.25 p.m.]: On Friday night I was present when more than 100 guests attended council chambers to celebrate the achievements of 15 residents and groups who were nominated for the Port Stephens Community Awards. Mrs Anna Cordwell of the Mambo Wanda Wetland Reserve and Landcare 355b Committee has been a member of the Port Stephens Corlette Precinct for many years and has real passion and dedication for the preservation of the Mambo and Wanda wetlands. Wendy and Jim McCormack were both actively involved in Port Stephens FM community radio from 2004 until very recently. Wendy used her extensive journalism experience to present on air, train new presenters and offer public relations support. Wendy's husband, Jim, has also been a presenter, technical officer and committee member.

Mr Kurt Lloyd has been an active member of the Raymond Terrace community for more than 60 years and his support for sport, particularly amongst Port Stephens youth, has been exemplary. He supported youth activities as Sea Scout Leader from 1950 to 1965 and has been an active member of the Raymond Terrace Swim Club since 1967, including a 15-year stint as president. Mr Tino Rossi, who is a martial arts teacher and former local police officer, has been mentoring in martial arts in the community for more than 20 years at both senior and junior level. He has tirelessly committed his time to teaching young people the value of focus, patience and discipline.

Mr and Mrs Col and Clyne Bridgeman are valuable members of the Mambo Wanda Wetland Reserve and Landcare 355b Committee and their innovative and productive ideas have been a real feature of their contribution to the important work carried out by this committee. The Salamander Ecology Group recently disbanded after an amazing 10 years during which they instilled great pride in their community, collecting garbage, planting trees and plants, and spreading mulch. Ms Carol Ridgeway-Bissett is a Maaingal Aboriginal traditional owner and founding member of the Mambo Wanda Wetland Reserve and Landcare 355b Committee and is actively or has been involved in Aboriginal studies at the University of Newcastle, the Worimi Aboriginal Corporation, Hunter Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority and the National Parks and Wildlife service advisory committee.

The Raymond Terrace Senior Citizens Association is celebrating an amazing 50 years in the Terrace this year. It started off in an old tin shed in 1961 and now operates out of a large new building on Irrawang Street. Incredibly, it has seen a 300 per cent increase in membership due to the fantastic activities and services on offer. Mrs Elaine Richards has been a committed, long-term resident of Port Stephens for more than 30 years and she has been an active member of many key organisations, such as Tilligerry View Club, Habitat, the Salt Ash Safety House and the library on the Tilligerry Peninsula.

Mr Keith Brabham is the convenor of the Port Stephens Graffiti Action Team. He was a leader in the formation of the team in 2009 and has worked tirelessly almost every day since to remove graffiti in various locations around Port Stephens. Keith is a mighty 87 years old and recently suffered a stroke; however, he still works actively and passionately towards graffiti removal across Port Stephens. The commitment of the Boat Harbour recreation club extends far beyond sport and recreation in Port Stephens. It includes community development, education and youth development. They have worked very closely with Anna Bay Public School to introduce a tennis program for students who were missing out on quality physical programs.

The Port Stephens Award is given to individuals or groups for services in a specific locality or field of activity within Port Stephens community and in 2011 it was awarded to Claire Bell, whose contribution to the Port Stephens community has been profound. Claire began the very first Port Stephens support group for grandparent carers who, usually due to tragedy, were now the sole care givers to their grandchildren. The Rivergum Grandparents Group is now one of the most successful support groups in the State. The Port Stephens Medal is awarded to individuals or groups for distinguished service to the Port Stephens community and was awarded to Mr Darrell Dawson, who has spent 20 years working towards the protection of aquatic life in Port Stephens. He is an active and very valuable member of a wide range of environmental organisations such as the Tomaree National Park Committee, the National Parks Association, the Port Stephens Marine Park committee and many more. He founded EcoNetwork in the early 1990s and has been its driving force ever since.

The honour of Freeman of Port Stephens recognises individuals who have distinguished themselves with the highest order of community service, and this year it was awarded to Jill de La Lande. Jill worked extensively in aged care for more than 20 years and has been the facility manager for the aged care facility Regis the Gardens since 2004. In that role she works extensively with those suffering from terminal illness and diseases such as dementia. It is Jill's commitment, compassion and dedication, however, that set her apart. Making life meaningful and dignified for patients and families has made a huge difference to so many people in Port Stephens. This are a fantastic group of people, all of whom deserve the congratulations and thanks of this House and the people of New South Wales. I take this opportunity to congratulate newly re-elected mayor Bob Westbury and newly elected deputy mayor Ken Jordan, who were elected to those positions at a meeting of council in Port Stephens last night.

REVESBY BLUE LIGHT DISCO

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [7.30 p.m.], by leave: On Tuesday 13 September 2011 I had the pleasure of participating in the annual cheque presentation ceremony held by the Revesby Blue Light Disco. The Revesby Blue Light Disco has been an important part of our community for 23 years. I say an important part of our community because since 1988 the Revesby Blue Light Disco has been providing our children with a safe and secure place to spend an enjoyable Saturday night. Let us not forget that without such a service parents like me would not have one night off per month without the kids, which I spend with my wife. Over the years three generations of young people have come through the doors of the Revesby Blue Light Disco looking forward to a great night of music, fun and friendship at a price they can afford and in a venue where they are out of harm's way. Throughout that time one person has always been there, supervising the volunteers, making sure the canteen is stocked and watching over the kids. Gloria Hansen is the person I am referring to.

I first met Gloria Hansen several years ago when my two boys started to attend the Revesby Blue Light Disco. After having met Gloria, a woman who is strict with the kids but also compassionate and caring, I had no hesitation in leaving my boys under her supervision. Gloria Hansen, Rosemary Daly and all the volunteers are the heart and soul of the Revesby Blue Light Disco. Without them, especially the volunteers, the Revesby Blue Light Disco simply would not exist. Our community is indebted to Gloria Hansen and the volunteers for all of their hard work and dedication. Our community is also indebted to the police officers from Bankstown station rostered to assist in the running of the disco. Those police officers add to the security of the venue and provide our children with respect for the law. I take this opportunity to thank the police officers for their work not just with the blue light disco but for the community in general.

The Revesby Blue Light Disco is one of the longest-running and most successful of all the blue light discos run in this State. But the money raised is not kept for very long, because every 12 months in September, Gloria Hansen distributes the funds it has raised to local schools. Year after year cheques with a combined value of more than \$20,000 are distributed, and I am happy to say this year was no different. Both government and non-government schools within the East Hills electorate received \$1,000 each to run programs dealing with cyber bullying, road safety, bike education, the safe use of public transport and other crime prevention activities.

It was my pleasure to welcome and introduce to the school principals at the cheque presentation ceremony the New South Wales Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services took time out of his busy schedule to attend the ceremony and distribute the cheques. The Minister's presence yesterday is yet another example of the commitment that this Government has to the western suburbs of Sydney. I applaud the work of the Revesby Blue Light Disco and I thank Gloria Hansen and all the volunteers for their part in making our community a better place to live.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.33 p.m. until
Thursday 15 September 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
