

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 15 September 2011

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

**The Speaker** read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

## R U OK? DAY MORNING TEA

**The SPEAKER:** I encourage all members to attend the R U OK? Day morning tea that is being held in the Speaker's Garden this morning.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Routine of Business

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.04 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide for the following routine of business from 12.15 p.m.:

- (1) at 12.15 p.m., Government Business;
- (2) at 1.00 p.m., Orders of the Day (Committee Reports);
- (3) Private Members' Statements until 2.00 p.m.;
- (4) at 2.15 p.m., the Speaker resumes the Chair;
- (5) Ministerial Statements;
- (6) Notices of Motions;
- (7) Question Time;
- (8) Ministerial Statements;
- (9) papers;
- (10) tabling of Committee Reports and notification of inquiries;
- (11) petitions;
- (12) introduction and the agreement in principle speech on the Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment (Ethics and Public Service Commissioner) Bill;
- (13) Notices of Motions (General Notices);
- (14) Private Members' Statements; and
- (15) the House to adjourn at 4.30 p.m. or at the conclusion of Private Members' Statements, if concluded before 4.30 p.m., without motion moved.

I advise members of a slight change in the order of business for today that I have discussed with the Opposition, as I often do to ensure that there is full understanding on both sides about the conduct of business in this Chamber. Today the Premier will deliver an agreement in principle speech relating to the Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment (Ethics and Public Service Commissioner) Bill 2011. In the normal course of events that would take place during Government Business between 12.15 p.m. and 1.00 p.m. However, because of other commitments of the Premier that is not possible today. That agreement in principle speech will be given by the Premier this afternoon immediately after Question Time and before the giving of Private Members Statements.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## GLENDALE TO SPEERS POINT CYCLEWAY EXTENSION

**Debate resumed from 9 September 2011.**

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [10.06 a.m.]: As the shadow Minister for Health and a member of Bicycle New South Wales I am pleased to contribute to debate on this most important motion. The reduction in the incidence of bicycle riding since the 1950s has been disastrous for public health. One of the consequences of that reduction is that more than 50 per cent of people in New South Wales are now overweight or obese, with 63 per cent of men and 50 per cent of women having a body mass index of greater than 25. The Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle study, known as AusDiab, showed that the most weight gained is by people between the ages of 25 and 34, and that is approximately one kilogram a year, or only 20 grams a week.

At an approximate body mass index of 26.8, the rate of adverse health measures begins to increase. With obesity, which is defined as a body mass index of 30, the risk to health in the long term is considerable. At every age children now consume 15 per cent to 25 per cent more calories than they did in 1985, and much of that is from discretionary foods such as snacks or sugared soft drinks. A great problem is the increase in fast food consumption. On today's salary rates one must work for 14 minutes to earn enough to buy one Big Mac. In the *Archives of Internal Medicine* Vol 160 No. 11, June 12, 2000, a study involving 30,000 people showed a 40 per cent decreased risk of mortality for those who cycled to work, and on that statistic alone this cycleway is so important. It will give people the opportunity to cycle to work or, alternatively, to the nearest public transport interchange.

The health benefits of physical activity include increased life expectancy, physical fitness, increased energy, and improved mental health. There is also a proven correlation with obesity, physical activity and the reduction of cancer risk. The risk of cancer is reduced by approximately 20 per cent if obesity is reduced and physical activity is increased. The promotion of lifestyle physical activity such as regular walking and cycling is more effective than structured exercise programs such as boot camps or gyms. Thirty minutes per day of moderate to vigorous activity will give a health benefit, and those thirty minutes of exercise can be accumulated in three 10-minute periods of exercise such as would be attained on a cycleway.

We know from the 2005 Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle Study that this year another 100,000 people will develop diabetes, 200,000 people will become obese, 400,000 people will develop hypertension and another 470,000 people will develop early onset renal disease. The enormous increase in demand for renal dialysis is driven by the obesity epidemic in older Australians. The cost of that epidemic is staggering. The direct cost to the health system is \$2 billion with a further \$3.6 billion in lost productivity due to obesity, 40 per cent of which is carried by Federal, State or local governments.

While there is no simple answer to this problem, all of us need to lose a little weight and to be more active. Even a two-kilogram weight loss results in a 10 per cent reduction in medication use in men and 7 per cent in women. Permanent lifestyle change is the only solution, and that is why this cycleway is vital. Another advantage of the cycleway is that it engages populations who do not traditionally cycle, such as women, adolescent girls and older adults. In countries with high rates of active travel such as The Netherlands, these population groups achieve high levels of physical activity resulting in significant health benefits. As I said, the public health literature is clear that habitual activity is far better than structured exercise.

Another advantage of this cycleway relates to the perceived danger of riding on the road, which is a major disincentive to cycling. Walking and cycling carries a five to ten times higher risk of injury per kilometre travelled than the risks associated with driving a car. However, the increased risk of injury while cycling is offset by substantial health improvements by a factor of 20. Cycleways are a good way of engaging young people in cycling, facilitating commuting and encouraging people who have not ridden a bike for years to ride. This is a wonderful initiative and I commend it to the House.

**Mr GARRY EDWARDS** (Swansea) [10.13 a.m.]: I commend the member for Wallsend for moving this motion and I fully support the Glendale to Speers Point cycleway. I am a councillor on the Lake Macquarie City Council, which is fully in favour of shared cycleways and walkways. We realise the importance of linking these facilities and separating them from the main traffic arteries. Like the member for Wallsend, I fully support Mr Hocking in this endeavour. A couple of months ago I was honoured to be the official starter at an annual event that I am not sure the member for Wallsend knows about. I refer to the Loop the Lake cycle event, which is organised by local Rotarians and which circumnavigates Lake Macquarie, starting and finishing at Speers Point.

Over the years our local Rotary has raised several hundred thousand dollars for various charities. Earlier this year we were fortunate to be able to open a facility in Lake Macquarie known as the Fernleigh Track, which runs along the old railway line from Newcastle to Belmont. I call Belmont home; it is a great part of the world between Lake Macquarie and the Pacific Ocean. I think most members are aware that it is home to the wonderful Belmont 16 Footers sailing club, which does amazing work for community groups and charities in our area. The track project was a joint venture between Newcastle City Council and Lake Macquarie City Council.

My friend and colleague Tim Owen is the member for that area, and another friend and colleague, Greg Piper, is the local member and also the Mayor of Lake Macquarie. Greg played a large part in this project. The Federal Government contributed some funding for the project as a result of the efforts of the Federal member for Shortland, Jill Hall. The State Government also provided funding over a number of years. The track is finally open and if members were to go to the area, particularly on a Saturday or a Sunday, they would see many families availing themselves of this wonderful facility.

I note some of the comments made by the member for Macquarie Fields about the benefits of providing facilities such as cycleways. Projects such as this are part and parcel of the Healthy Lifestyles Program. The more that people walk and cycle on these paths the healthier they will be. They also provide a venue that can be used by the entire family. We know that if people are healthier, there will be less pressure on our hospitals and general practitioners. These projects are great for the entire community. Lake Macquarie City Council is working closely with the Roads and Traffic Authority. I discovered yesterday that it has had a name change; I am not sure of its new name. I will have a chat with the Minister for Transport to update my information about the new department. Whatever it is called, I am sure it will be a wonderful organisation. I again commend the member for Wallsend for moving this motion. The cycleway is a wonderful initiative and it has my full support.

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [10.17 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members who have made contributions to debate on the motion this week and last week and who are interested not only in cycleways in the Hunter but also in good health generally. I thank the members representing the electorates of Charlestown, Lake Macquarie, Macquarie Fields and Swansea. I thank the member for Charlestown for his comments about the positive future of the New South Wales Bike Plan. We all look forward to more funding being made available for the construction of bicycle routes and shared pathways in New South Wales. The member for Lake Macquarie referred to the very productive meeting involving councillors from Newcastle City Council and Lake Macquarie City Council. It was my goal to get them together to talk about regional cycleway links and it is terrific that that meeting occurred.

I also thank the bike-riding member for Macquarie Fields, who is a doctor and very interested in good health. He said that this motion is a good one, and I agree. He told the House about the disastrous health impacts of the reduction in cycling in our community. An extremely thorough survey undertaken by the Australian Bicycle Council found that New South Wales has the lowest rate of cycling in the country. That is sad news and we must do something about it. In his role as shadow Minister for Health, the member for Macquarie Fields emphasises the importance of good health and the impact of incidental exercise in the prevention of disease. The member for Swansea reiterated his full support for shared cycleways in the Hunter, and that is terrific. He also told the House about the successful Loop the Lake event. I thank Lake Macquarie Rotary for organising that fantastic event.

I thank my friend Ray Milliss, a former engineer in the Hunter and a cyclist, who said that the cycleway extension—which was the missing link—is a great idea and that it will benefit that growing area. Ken Scott has been a vigilante with regard to promoting the Wallsend to Glendale shared pathway/cycleway along with my predecessor John Mills, who secured the \$750,000 funding for the project. Ken said that he would love to see a shared cycleway/walkway from Glendale to Speers Point. He reminded me that we should always call them shared pathways. He probably says that because he is a walker, but it is true nonetheless. He is the type of person, being a retired university lecturer and geographer, who would be particularly interested in this project.

The notion of a cycleway from Glendale to Speers Point upon the completion of the Wallsend to Glendale cycleway on the historic tramway corridor, which should happen soon, is a logical step. I flag this issue now, early in the Government's term, so that funding can be provided in the next budget for a Glendale to Speers Point cycleway. I would support Government members to obtain funding for this project and would be happy for a share funding arrangement to be implemented. I also urge Lake Macquarie and Newcastle city councils, particularly Lake Macquarie because it is in its patch, to start working on this project and apply for

funding for planning. This project would be supported by all Hunter residents, particularly cyclists. Cyclists in the Hunter are pleased that this motion is before the House. They love the idea of more cycleways in the area, particularly off-road cycleways as they are much safer.

I am pleased that debate on this motion has been completed today. The Government could not postpone the motion because it was an adjourned debate. I gave notice of the motion at the beginning of May and it was appropriate for the motion to be before the House in September. I urge the Government in future to make sure that notices of motions are dealt with in order in which they are given. That is the most ethical way to do it. The hardworking members who gave notice of their motions in May, early after the election of the Government in March, should have their motions dealt with in order.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **SURF LIFESAVING**

**Mr DARREN WEBBER** (Wyang) [10.21 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the 2011-12 surf life saving season begins on 23 September 2011;
- (2) notes that the first patrols of the surf life saving season begin on 24 September 2011;
- (3) acknowledges the efforts of volunteer surf life savers across the State to keep beaches safe for residents and visitors; and
- (4) thanks the volunteer surf life savers and Surf Life Saving New South Wales.

I thank the Opposition for allowing the reordering of this motion. There was no malice intended in my seeking yesterday to have precedence given to my motion; the purpose was merely to bring attention to the achievements of this wonderful organisation. Surf Life Saving Australia's origins can be traced back to 18 October 1907 in this great State of New South Wales. On that day a meeting was held with nine voluntary surf life saving clubs and representatives of the Royal Life Saving Society. The nine original clubs were: Manly Surf Club; Bondi Surf Bathing Life Saving Club; Coogee Surf Life Brigade; Bronte Surf Brigade; Bondi Surf and Social Club; Tamarama Surf Club; Maroubra Surf Club; United Wanderers Surf Club and Woollahra Surf Club. It is interesting to note the different name each club chose and that not all those clubs have survived. Much heated debate has ensued as to which club was the first to start in its own right.

However, the 1907 meeting is undisputed. The clubs affiliated as a result of the meeting and became known collectively as the Surf Bathing Association of New South Wales. In 1922 the name was changed to the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia and in 1991 it changed again to the current Surf Life Saving Australia. This organisation, which started from humble beginnings a little over a century ago, has become the largest volunteer movement of its kind in the world. Today, over 150,000 Australians are members of a surf life saving club. More than 40,000 of those fine Australians are active patrolling members, including me. Australia boasts 11,726 beaches along her coastline.

Over 400 of those beaches are patrolled by surf lifesavers from 306 surf life saving clubs. The members of those original nine clubs would never have dreamed of being joined by an additional 297 clubs or that by 2011 over 550,000 lives would be saved by the movement. One hundred years on from that first meeting, to assist in celebrating the centenary of Surf Life Saving Australia, the Howard Federal Government declared 2007 as Year of the Surf Lifesaver. This brought unparalleled exposure to the movement and highlighted to the community at large the services the clubs provide. Surf life saving has been great to me. I have saved lives, patched up countless wounds, treated bluebottle stings and found lost children for distressed parents. I have made countless friends and learnt many skills, not only cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR] and first aid, but management skills as well.

As an enthusiastic teenager I took part in the Surf Life Saving future leaders development course. Since then, I have been elected to the positions of chief instructor, club captain, secretary and president. I also have taken on the immensely rewarding role of age manager for nippers on Sunday mornings. Junior club members aged 5 to 13 years are called nippers and are taught beach safety and awareness skills and surf sports. Nearly 60,000 nippers across the country take part in a fun, active and healthy lifestyle. The first aid

skills we teach can be applied in any environment, not just at the beach. I am most impressed when nippers I have taught come through the rookie program, a path that leads to those rookies becoming tomorrow's surf lifesavers.

For many people on the Central Coast, playing on the beach is a way of life to play. The member for Terrigal and Minister for the Central Coast has a long association with Wamberal Surf Life Saving Club, the club at which I started. He even enjoyed a season in the boat crew. He is a patron of Wamberal and Terrigal surf life saving clubs. The member for The Entrance is an active patrolling member of The Entrance Surf Life Saving Club and a former board member and current patron of the club. The member for Gosford has overseen an unprecedented rebuild of local clubhouses through his role as mayor. Even the Minister for Police, the Hon. Mike Gallacher, is an active patrolling member and enthusiastic boatie.

Surf lifesaving is also part of being a Webber. My father has been involved in surf lifesaving for over 50 years and has the honour of being a life member at The Entrance Surf Life Saving Club. Back when he was young, pillow fighting on a raised bar was used in competition to sharpen balance skills that were needed in the surf whilst riding boards. The old man was runner-up at the Aussie titles in this unique event. Dad has seen many changes in surf lifesaving over his five decades of involvement. Reels and rowboats no longer perform the task of rescues but live on in competition. They have been superseded by an arsenal of equipment for volunteers to put to good use. Inflatable rescue boats, more commonly known as rubber duckies, quad bikes, rescue tubes, lighter and faster boards, radios, Oxy Viva resuscitators and defibrillator units are all standard operating equipment for a patrol today, resulting in a faster response time and high level of patient care.

I have inherited some of my father's swimming skills, but not to the extent of my sister Kylie. She qualified to take part in the national Ironwoman series and has a distinguished record in swimming. All three of us have our bronze medallion and have taken an active part in patrolling. It is the same commitment to community service my parents instilled in me that brings people back to surf clubs summer after summer. While we all enjoy the off season after a long season of patrols, by spring we cannot wait to get back to the beach. Surf Life Saving has been a great tradition on the Central Coast for over 72 years. Central Coast Surf Life Saving has won branch of the year several times. It is little wonder with the hard work that goes into the coordination of all 15 clubs on the coast. The electorate of Wyong is privileged to have the Lakes Beach Surf Life Saving Club and Soldiers Beach Surf Life Saving Club.

Soldiers Beach has a handover ceremony tomorrow for its new clubhouse. I am looking forward to attending that ceremony. The other 13 clubs on the coast going north to south are North Entrance, The Entrance, Toowoona Bay, Shelley Beach, Wamberal, Terrigal, North Avoca, Avoca Beach, Copacabana, Macmasters Beach, Killcare, Ocean Beach and Umina. Surf lifesavers are an iconic image of Australia, wearing the red and yellow uniform and the quartered cap, standing guard over beachgoers and setting up the red and yellow flags designating the safest place to swim and bodyboard. The flags were first introduced in 1935 and at that time the colours were divided diagonally, not horizontally as they are today. The service provided by clubbies is recognised internationally. Even non-English speaking tourists understand the role and follow directions on our beaches.

Surf lifesaving teaches us to always swim between the flags and, if caught in a rip, relax, swim to the side, or signal for assistance. To signal for assistance, all one has to do is raise one arm and, if able to, wave to attract attention. Always exercise caution with the sun, remembering to slip, slop, slap. Do not swim alone, take a mate, and remember that, if you cannot see a patrol, they cannot see you, hence the importance of swimming at a patrolled beach and between the flags. Last season, in New South Wales alone more than 7,000 lives were saved in rescues performed by volunteer surf lifesavers. There were almost 30,000 first-aid cases treated and 160,000 preventative actions were undertaken. The 2011-12 surf lifesaving patrolling season begins next weekend on Saturday 24 September.

On behalf of the State Government, regular beachgoers and tourists, I express my deepest gratitude to volunteer surf lifesavers across New South Wales and Australia. I acknowledge the hard work that will be performed over the 2011-12 season and appreciate the members who have taken administrative roles in their clubs. I highlight the fact that all of these roles on a club level are voluntary and, in performing rescues, patrolling members will place their own lives at risk while endeavouring to save others. I wish every clubbie and boatie, surf lifesaving club, branch, State and national body a safe and enjoyable season ahead. Our goal is ultimately to have no lives lost between the flags. I hope that the 2011-12 season delivers that pledge for as many clubs as possible. Thank you for keeping our beaches safe.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [10.31 a.m.]: The Opposition wholeheartedly supports the motion and thanks the member for Wyong for acknowledging that the Opposition acquiesced in efforts to bring

on this motion today to herald the season, which begins on 24 September. Undoubtedly, surf lifesaving is written into Australia's history. From its fledgling beginnings as various surf lifesaving clubs and brigades in the 1870s, surf lifesaving now has 140,000 members in more than 260 clubs around Australia. In New South Wales over 66,000 members at 129 clubs patrol and protect swimmers along almost 1,600 kilometres of coastline from Fingal Beach in the north to Pambula Beach in the south.

The origins of surf lifesaving in New South Wales, and indeed Australia, can be traced back to the actions of Mr William Gocher at Manly Beach in September 1902 in defying the law by bathing during prohibited hours—in daylight. It is strange to think that daylight bathing was prohibited, and shows how things change. His and similar actions by other people forced the recognition of daylight bathing, and surfing became one of the national pastimes of our country. To keep our beaches safe, surf lifesavers now patrol beaches in New South Wales from September to April each year, spending in excess of 500,000 voluntary hours. Last season they performed more than 6,000 rescues and more than 188,000 preventative actions, and they treated more than 30,000 first-aid cases. Since recording began in 1949, lifesavers in New South Wales have saved more than 300,000 lives, which is astounding.

Thanks to the dedication and professionalism of these volunteers, New South Wales beaches are among the safest in the world. We recognise in this place Surf Life Saving's motto, which has not changed since its inception in 1907 and is still as relevant today as it was then: "Vigilance and service". It is indeed, as the member for Wyong said, the largest volunteer organisation in the world. The best way to exemplify praise for surf lifesaving is by discussing some of the features of the surf lifesaving clubs in my electorate, which are the Maroubra and South Maroubra clubs. There has been some controversy about the oldest surf lifesaving club in New South Wales. Last night I looked at Bondi surf club's website. It refers to more than a centenary of tradition and says:

The Bondi Surf Bathers' Life Saving Club ... is officially recognised as the oldest surf lifesaving club in the world.

It was established on 21 February 1907. Sorry, guys, there are no second prizes. The Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club was formed in 1906. I have a photo, which I am happy to table, of a reel and a bunch of clubbies sitting in and around their club in Maroubra in 1906. There were two surf lifesaving clubs established at Maroubra Beach. The North Maroubra Life Line Club was the forerunner to the present Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club, which I should mention is the New South Wales Club of the Year. During the 1960s and 1970s, Maroubra surf club members created the Maroubra Seals Club, whose members are the major sponsors of the surf club today.

I thank Maroubra Seals Club, Souths Juniors, the Randwick Labor Club and Randwick City Council, which are, along with Community Building Partnership grants from me and other members in this State, the largest donors to surf lifesaving. In the 1970s Maroubra's favourite son, Des Renford, who was a member of the Maroubra surf club, was conquering the English Channel. Barry Rodgers became an Australian lifesaving legend—and still is a legend in many respects—winning three successive Australian Ironman titles. Dennis Heussner—another great—later continued the ironman tradition at Maroubra and represented Australia at the Olympics.

Here are some quick facts: There are 963 club members. Last season there were 222 rescues, over 5,000 preventative actions and no lives lost while on patrol. The 24-hour public access defibrillator was launched for people who get into trouble at the beach. The club provided cardiopulmonary resuscitation training for a number of community groups and conducted dedicated disabled nipper activities for children with special needs. Keith Grima, long-time member and secretary, was the Surf Life Saving Volunteer of the Year. As I have mentioned, Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club was New South Wales Club of the Year. It will also be in the running for the Australian Club of the Year award, and Keith Grima is in line for the Australian Volunteer of the Year award, which will be announced at the Surf Life Saving Australia Awards of Excellence on 8 October. Maroubra surf club has been the recipient of over \$60,000 from me and the State Government in community building partnership grants over two years. I am a patron of Maroubra and South Maroubra clubs.

Last season, South Maroubra surf club carried out 2,872 preventative actions. The club has grown to 1,057 members and has achieved 523 nipper surf education awards. Last season there were 1,336 first-aid cases, 233 surf lifesaving awards and 216 rescues—it was a very busy season. South Maroubra surf club was awarded Sydney Club of the Year. It is a working-class family club where children can develop skills. It welcomes children and families from the La Perouse and Redfern Aboriginal communities to participate in surf awareness and surf sports. This year, South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club went to the western suburbs of Sydney to promote their great Australian activity in non-traditional recruiting areas, such as Campbelltown and Liverpool.

South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club is a uniquely Australian club, which espouses the value of mateship, community service and volunteerism. It is one of the few organisations, it says, where its members can strive to be the best in a surf sport discipline and then use those skills to save lives, which is one of the unique characteristics of surf lifesaving. One can be a great footballer, sprinter, shot putter, weightlifter, boxer—excel in whatever sport one wishes—but it is very rare that the skill one attains in that particular sport can be applied to a greater community end. In surf lifesaving, one can. Skills in swimming, in belt racing and in the use of inflatable rescue boats can all be applied to pursue the mission statement of surf lifesaving, which is to save people's lives when they are having a surf or enjoying the water.

Many organisations use South Maroubra Surf Club, including, for the past 10 years or so, members from the New South Wales township of Narrabri. Approximately 40 children and parents from Narrabri stay at the club for a week so they can explore Sydney and be amazed at things that happen on the beach, which kids from the west do not get to see but which those of us who live on the coast perhaps take for granted. Over the past two years the clubhouse at South Maroubra Surf Club has been in a rebuilding phase and has received more than \$150,000 from me and the Community Building Partnerships program. Former Minister Kevin Greene visited the club a couple of years ago with Phil Vanny, who is another legend from South Maroubra and who now works for the State office of Surf Life Saving New South Wales. The former Minister gave the club a grant of more than \$200,000.

The member for Kingsford Smith, Peter Garrett, who is a great supporter of both of the surf clubs, was recently instrumental in getting the club another grant of \$120,000 from the Federal Government. I am proud to say that a couple of other iconic organisations connected to surf lifesaving also reside in my electorate. The Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter service also resides at Cape Banks in my electorate. The helicopter was formerly situated at Prince Henry Hospital, but when the hospital was redeveloped former Premier Bob Carr guaranteed it a permanent home at Cape Banks. The helicopter has carried out 101 rescue missions in the past 12 months, 22 missions to support the State Emergency Service, 22 missions searching for activated distress beacons on behalf of Australian Search and Rescue and 55 surf patrols along the coast—a total of 200 missions.

Many of those missions were free to the community—in fact, \$620,000 worth. That is why I was very pleased that former Premier Kristina Keneally gave the service a grant of \$800,000, which I was happy to present in January this year, to keep the helicopter flying 24 hours a day. I conclude by recognising the Offshore Rescue Boats service that resides at Malabar and thank Karl Solomonson for his efforts in that service. Last year, under the Community Building Partnerships program, I gave the service \$40,000. That is another rescue organisation that helps people further offshore, such as fishermen. I join with the House in congratulating all of the clubbies and wish them all the best for the coming year.

**Mr STEVE CANSDELL** (Clarence—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.41 a.m.]: I commend the member for Wyong for this great motion recognising surf lifesaving clubs across New South Wales and across Australia. I am very fortunate in my area to have four clubs: the Evans Head Surf Life Saving Club in the north, Yamba Surf Life Saving Club, which is the oldest regional surf life saving club in New South Wales, Mini Water/Wooli Surf Life Saving Club and Red Rock/Corindi Surf Life Saving Club. Those clubs cover a coastline of approximately 140 kilometres, which I am fortunate to have in my electorate.

This is a day of celebration and recognition of a great community organisation, but in some ways it is also a day of sadness. In 1988 two young boys were swimming in Red Rock River when they encountered difficulties with the extremely fast outgoing tide. Their father, Gary Wall—who only 18 months earlier had bought an old Jaguar of mine—was a fit guy who was involved in helping young kids in youth centres. He dived into the river and pulled one of his sons to safety. Gary then went back into the swelling, fast-running water and both he and his young son Terry were washed out into treacherous surf. The nearest surf life saving club was 30 minutes away at Woolgoolga. Gary Wall paid the ultimate sacrifice in his selfless action of a valiant attempt to save his son's life. Gary and Terry Wall's drowning was the catalyst, motivation and reason for the community's campaign for, and involvement in, moves to establish a surf lifesaving club at Red Rock in 1992 to ensure that a similar tragedy never happened again.

Many surf lifesaving clubs were established for, essentially, the same reason—protection against the dangers of the surf. Initially, in 1907, the first lifesaving club—or surf bathers club as it was called then—was formed because people were unfamiliar with the surf and the rips and many people drowned when they were just trying to have a pleasant day in the surf. This year alone 21 people have drowned at beaches across New South Wales, and I would be very surprised if any of those people were swimming between the flags. The message has to go out today to anybody who goes swimming—tourists, visitors, locals: Swim between the flags.

I mentioned earlier that the oldest regional surf lifesaving club in New South Wales is the Yamba Surf Life Saving Club. A couple of years ago I spoke in the House about a young guy at that club, Jacob Lollback. In 2005 Jacob was named the *Daily Examiner's* 2005 Sports Star of the Year. In 2007 he won the under-19 Coolangatta Gold ironman title. In 2008 Jacob captained the under-21 Australian Surf Life Saving team at the World Cup in Japan. Unfortunately, in September 2009 Jacob Lollback, aged 20, drowned in a tragic scuba diving accident in North Queensland. It was a great loss for the community and a great loss for the surf club. Jacob's family was typical of surf lifesaving club families. Usually, when a son or daughter gets involved in a surf club, mum and dad get involved as well and it becomes a family affair.

I have attended many surf lifesaving club presentations in my area, and whether it is Mini Water/Wolli, Red Rock/Corindi, Yamba or Evans Head, every presentation is a family day. The mums and dads get involved in the clubs: they end up getting involved in surf lifesaving, they get their Bronze Medallion and they are on the committees of the clubs. Their kids learn more than just swimming and surf lifesaving; they learn real commitment to their community, they take pride in what they are doing, and their self-esteem grows. Because of their contribution to the community, the kids go on to have a very good life, and rightly so. Surf lifesaving clubs offer more to the community than just saving lives; they give kids direction, they bring families together, and they make our beautiful beaches that we enjoy so much safe environments. I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [10.46 a.m.]: In acknowledging and joining with my parliamentary colleagues and recognising the great work done by surf lifesaving clubs throughout New South Wales, I also want to give particular recognition to the growing number of female participants in surf lifesaving. Certainly in my area the numbers have increased by leaps and bounds and we are very proud that there is such a gender balance in surf lifesaving. A women's swimming club commenced in North Wollongong in 1907, and in 1908 a public meeting was held to formalise the need for a surf lifesaving club, which was then established in 1908 as North Wollongong Surf Life Saving Club.

I place on record our sincere gratitude to the lifesavers who do such a magnificent job. Often they not only are involved in saving lives and feeling the satisfaction and elation of saving somebody's life but also, as the member for Clarence said, are involved in the trauma of retrieving somebody who has lost their life. They have to deal with the stress and the ongoing issues that flow from that. We should recognise that, especially as today is R U OK? Day, which is a day to promote suicide prevention and the prevention of depression, which affects so many people. Today is a good day to acknowledge and recognise the traumas and difficulties faced by surf lifesavers on whom we so heavily rely. People should swim between the flags and the iconic yellow and red cap worn by surf lifesavers should be kept. Port Kembla Surf Live Saving Club and Wollongong City Life Safe Saving clubs do a wonderful job. When my children were young they were active participants at Wollongong City Life Saving Club.

Port Kembla Surf Live Saving Club was established in 1910 and its first dressing sheds were built in 1912. In 2010 the former Labor Government contributed \$2 million to upgrade and enhance surf lifesaving facilities across the State. In that year I announced and presented \$84,000 to the Port Kembla Surf Life Saving Club to increase the size of the club's premises to facilitate greater flexibility in its use. The Wollongong City Life Saving Club also has been a successful competitor throughout its history, boasting a number of titles won at various surf carnivals. Bob Burcher is a life member of the club. At one of the club's functions veteran surf lifesaver Warren Hopper reminisced about the first time a bikini was worn on Wollongong Beach. He regaled us with the tale that because he was the captain, it was his job to ask the young lady to leave the beach because bikinis were not allowed. That is a good example of the enormous demands placed on our surf lifesavers.

I acknowledge Michael Dennett, who is the President of Wollongong City Life Saving Club, Steve Maidment, the secretary of the North Wollongong Surf Life Saving Club, John Wren, the captain of the North Wollongong Surf Life Saving Club, Dave Erskine, the President of Port Kembla Surf Live Saving Club, Dave Edwards, the caption of the Port Kembla Surf Live Saving Club, Noel Gracie, the secretary of the Port Kembla Surf Live Saving, Michael Wilson, who has a long history with the Port Kembla Surf Live Saving, and Denis Gracie and Rod Kuhn, who are life members of the Port Kembla Surf Live Saving. I say thank you to surf lifesaving participants at all levels, male and female, including the nippers. I appreciate all your efforts and I call on the community to do the right thing: Swim between the flags. If we do that, then those who protect us on our beaches will have a much easier task.

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE** (The Entrance) [10.51 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wyong. Surf lifesaving is quintessentially Australian. Each year, thousands of volunteer surf lifesavers patrol our beaches in their iconic yellow and red uniforms to keep the multitudes of swimmers who flock to our



beaches safe. At the heart of the surf lifesaving brand is a dedication to preserving and protecting Australian life, which is a celebration of that life. Australian surf lifesavers are renowned worldwide for their exceptional skills in surf rescue and survival techniques, and demonstrate outstanding fitness and endurance. From the young age of five, Australians from all walks of life are able to get involved in surf lifesaving. The unique nippers program engages children on our beaches, teaching them invaluable skills in water safety and rescue and promoting self-confidence and wellbeing.

The Central Coast beaches are intrinsically entwined with our culture as a community and are a popular tourism drawcard. Our dedicated surf lifesaving volunteers are an integral part of keeping both locals and tourists safe on our beaches each year. In the 2010-11 season Central Coast surf lifesavers overall saved 777 lives, took 31,639 preventative actions, and attended to 4,718 first aid cases. In the 15 surf lifesaving clubs across the Central Coast there were 8,262 members and 2,310 patrolling members, who collectively totalled an impressive 89,255 patrolling hours throughout the season. The Central Coast's Surf Life Saving branch certainly deserved to once again be awarded New South Wales Branch of the Year in 2011, having also won it in 1999, 2004, 2009 and 2010. As a member of a surf club within the Central Coast Surf Life Saving branch, Amy Nurthen was awarded New South Wales Young Athlete of the Year, and was selected for the surf lifesaving Australian national Rescue 2012 train-on squad.

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

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE:** Katie Dixon was awarded New South Wales Lifesaver of the Year and received the Sir Adrian Curlewis Scholarship. I congratulate both Amy and Katie on their outstanding achievements. Additionally, 11 local athletes were selected to be included in the New South Wales representative team, and two were selected in the under 21s Surf Life Saving Australia representative team. The Entrance electorate has four surf lifesaving clubs: North Entrance, The Entrance, Toowoona Bay and Shelly Beach. During the summer season The Entrance thrives with tourism, and our beaches are highly popular. Our patrolling members do an exceptional job in making sure our beaches are safe for swimming, and they keep careful watch over the swimmers. I am proud to be Patron of The Entrance Surf Life Saving Club, the second oldest surf club on the Central Coast. I have also been an active patrolling member of the club for several seasons, having obtained my bronze medallion. I am proud to be a member and patron of a surf club with such a rich heritage and of cultural importance to the Central Coast.

I am looking forward to the opening of the new clubhouse of the Shelly Beach Surf Life Saving Club, which is nearing completion. Unfortunately, the club will not be open in time for the start of the 2011-12 season due to unforeseen commitments. November this year is the projected opening time. Importantly, surf lifesaving continues to receive strong support from governments at all levels. On the Central Coast, both Gosford and Wyong councils make significant contributions each year to the provision of equipment and ongoing financial support. The Federal Government has contributed to the rebuilding of the clubhouses at Shelly Beach and Soldiers Beach as well as contributing funds for renovations at Macmasters and Umina Beach Surf Life Saving clubs. The State Government makes contributions through the Surf Club Facilities Grant, as well as funding applications made through the Community Building Partnerships Program. I wish all surf lifesavers across New South Wales and the Central Coast a safe season. I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour)** [10.56 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wyong. While I fully support surf lifesaving in New South Wales, particularly those clubs in my electorate such as Warilla-Barrack Point Surf Life Saving Club, I find it unusual that motion No. 427 is being heard ahead of other important matters, such as health and jobs in the Illawarra. Throughout the history of the Warilla-Barrack Point Surf Lifesaving Club, not one life has been lost during patrols at Warilla Beach. Protecting swimmers is the number one objective of all surf lifesaving clubs, and we should all be proud of Warilla-Barrack Point Surf Lifesaving Club's record.

For the benefit of members I will give a brief overview of Warilla-Barrack Point Surf Life Saving Club, which has a long and proud history. A steering committee was formed early in 1959 by members of the Shellharbour Surf Life Saving Club. The first public meeting about formation of the new club was held on 24 February 1960. In its first season, from 1960 to 1961, the club had 32 active members, 15 associate members, an honorary category comprising 12 bronze medallion holders, 16 cadets, 6 sub-cadets, and it won 30 awards. It also won the Branch Patrol Efficiency Competition. It obtained a surf boat from the Whale Beach Surf Life Saving Club, had two reels, a few signal flags, a tent and some patrol flags. In 1966 and 1967 big seas washed the beach away. Beach erosion continues to be a problem.

In the 1969 to 1970 season Steve Thomas won the club's first State medal and Lod Leggett became the first life member of the club. In the 1973 to 1974 season the Warilla-Barrack Point Surf Life Saving Club and Shellharbour Surf Lifesaving Club, assisted by Shellharbour City Council, purchased a jet rescue boat. In the same season, the first clubhouse of the Warilla-Barrack Point Surf Life Saving Club was officially opened. In the 1974 to 1975 season, Noel Hayman won the Australian medal for flags. The Warilla-Barrack Point Surf Life Saving Club holds fun carnivals, which are great for team building, and many types of surf sports are participated in, including surf swimming, surf ski paddling, board paddling, inflatable rescue boats, surf boat rowing, rescue and resuscitation, belt races, iron man and iron woman competitions, and beach events.

I am lucky enough also to have Shellharbour surf club in my electorate. The club was formed in 1936. There was a short enforced break during World War II, but it has served the local community continuously from that time. During that time the club has established itself as one of the principal surf clubs in regional New South Wales. Over the years members have turned in outstanding performances in rescue, competition and community services. There are usually around 250 junior members and more than 200 senior members patrolling the club's stretch of beach. I am proud to say that both my son and daughter started as nippers at the Shellharbour Surf Life Saving Club and went on to compete and to volunteer for patrols.

The Shellharbour region has always been a popular holiday destination. However, the Shellharbour electorate is the fastest-growing electorate on the New South Wales eastern seaboard and the area has developed into a vibrant and progressive community. The Shellharbour Surf Life Saving Club patrols the main beach called Shellharbour North, Shellharbour South and Blacks Beach. Club members are committed to community involvement and compete regularly at inter-branch, State and national levels. I am a strong advocate for surf lifesaving in New South Wales, and particularly in my electorate, because it provides education for life that a healthy body is a healthy mind. My children have certainly benefitted from their time at the surf club.

The clubs are anti-smoking and anti-drinking, which is a fabulous example for our young adults and children to learn early while enjoying the natural and boundless beauty of Shellharbour and its beaches. I will quickly outline the difference between the surf lifesavers who wear yellow and red and those who wear blue and white. While I fully support the volunteer surf lifesaving clubs, the blue and white surf lifesavers are employed by local government. They have the necessary skills and qualifications to provide surf lifesaving in our communities. Both teams work hand in hand, which is a fabulous thing to see. I thank the member for Wyong for bringing this motion to the House.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [11.01 a.m.], by leave: There are four surf lifesaving clubs in the Coogee electorate and I have had an unbroken association with two of them for more than 11 years in my role as a councillor on Randwick City Council and as Mayor of Randwick. As an honorary member of the Coogee Surf Life Saving Club, which is in the ward that I have represented for the past 11 years, I note that the club now has well over 2,000 members and that thousands upon thousands of nippers train on Coogee Beach every year. Over the years I have said repeatedly that the contribution that surf lifesaving clubs make to our community is incalculable. One could, if so inclined, put a costing on the rescues undertaken, but surf lifesaving is so much more than just rescues.

The number of surf fatalities that are averted each year due to the surf safety training given to thousands of nippers cannot be estimated. One could never put a dollar value on that. Nor could one place a dollar value on the camaraderie and sense of involvement in one's community that being a member of a surf lifesaving club provides. In today's crowded cities it is easy to feel isolated. Surf clubs are a wonderful way of bringing our communities together. As we see on an important day such as this, R U OK? Day, the social cohesion that surf clubs provide is invaluable. That is why I have always been a strong supporter of our surf clubs and, importantly, I have always been willing to match my words with money. As has been noted, Randwick City Council has probably the most enviable record of providing financial support to its surf clubs. There are four great clubs in the Coogee electorate, which covers both Randwick and Waverley council areas.

All these clubs have either been renovated or are about to be renovated. Major renovations are planned for the Tamarama club—and not before time. The clubhouse is looking a bit tired, but its membership is going strong. Last Friday I was at Clovelly Surf Life Saving Club when it opened its most recently renovated facilities. These renovations not only enhanced the building and club environment but were critical repairs necessary because surf lifesaving clubs are located in corrosive environments, by the sea. The Coogee club is still undergoing major renovations but the work is well on track and the club is looking good. The Bronte club has become a leader in sustainability by installing water tanks and solar panels. I must address the assertion made in this place that Bondi Surf Life Saving Club is the oldest surf club in the world. Bondi is a wonderful club in the neighbouring Waverley electorate, but Bronte is the oldest surf lifesaving club in the world.

**Mr Chris Spence:** I thought it was Maroubra.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH:** It is not Maroubra either. It is beyond doubt that Maroubra is not the oldest, though I do love the people of Maroubra. In 1931 Bronte surf club buried a time capsule that contained minutes from its fourth annual meeting and were dated 1907. Therefore, the first general meeting was four years before that, in 1903. There may not be any evidence available of the first three meetings, but the minutes from the fourth general meeting of 1907 prove beyond doubt that Bronte is the oldest surf lifesaving club in Australia. I congratulate all the clubs on their fantastic work and I thank the member for Wyong for recognising the valuable role that surf lifesaving clubs play in our community.

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [11.07 a.m.], by leave: As a member with an electorate on the coast, I agree that this is an important motion and an important issue to discuss. I am lucky enough to live around 300 metres from the beach in the beautiful Keira electorate.

*[Interruption]*

Settle down. I am not in Vacluse. I know they are doing it tough in Vacluse, but take it easy. The same goes for you, Bruce. I am fortunate to live so close to the ocean. There are some fantastic surf clubs in my electorate. Woonona surf club in the north was given funding by former Premier Kristina Keneally, the member for Heffron. She was a fantastic Premier. She also provided funding to Bellambi surf club. That is the sort of record that the new Government has to try to match, so Barry is in a bit of trouble.

**Mr Chris Spence:** Bring back Kristina.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** That's right. Corrimal surf club is also in my electorate, and next week I will be attending its 100th anniversary celebration. One hundred years of service is a fantastic achievement for a surf club, and I will certainly be there to celebrate it. Another club—whose name no-one can pronounce very well—is Towradgi in the southern part of the Keira electorate. Like many members opposite I also have my bronze medallion but unlike them I do not consider myself to be a good look in a pair of budgies. The member for Wyong needs to be very careful because the previous member for Vacluse—not the current member—got into a little trouble by continually appearing in budgies. It would not be smart for the member for Wyong to do that. I am not sure about the member for Lismore, but I think he and I would be safe with board shorts.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** I live 300 miles from the beach.

**Mr RYAN PARK:** I will stay with the board shorts. This is a very important motion because we know how essential surf lifesavers are in people's most difficult moments. There can be no more frightening experience for people, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the coast and the surf, than to find themselves in difficulty in the ocean. We have a fantastic coastline and those of us whose electorates run along the coast know how great it is. We also know how very dangerous and challenging it can be at times. I take my hat off to the men and women who protect us throughout the summer months, and all year round on those beaches that are permanently patrolled such as the beach in the electorate of the member for Wollongong. It is to the credit of those men and women who put their lives on the line in some of the most difficult ocean conditions, such as large seas, rips, swells and undercurrents.

It is important that young people be involved in the surf lifesaving movement. With my background in health and physical education, I have encouraged many young people to join the nippers. It gives them not only great sporting and athletic skills but also, as the member for Coogee said, social cohesion and interaction, which are very important. I commend the motion to the House. I promise Hansard and members that they will not see me in a pair of budgies. I warn the member for Wyong again that he needs to be very careful and learn the lesson of the former member for Vacluse. I am confident that the current member for Vacluse will not make the same mistakes. I congratulate the surf clubs in the electorate of Keira.

**Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN** (Gosford) [11.12 a.m.], by leave: I support the motion but I want to focus on a different aspect—and it will definitely not be budgie smugglers. Some members who have spoken in the debate have been active members of the surf lifesaving movement but, unlike them, in my earlier days my involvement with the surf lifesaving movement was nil. In fact, the rumour in the electorate of Gosford is that the last time I appeared on the beach Greenpeace tried to refloat me! However, 20 years in local government have taught me much about the benefits of the surf lifesaving movement. I am very proud to say that, as a civic

leader for 20 years in my local government area, I have been a patron of the surf lifesaving movement. In that time I have gained an appreciation and understanding of individuals who have truly represented their community.

I refer to people such as David Unger, Peter James and Jim Meyer and current members such as Stuart Harvey, president of the Central Coast Surf Life Saving Club, and the chief executive officer, Chad Griffiths. Their dedication and commitment to the community has been outstanding. With regard to support for surf lifesaving, it was good to hear the member for Coogee say that the council has been at the forefront of contributions to surf lifesaving. On the Central Coast, Gosford City Council took exceptional steps in 1997 to reverse the degeneration of our surf clubs over many years. There are nine surf clubs in the Gosford local government area: Wamberal, Terrigal, North Avoca, Avoca, Copacabana, McMasters, Kilcare, Ocean Beach and Umina, the last two of which are in the Gosford electorate.

In 1997 the council took the initiative to raise funds for the improvement of our surf clubs, not just to provide secure storage for the vital equipment, the venues for training young nippers and lifesavers, or the provision of amenities for those who use the beach. Last year there were 2.2 million visitors to Central Coast beaches. The council focused more on the other uses for our surf clubs, such as community centres for meetings that involved more than the "beachies"—the local chambers of commerce, the Country Women's Association, yoga and fitness clubs, mothers clubs and the residents association. They all use the surf club as a venue for the community to come together. The council's attitude in 1997 was that these facilities not only serviced the beach but their communities as a whole, and so it was important that they be upgraded.

There has been some debate this morning about which was the first surf lifesaving club. I am not going to get into that debate. I will say that we got the best value for money because one of the first clubs to be built was at Kilcare in 1925, at a cost of £150. The last club we completed in the reconstruction of our surf clubs was in fact Kilcare, which was officially opened in May 2009, at a cost of \$2.6 million. Gosford council has contributed over \$15 million in a 10-year program for the rebuilding of its surf clubs. I am very proud to say the program has been completed and it has been done with the support of the staff of Gosford council such as general manager Peter Wilson and the city services manager for most of the program, Stephen Glen.

The council came together and pushed aside the politics and the parochialness of different areas. I take this opportunity to commend the council's mayors over that period, including Robert Bell, and councillors Jim Macfadyen, Laurie Maher and Malcolm Brooks. They committed to their whole community not just for the benefit of the surf lifesaving movement but because the surf clubs are a community centre for everybody. I commend the surf lifesaving movement and all those individuals who play an active and responsible role for their dedication and commitment. I commend the motion to the House.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I am disappointed the member for Wyong did not tell us whether Greenpeace was successful.

**Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyong)** [11.17 a.m.], in reply: I again thank the Opposition for allowing the re-ordering of this motion prior to the start of the surf lifesaving season next weekend. I am very pleased that there were eight speakers, other than me, talking about surf lifesaving. Surf clubs operate not only on the New South Wales coast but right around Australia and it is obviously very important to many members. I thank all members for contributing to the debate. The member for Maroubra referred to daylight bathing and it can be said that the origins of surf lifesaving having a lot of positive and negative stories. It is amazing to see how far Australia has come in that regard. He mentioned the motto of vigilance and service, which is certainly true today. He said that he is patron of both Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club and South Maroubra Surf Life Saving Club. I congratulate him; they are very important positions and it is good to hear that he too is proud to hold those positions.

The member for Maroubra mentioned that Bronte was probably the first surf life saving club. I will not get involved in that debate. But it is not disputed that surf lifesaving's official origins date from 1907. The member for Maroubra mentioned visits from kids from the west to beaches and surf clubs. That has happened at my club. It is rewarding for a kid from the bush, who may never have been to the beach, to see waves and sand, and especially to master the art of riding the waves. The member for Clarence mentioned his four local surf clubs, the sacrifice by the volunteers involved with those clubs and the importance of swimming between the flags. He also mentioned the clubs' commitment to the community and the pride people take from being involved in their local surf life saving clubs. It is good to hear that so many members understand that involvement from their personal experience.

The member for Wollongong mentioned female participation in surf lifesaving. It was not until 1980 that women could be active patrol members of surf clubs. It is a shame it took so long, but it is important to note that for many years prior to 1980 women and girls were involved in surf lifesaving behind the scenes. It is a good sign that it is getting to the stage where female members will outnumber male members in the ranks of surf lifesaving. The member for Wollongong likes the quartered cap and wants to keep it as part of the patrol uniform, which I most certainly agree with. A poll of members conducted late last year found that the cap should be retained. That is a good thing. The member mentioned that her children were involved in surf lifesaving when they were younger, and I congratulate the member for Wollongong on that. She also related some history about her club captain encountering a bikini for the first time.

That reminded me of a story my father told me about Princess Diana visiting Australia. She was most amused by the attire of males in beach competition. While Prince Charles was talking to dignitaries behind the scenes, apparently you could not get Princess Diana off the beach. The member for The Entrance talked about the world-renowned skills of surf lifesavers and his four local surf clubs. He is patron of The Entrance Surf Life Saving Club, the second oldest on the coast. He mentioned his pride at the new Shelly Beach clubhouse that is to open shortly. The member for Shellharbour is proud of the record of one of her two local clubs in having no lives lost, which is certainly an achievement.

Unfortunately, many clubs do not have that record, so it is a source of pride. She mentioned that healthy body, healthy mind is the attitude of all surf lifesaving members. Her children are also involved in a surf club, and I congratulate the member for Shellharbour on encouraging their participation. She also mentioned the blue-and-white uniforms worn by local government lifeguards. There is some debate about whether the blue-and-white and red-and-yellow uniforms lead to confusion, but that is the current situation. The member for Coogee has four surf clubs in his electorate with which he has had a long involvement as a councillor. It is interesting that Coogee Surf Life Saving Club has thousands of members. The clubs on the Central Coast would love to have that number of members. The member highlighted the fact that Bronte is the oldest surf life saving club in the world. I will not get into that debate.

The member for Keira lives close to the beach and one of his clubs celebrates its centenary next year. He has his Bronze Medallion, which is a good thing to have, and I congratulate him on that achievement. I will not go anywhere near his comments about Speedos. Finally, the member for Gosford has a long involvement with local government. He is a club patron. He mentioned some individuals from Surf Life Saving Central Coast whom I know as well. There is a long, proud history of service in that club. It was good that the member named those individuals today. He mentioned also the high cost of rebuilding clubhouses. I thank all members for speaking on this motion and I wish all clubbies the best for the season ahead.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I am sure that all members of the House support the motion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **DARLING STREET WHARF FERRY SERVICES**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [11.23 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the Balmain community remains concerned about recent changes to ferry timetables;
- (2) calls on the Government to correct the loss of integration of ferry to bus and ferry to ferry services at Darling Street wharf;
- (3) calls for a timetabling review to avoid simultaneous ferry arrivals and improve morning and evening peak services to Darling Street wharf; and
- (4) calls on the Government to reinstate the 11.30 p.m. service to Darling Street wharf.

I bring to the attention of members concerns in my community about changes to ferry timetables last year, in particular, changes that apply to Darling Street wharf, Balmain East. Balmain residents and many Sydneysiders in general want to commute by ferry but peak service scheduling, timetable problems and poor integration are making that increasingly difficult. Residents of the Balmain peninsula value the services provided by Sydney

Ferries—they are great supporters of Sydney Ferries and its workers—and census data provides solid evidence of the high usage of ferry services by our local community. I recognise also the excellent work of Councillor John Stamilos with the local precinct committees on this issue. While there have been some important improvements to services, fundamental concerns remain regarding morning peak services, evening peak services, the integration of transport services and night safety, as well as the general poor timetabling of ferry services. I addressed many of these issues in a private member's statement that I made on 30 May 2011.

The key concerns of local residents are the removal of Balmain East from the Balmain-Woolwich service, reduced peak period services and the need for comprehensive community consultation. I will address those issues today. I note also that the Birkenhead ferry service was discontinued when the timetable changes were implemented last year. That is a real loss. I also ask the Government to examine network efficiency in coordinating ferry and bus timetable connections with bus routes 441, 442 and 445. The current focus on services between Balmain and the central business district and Darling Harbour fails to recognise and accommodate for Balmain's diverse community. In order to examine the implications of the changes to ferry services, it is important to consider both the physical and social context of the Balmain peninsula.

The Balmain peninsula is ideally situated for high levels of ferry usage, being surrounded by Sydney Harbour and having four existing ferry wharves. The peninsula has only three genuine gateways to the surface road network, all of which join heavily congested Victoria Road. Traffic congestion diminishes road network capacity and therefore reduces the reliability of bus services. The area's topography is also significant—ferries are more convenient for residents who may have difficulty walking up steep slopes around the peninsula. Two areas of particular concern regarding the recent reduction in services are Elliot Street and Thames Street, which has a very high population of residents in social housing. A significant number of aged, disabled and low-income residents rely on public transport to access essential facilities and services in Balmain and Leichhardt.

Residents depend solely on ferries via wharves at Balmain West and Balmain. While the transfer of Balmain East from the Balmain-Woolwich service to a direct Darling Harbour service has improved accessibility for many central business district commuters, it has compromised accessibility for a number of Balmain's more vulnerable residents due particularly to the resultant loss of access to buses from Balmain East wharf. Many residents of the Elliott Street and Thames Street areas are isolated from Balmain by steep grades that prevent pedestrian access and necessitate the use of ferries to connect with bus services at Darling Street. The situation is not optimal.

The Balmain-Woolwich ferry service, in its previous configuration, provided these residents with access to the 442, 444 and 445 buses at Balmain East wharf. These buses then permitted travel to the numerous facilities and services on Darling Street including supermarkets, Balmain Hospital, dentists, doctors and other healthcare providers, as well as connections to Rozelle and Leichhardt. The discontinuation of these services has therefore undermined connectivity between Balmain East and the rest of the peninsula. Therefore, I call on the Government to reinstate, as a minimum, non-peak services that connect Balmain East directly with Balmain and Balmain West.

I have also raised the issue of the 11.30 p.m. service. In the new timetable there is a 10.22 p.m. service. However, it is important to note that under the former timetable there were 12 stops by the last ferry, including three in Balmain, whereas the new timetable has only five stops and only one in Balmain. That is a significant reduction in service for those taking the last ferry of the night. Under the old system the last ferry finished at almost 12.30 a.m.; the new service finishes at 11.45 p.m. It is a service that is missed by the many commuters who have contacted my office.

The reduction in peak services has significantly affected service level and will prevent future opportunities to increase ferry services. The morning peak services to Circular Quay from the Darling Street Wharf are poor. The only useful direct service is at 7.56 a.m. The new 7.21 a.m. service is far too early for most commuters and takes an indirect route that is much less patronised than the previous 7.37 a.m. service. The new schedule has a 36-minute gap in the morning peak service, forcing commuters to go to Thames Street Wharf for an earlier service. As the Thames Street Wharf has no bus connection, this results in the Balmain Peninsula having more unnecessary traffic and parking problems at the wharf.

Evening peak services to the Balmain Peninsula from Circular Quay are also poor. The service gap during the evening peak time is from 5.15 p.m. to 5.55 p.m. and is the longest on the schedule for the entire day. The previous 5.45 p.m. and 6.05 p.m. services at Darling Street Wharf should be reinstated as they were well

patronised and, importantly, connected with bus services. The introduction last year of the new timetable caused concern for night integration of transport services. The Darling Street Wharf connects two ferry services and three bus services. Removing the Woolwich ferry service has greatly reduced the benefits of the integrated bus-to-ferry and ferry-to-ferry services. Many commuters prefer to use the Darling Street Wharf after dark as it has a bus connection—unlike the now heavily used Thames Street Wharf.

Service changes to Darling Street Wharf are based on the premise that more commuters prefer King Street Wharf. If that is so, why do the changes apply only to Darling Street Wharf? An efficient connection between Woolwich and Darling Harbour services at the Darling Street Wharf would support the premise for greater services to King Street Wharf. I call on the Government to listen to the issues raised by my community. Consultation with local communities and councils about the earlier timetabling changes was poor—information was delivered via advertising in local newspapers. Local government can improve its management of building development issues by consulting the local community on public transport initiatives. Importantly, including and engaging local government specifically would improve the consultation process with the State Transit Authority, Sydney Ferries or other transport agencies.

This is an important issue not only for residents of the Balmain Peninsula but also for those who want integrated public transport services. I understand that the Government will review the ferry timetable. It is important that the Government takes an active role in engaging local communities and councils in these important decisions. We have heard much rhetoric from the Government about integrating bus and ferry services, but integration must be implemented when the new ferry and bus timetables are developed. I have had some contact with the Minister for Transport, who made some positive noises. We look forward to addressing these matters in detail so that ferry users, particularly the disadvantaged on the Balmain Peninsula, have access to connecting bus services. I thank the House for the opportunity to raise this issue. It is important to debate public transport needs and for the Government to listen to the local community.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne) [11.33 a.m.]: The people of Balmain can be assured absolutely of one thing: the Government will deliver on its commitment to fix Sydney ferries. That commitment does not end in Balmain; it extends also to other electorates serviced by public transport via water. After being elected in March, the Government swung into action almost immediately and hit the ground running. In May the Government announced a program to restore, improve and expand ferry services as well as upgrade wharves and replace the fleet. I am glad that the budget supports that commitment in monetary terms. Substantial progress has been made already, including steps for the proposed franchising of Sydney Ferries to a private operator. My colleague the member for Strathfield will say more about that later. Five strong local and international transport operators with fantastic credentials expressed interest in that opportunity. We look forward to more decisions down the track.

A number of constituents in my electorate were unhappy with service changes, particularly those extending to Birkenhead Point. The service to Birkenhead Point was cancelled—a terrible decision given the high-density living on that part of the peninsula. However, I have received feedback from my constituents that the Birkenhead Point service was not well promoted, and timetable changes were inconvenient. In October 2010 changes were made to the ferry timetable configuration for the Balmain Peninsula, particularly the Darling Street Wharf. They were not good changes. That wharf is now serviced only by the Darling Harbour ferry route. The Woolwich service has been redirected from the Darling Street Wharf to Thames Street Wharf. Currently, the frequency of bus and ferry services to and from Darling Street Wharf means that connection times are reasonable.

However, in saying that, the Government is always committed to looking at ways to improve the public transport system. That is why Sydney Ferries, in conjunction with the State Transit Authority and the Department of Transport, will examine connection times in their next network review. The Government recognises also that timetabling and turnaround at some Balmain wharves is rather tight. The Department of Transport and Sydney Ferries have identified issues and are considering options to rectify that problem. The timetabling and turnaround issues mentioned by the member for Balmain will be reviewed as part of the introduction of Sydney Ferries' summer running timetables.

In response to the call to reinstate the 11.30 p.m. Darling Street Wharf service, I draw the member's attention to the fact that the last service departs that wharf at 11.22 p.m.—eight minutes earlier than was previously the case. However, I thank the member for Balmain for drawing my attention to the fact that that service no longer makes the number of stops it used to make. Nevertheless, the Government will investigate the span of services as part of the ferry network review. It is pleasing to note that Sydney Ferries advises that total

patronage from the four wharves on the Balmain Peninsula has increased by approximately 25 per cent over the past 12 months. We encourage the use of public transport, particularly as the opening of the duplication of the Drummoyne Bridge in that neck of the woods certainly did it no justice.

I stood with the member for Balmain during the protests against that unnecessary piece of infrastructure. I live particularly close to Victoria Road, yet I have to travel the long way round via Parramatta Road to get to this place. The member for Heffron was happy to open the bridge in a rather unique fashion. Instead of cutting a ribbon, she crossed the bridge in a bus. It was fantastic. The improvements that the Government will deliver under its Fixing Sydney's Ferries program will see further increases in Balmain patronage. This Government is about providing better public transport services. Recently, I was happy to distribute some informative literature at Abbotsford Wharf for my residents, who were pleased and surprised to see a member of Parliament at the wharf after an election. I am keeping in touch.

I am advised that Sydney Ferries and the Department of Transport are aware of timetable issues raised by the member for Balmain; they will be considered in future timetable reviews. We hope that is soon. The Government will restore ferry services to the lower North Shore, which the previous Labor Government reduced in October 2010. Cuts to ferry services were not restricted exclusively to the North Shore, the Birkenhead Point service was lost completely. I also note that the Bayview Park ferry wharf has a very limited ferry service. It is no wonder that commuters find it difficult to access ferry services. From recollection, two ferry services run each morning—one prior to 7.00 a.m. and another at 8.00 a.m.—and two ferry services run in the afternoon. I do not regard four ferry services as adequately servicing the community.

The Minister for Transport announced that the Government has invited private sector operators to express their interest in any additional peak-hour services they would like to provide to taxpayers on a cost-neutral basis. The member for Balmain and I will make submissions on that matter on behalf of our electorates. To facilitate these services—we are not about talk, we are about action and delivery—wharf access slots will be made available at Circular Quay at wharf No. 6 and other commuter wharves around the harbour, including those at Balmain. The Government looks forward to receiving ideas for new services from private operators.

The Government will develop a long-term strategic plan for ferries—a vision, which has been sorely lacking. The plan will encompass the overall ferry network, identifying expansion opportunities and highlighting the assets improvement, including new vessels and wharf upgrades, that are required to support viable and good ferry services. With this program in place people living or working in Balmain and the adjoining electorates can expect to see improved services. I share a common interest with the member for Balmain: the lifeline of public transport in our electorates. The previous Government left us with real problems, but this Government has well and truly taken up the challenge and is committed. I thank the member for moving his motion and for the opportunity to speak on it.

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [11.42 a.m.]: This is an important motion and I congratulate the member for Balmain on introducing it. The job of Minister for Transport is probably one of the most, if not the most, difficult job in any government. Timetabling is known as the "black art" when it comes to transport, because it is very difficult. The member for Balmain raised very important issues such as good timetabling needs to be informed by the community and commuters. At times governments of all persuasions have probably allowed this "black art" to be undertaken by technocrats in a way that may make sense on paper but does not always make sense in terms of travel times.

We talk about reform in Sydney Ferries, but reform does not necessarily mean privatisation. Reform means improvements to a previous service. The Government talks about undertaking reform and how the private sector will do it better, but let us look at a specific example. The member for Balmain has mentioned to me previously that the maintenance workers at the Balmain shipyards have expressed concern about their positions, wages and what is going to happen to them as a part of the reform. The men and women employed by Sydney Ferries do a fantastic job. I had an opportunity to work closely with the Chief Operating Officer, David Callahan, who is a fine individual and leader of that organisation.

Timetabling is difficult and to get it right the Government must listen to the community and listen to the local elected members of Parliament through which many of these concerns are raised. One of the important issues in transport is travel times and not simply the length of time the journey takes on a particular service. Travel time is the time it takes you from when you leave your home to get to your destination. It is not only sitting on a train or ferry, but also the length of time spent at interchanges. The



member for Balmain has raised legitimate concerns about ensuring that the timetables for ferries and the buses meeting those ferries are synchronised so that people do not have to wait extended periods of time to continue their journey.

Waiting for a connection can extend travel time significantly. Synchronising timetables is a complex task, but it is something that governments across Australia have to address. Complex timetable arrangements must reflect the needs of the community; a balance must be achieved that prevents overservicing or underservicing and streamlines the linking of various transport modes at key interchanges. Huge numbers of people in and around Sydney use public transport; it is an enormous part of their lives.

Although it must be an enjoyable ferry commute for people living in western Sydney and on the North Shore, we must make sure that when we talk about timetable reviews we do not look at single mode transport, because single mode review of timetables is problematic. I look forward to this new department, which was started by the former Premier and former Minister for Transport, centrally coordinating and streamlining timetables for all modes of transport based upon community need. That is what the community expects of members in this place. That is what the community expects of their Government. I look forward to the member for Drummoyne coming back to this House and telling us how the ferries are going.

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI** (Strathfield) [11.47 a.m.]: I congratulate the member for Balmain on moving this motion highlighting his concerns about ferry services out west and to the Balmain peninsular. Before I deal with the motion I will refer to some comments made by the member for Keira. I was quite entertained by his assertion that timetabling is now a "black art". When I caught trains in the 1960s and the 1970s timetabling was well understood by many people and it never seemed to be a problem. The reason it is a "black art" is that the former Government made it a "black art".

**Mr Ryan Park:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. We are talking about ferries, yet the member for Strathfield admitted he has not taken a train for 40 years.

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

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** The "black art" of timetables was refined under the former Government by cutting a number of the rail services and ensuring that the journey times were longer.

**Ms Sonia Hornery:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The motion is about ferries, not railways.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Strathfield will return to the leave of the motion, which deals with wharves and ferry services.

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** We cannot deal with ferries without dealing with transport generally, as the member for Balmain pointed out. When considering the scheduling of ferries one also must consider the scheduling of buses and trains. The word "integration" comes to the fore. Ferry services are part of the transport network. The member for Balmain will take heart from this: The Government has established an organisation called Transport for NSW, which deals with the substantive part of the issues he has raised. The integration of ferries and buses is important, as is the availability of commuter car parking around the nodes that service ferries. I am reminded of that famous statement: New South Wales is the only place in Australia where people get up in the morning and have to fight their own government to get to work. I am sure all users of ferry services would say that.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** Who said that?

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I said it on Channel 9 on a number of occasions. I thought it was a brilliant line.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** You quoted yourself?

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I thought it was a great line.

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

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I can inform the member for Balmain that we are dealing with the issues he has raised. We have asked for expressions of interest and we are considering additional routes and services, particularly during peak periods. More than that, we are examining the quality and reliability of services, and the best way to do that is to seek the input of the private sector. The private sector has operated excellent ferry services, as demonstrated by the high-speed Manly ferry service. Around the world in multiple jurisdictions the private sector has proved that more often than not it can provide higher-quality, more reliable and more cost-effective services than its public counterpart.

**Mr Ryan Park:** You worked with the RTA.

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I did work in the Roads and Traffic Authority. It was a great place to work.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Keira will refrain from interrupting the speaker.

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** We will use the experience of the private sector to provide the services referred to by the member for Balmain. The member would appreciate that the major issue across the transport network is scheduling, which requires a long-term approach. Members have referred to community consultation, which is a given. I implore members who have had experience in the transport sector to acknowledge the professionals who do this for a living. The professionals should be listened to rather than ignored. We need to get the balance right by engaging in community consultation and using professionals to deliver the best outcome for the ferry users of Balmain.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain)** [11.52 a.m.], in reply: I thank all members who made a contribution to this debate: the member for Strathfield, the member for Drummoyne and the member for Keira, who all highlighted the importance of integrating public transport. I acknowledge the points raised by the member for Drummoyne about the Government's serious commitment to review this matter, involve the community and ensure that these issues are addressed when the next timetabling review is undertaken. I will address an issue that was raised by the member for Drummoyne. The motion is in no way a criticism of the employees of Sydney Ferries. Those workers, many of whom I met at the recent rally against the Government's industrial relations agenda, are a fantastic bunch of people who do incredible work in a difficult situation. When my parents migrated to Australia my father's first job was as a fitter at Balmain Shipyard. He worked there for many years. I recognise, in particular, Chris Moutter from the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union.

**Mr Ryan Park:** You should be in the Labor Party.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER:** I would be if it was not so right wing. I also recognise Paul Garrett from the Maritime Union of Australia and members of the Australian Services Union who fought valiantly against the former Labor Government's attempt to market test Sydney Ferries. The Greens worked with representatives from Balmain Shipyard and Sydney Ferries to make sure that did not occur. It did not take place, to the great credit of the former Government. That was an excellent outcome. Unfortunately, this new Government raises concerns not only from the philosophical perspective of the privatisation of ferries but also in relation to the wages, conditions and employment security of workers at Balmain Shipyard. Those workers are concerned about the process and what it will mean for them.

I have raised this issue with the Minister for Transport and I will continue to work side by side with, in particular, delegates from the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union and the Maritime Union of Australia, the majority unions represented on that site, to make sure that we support the public provision of Sydney Ferries and, if the Government continues down this path, to defend and protect the security, wages and conditions of those workers. The workers at this facility have done an amazing job. The problem with Sydney Ferries has not been the workers; the problem has been the management and the different types of vessels and engines they have introduced. Sydney Ferries should not be run by the Navy; it should be run by public transport management experts. That has been one of the great challenges faced by Sydney Ferries.

The important issue does not relate only to protecting jobs, wages and conditions and keeping Sydney Ferries public. It also relates to ensuring that the Government and the professionals referred to by the member for Strathfield engage the community. Government members have given a commitment in that regard, which gives me a great deal of comfort. The Government must ensure that ferries and buses are properly integrated and that adequate services are provided. For example, the 11.30 service, which was well supported, has been

reduced from 12 stops to only five and rather than stopping at Balmain on three occasions it now stops only once. The high density of people living in social housing in a large development around Mort Bay and East Balmain should have access to public services. Many of them are frail and elderly and find it difficult to traverse the steep streets from the harbour up towards the main street on the ridge.

I hope the Government seriously considers the social justice aspect to public transport. The member for Drummoyne referred to integration works. The member for Drummoyne and I were very disappointed when the Birkenhead ferry service, which services his electorate, was discontinued. It was a big loss for the people of Drummoyne and Balmain. I hope the Government seriously considers all these issues because they have implications not only for the workers but also for social justice, and for the efficient and effective running of the community and the economy, as well as for the environment. By maximising the number of people who use public transport and reducing the use of private vehicles we will reduce pollution and congestion. That is good for business, for the community and for the environment.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **ELERMORE VALE MEN'S SHED**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [11.58 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the launching of a men's shed at Elernmore Vale; and
- (2) congratulates all the men involved with the launch and congratulates Elernmore Vale Neighbourhood Centre on this initiative.

Although notice of this motion, which is No. 31 on the *Business Paper*, was given on 5 May 2011, it will not be completed today due to it being bumped off the calendar. However, I am relieved that I can commence the debate today because men's sheds, particularly for the blokes in this House, are as important as any other item on the *Business Paper*. The reason I want to bring on this motion, which is Notice of Motion No. 31 and of which I gave notice on 5 May, is because I was aware that men in the Elernmore Vale area are very keen to build a Men's Shed. They are asking for government support. I did the right thing. I did not try to jump the queue. I gave notice in May and the motion is being debated today. Debate will not conclude today, due to the Government jumping to the head of the queue.

**Mr Daryl Maguire:** You should have reordered it. You could have reordered it, no problem. We would have agreed.

**Ms SONIA HORNERY:** I thank the Government Whip for now telling me that very useful information. Yesterday he told me that we would be debating motions until 1.00 p.m., but I now understand that we will be debating motions only until 12.15 p.m. That is another furphy I have been told by the Liberal Government. The important issue is that on Saturday the Elernmore Vale Men's Shed will be launched. When I discovered this morning that the Government had bumped me off the calendar, I was quite desperate because my opportunity had been taken away to talk about the men's shed and its launch this Saturday.

The Elernmore Vale Men's Shed steering committee was established in 2010 following a community breakfast at which the vital need for this service within the area was identified. Those attending the community breakfast said that the major factors impacting on the physical and mental health of senior men and women are inactivity, social exclusion and a sense of social work experience. It was identified that the area comprised a large number of retired men from many backgrounds, both culturally and professionally, who wanted to remain engaged and seen as contributing to the community in a positive way. These people felt that their professional skills and life experiences had become devalued within society, but that meeting some needs in the community was within their capabilities.

The concept of Men's Sheds has been embraced by a growing membership of individuals, many of whom are returned servicemen or retired veterans. The multicultural mix of individuals has highlighted the diversity of our community and aided in dispelling misconceptions, misunderstanding and ignorance around cultural differences. The ability of people to work alongside each other to create understanding and tolerance of

each other's differences has generated greater harmony within the community. The children and grandchildren of the men view this developing collaboration between people, and that will further contribute to generational understanding and acceptance of our social and cultural diversity.

Even though commencement was in a modest environment that was within the means of the community centre to fund, the Men's Shed, and the community garden within which it is set, has rapidly expanded its community involvement both locally and in adjoining suburbs. The members are identifying and exploring possible options and planning avenues to meet the needs of the vulnerable, disadvantaged, socially isolated and disabled within the community. Achievable projects and undertakings are being formulated to aid other individuals to retain their independence and continue to live in their homes, such as performing minor home maintenance for them. It is felt that these social support initiatives will delay the need for many to enter supported living environments and will aid our leaders and society in being able to meet the pressures and infrastructure burden of this growing need.

The Men's Shed and Community Garden has become an essential component in meeting the community's needs both physically and socially. It would welcome any possible support. The organisation will continue in its endeavours to meet those needs, and feels it has a social obligation to do so. The Men's Shed will not accept that its contribution is not vital to the development of our society. Because the special launch of the Elmore Vale Men's Shed will take place this Saturday, I recently met with members of the Men's Shed who have indicated that they are happy for me to quote some of them and mention their names in the House. Mr John Fitness said:

I have recently retired as a Patient Transfer Officer at John Hunter Hospital, and I encourage retired men—  
and probably some members of Parliament should be encouraged—

to get involved in the Men's Shed. It is a way for retirees to utilise their life-long skills and to give back to the community.

The lovely Errol Thompson, a former bus driver, said:

At present we have been setting things up for the official opening. One of our aims is to assist community members with small handy jobs that don't require a tradesperson, but that they may not be able to do for themselves.

Referring to Errol, Allan Lewis said:

He is one of the linchpins – there to open up in the morning, set up the urn (one of the most important jobs!) and be there at least four times a week.

That is a nice comment about Errol. Allan also said:

I live nearby and I'm happy to go to the Men's Shed and open up at 8.30 am and attend almost every day. I am thrilled with the way the Men's Shed has developed and the interest it has generated. One of our projects is to make wind chimes and bird feeders in the Shed using the tools that have been generously donated, to donate to schools to promote environmental awareness. The Men's Shed has been great for the companionship it provides and the fact that men can also come here with their own pet projects.

I am sure that can be said about every other Men's Shed in New South Wales. Allan continued:

Many of the men have also contributed to the wonderful Community Garden that adjoins the Men's Shed at the Elmore Vale Community Centre.

I will conclude a bit early because I am a person who likes to give other people a chance to speak. I am pleased that at least I have had this opportunity in Notice of Motion No. 31 to make sure I officially advertise the wonderful Elmore Vale Men's Shed, which will be launched this Saturday. I wish good luck to all the blokes who have been involved, particularly Lester Mostyn, the Elmore Vale Community Centre coordinator, who has done such a good job at getting all the blokes together. Well done.

**Mr TROY GRANT** (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.06 p.m.]: I am very proud to support the motion of the member for Walsend and congratulate her for drawing this matter to the attention of the House. There are a significant number of Men's Sheds in my electorate and across western New South Wales. I have visited every one of them in my electorate. They have been established for a little while and I welcome news about the establishment of the Elmore Vale Men's Shed. I used to live just down the road from there, and there are some terrific people in the area. I commend and thank the member for Walsend for bringing this to the House and for her support of Elmore Vale. The New South Wales Government supports and celebrates Men's

Sheds as a community initiative. As the member for Wallsend highlighted, Men's Sheds provide a way for men in communities throughout the State to work together to combat issues such as loneliness, depression and social isolation.

It is quite appropriate that the member for Wallsend raises this subject matter today—15 September being R U OK? Day. That wonderful program promotes checking on each other's welfare—the very activity that is pursued every day through the Men's Sheds. The Men's Shed movement as a whole is particularly important. It is successful because the sheds are developed and managed by the community and are not reliant on government for funding or financial support. Community-run Men's Sheds are important for men's wellbeing and health. Primarily they are for older and retired men in rural, regional and metropolitan areas. While the Men's Shed movement is relatively new, it has mushroomed to about 300 locations across the country. New South Wales definitely leads the way, having 185 Men's Sheds established in the State. As I said earlier, I have had the pleasure of visiting every one of the Men's Sheds in my electorate.

I have seen firsthand the absolutely wonderful work that these sheds and the men are doing in bringing their communities together. I join with my Federal colleagues, Senator John Williams and Mark Coulton who is the member for Parkes, in supporting our Men's Sheds. I know that Senator Williams is the patron of a Men's Shed at Inverell and he does a wonderful job in helping them fundraise. He invited Kamahl to perform there. It was such a significant event and the money that was raised so extraordinary that they have now been able to add to the infrastructure within that Men's Shed. We applaud those sorts of initiatives. At the beginning of this year I joined Mark Coulton, the member for Parkes, at the expo held at Dubbo where we heard about the tonnes of innovative ideas and diversity of projects in the Men's Sheds, and the way they are being publicised. I will help the member for Wallsend to put her Elmore Vale Men's Shed in touch with the Lightning Ridge Men's Shed, who are doing significant work and who are happy to share some of their projects with fellow Men's Sheds.

The Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales and member for Barwon, Kevin Humphries, is well aware of the wonderful work of Lightning Ridge Men's Shed. He is a great supporter of the Men's Shed concept. As I said, the majority of the Men's Sheds are located in the bush. They could have no greater fans and supporters than members of Parliament who represent regional New South Wales. Traditionally there has been little encouragement for men to take an interest in their own health and wellbeing, particularly in regional areas. As we heard today through R U OK? Day, most men are reluctant to talk about their emotions, which means they often do not ask for help and, as a result, it is probably the reason that many men drink more, take more risks and suffer from isolation, loneliness and depression.

Relationship breakdowns, retrenchment from work, early retirement due to job loss, disconnection from the community and sometimes their own families are some of the factors that drive men into physical and mental illness, and they are just some of the problems that men have trouble dealing with. The Elmore Vale Men's Shed will be a type of refuge by providing a wonderful meeting place for men of the area, who will get a significant amount of benefit from it. I cannot speak highly enough of the Men's Sheds and their work to promote social inclusion. The aims of the Elmore Vale Men's Shed in tackling the issue have been well highlighted by the member for Wallsend. As I said, because of the isolation and other factors that affect men, Men's Sheds provide an opportunity for men to participate in activities together and reduce their social isolation.

Sometimes men just get together to play a game of cards or have a cup of tea and a yarn. Men's Sheds are wonderful places where men can do the proactive thing of asking each other, "Are you okay? Can I assist?" Dubbo Men's Shed has a wonderful program to support the kids at the skate park next door. The Men's Shed members conduct repairs on the kids' skateboards and BMX bikes that get a bit of a rough time at the skate park. That is a wonderful initiative because it bridges the gap that sometimes exists in our community between youth and men from an older generation. These men are often leaders in our community and can provide words of wisdom. The program provides a substantial foot in the door of building relationships between the generations. The profile of Men's Sheds is growing astronomically, as it should. That is because they make such a significant contribution.

Men's Sheds also play a practical role in connecting men with their communities. I just gave an example in relation to the younger generation, but they also relate to their communities as a whole. The member for Blue Mountains recently spoke about the wonderful work of the Blue Mountains Men's Shed and how some local women who are now involved are helping to build on and expand its opportunities. It is a pleasure to support the member for Wallsend and her motion. I congratulate the men and all those involved in the

establishment of the Men's Shed at Elmore Vale. We wish them the very best of luck. We know that they have an ally and great supporter in the member for Wallsend for the many great things they will do and the contributions they will make in the future.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON** (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [12.13 p.m.]: I support the motion of my colleague the member for Wallsend. I acknowledge, support and congratulate all the Men's Sheds throughout New South Wales, who play such an important role in each of their communities. We can all admit that people's lives are not perfect. Unfortunately, physical and mental health problems exist in society. Loneliness also exists. There is a void caused by a lack of friendship or camaraderie in the lives of many vulnerable men. When this void exists for too long it can affect their home life, bring on depression and have significant detrimental effects upon our community.

I am proud to say that volunteers at the Men's Sheds throughout Australia are working hard to fill this void. They are filling it with mateship, laughter, a handshake, a cuppa and a slap on the back. Men's Sheds serve as a place—sometimes even a sanctuary—to which semi-retired or retired men and young men recovering from mental health issues can come and enjoy some male camaraderie, or just sit and talk. Members of the community can go to the Men's Sheds to participate in activities or take part in worthwhile programs that I will expand upon shortly. There are an estimated 185 Men's Sheds operating in New South Wales and 400 nationally. This represents approximately 30,000 men. When one takes into account how family members' lives are touched by Men's Sheds, the contribution they make to our society is truly amazing. The sheds do a remarkable job in providing males in the community with a place to go to blow off steam, talk to others about health issues and basically get active and participate in the community.

Men's Sheds have played an integral role in our society for a long time and are fast becoming the "in thing" to supplement health care and recovery services. Men's Sheds fill the gap that exists during recovery stages from physical or mental health problems by providing men with a place at which they can talk about their issues or learn a skill to keep their bodies and minds active. Men's Sheds empower men to take hold of their lives for the betterment of the community. The empowerment invariably leads to a more harmonious home life for these men and a significant benefit to their local community. Men revel in the company of other men. As I said, it provides their families with some downtime and, most importantly, Men's Sheds give men the opportunity to learn new skills, try different things and become active. Some of the activities offered at Men's Sheds include woodwork, metalwork, cooking and computer skills building. There are also quiet areas where men are able to sit and talk.

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

## **STATE REVENUE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Mike Baird.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly—Treasurer) [12.17 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The New South Wales Government is committed to having best practice revenue laws. The State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 makes important amendments to the Duties Act 1997 to ensure the legislation is current and consistent with best practice tax administration. The bill also amends the First Home Owner Grant Act 2000 to improve one aspect of the administration of the First Home Owner Grant scheme. I will deal first with amendments to the Duties Act. The first two provisions deal with duty on superannuation transactions. The duties concession for persons changing complying superannuation funds will be extended to apply to transfers of marketable securities from a trustee of a complying superannuation fund to a life company. While the current concession allows transfers of property from a life company to the trustee, it does not allow a reverse transaction, which is a transfer of property to a life company from a trustee of a complying superannuation fund in connection with members changing funds.

The stamp duty cost is prohibitive in the absence of a concession. Extending the concession will enable funds to take advantage of the Commonwealth concession. A transfer of members between funds arising from a

merger of superannuation funds may result in a liability to landholder duty if there is an acquisition of a significant interest in a company or unit trust that holds land. The bill provides consistency with the transfer duty concessions by providing for a concessional duty of \$500 on an acquisition of an interest in a landholder that results from members ceasing to become entitled to benefits in one complying superannuation fund and becoming entitled to benefits in another complying superannuation fund.

The next duties amendment deals with special disability trusts, which are established by families to provide for the care and accommodation needs of a family member with a severe disability. The current duties exemptions for the establishment of the trust and the transfer of property to the trust apply to special disability trusts established under the Commonwealth Social Security Act 1991. However, special disability trusts may also be established under the Commonwealth Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986. The bill removes an impediment to establishment of these trusts in New South Wales by extending the duties exemptions to special disability trusts established under the Veterans' Entitlements Act.

The bill also contains a statute law amendment to the Duties Act to correct a reference to a Commonwealth Act. Finally, the bill amends the First Home Owner Grant Act to improve recovery of grants that are required to be repaid. Some recipients of the first home owner grant are subsequently required to repay the grant, usually because of the person's failure to satisfy eligibility requirements such as the requirement to occupy the home as his or her principal place of residence. The liability to repay the grant and any penalty imposed is now to be a charge on the land, entitling the Chief Commissioner of State Revenue to lodge a caveat on title.

At present, the debt owed to the Office of State Revenue ranks behind the interest of the mortgagee or any other holder of an interest that is registered prior to lodgement of the caveat. As a result, there are often insufficient funds available upon the sale of the property, including sale by a mortgagee in possession, for the Office of State Revenue to recover the debt. The bill provides that a grant recipient's liability to repay the grant and any penalty is a first charge on the land, with priority over all other encumbrances except land tax. This is consistent with the grant legislation of every other State and Territory. The amendment would apply prospectively only to grants paid on transactions occurring after 1 October 2011. I commend the bill to the House.

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

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**

### **Financial Year 2011-2012**

**Debate resumed from 14 September 2011.**

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [12.22 p.m.]: It is evident from the Government's 2011-12 budget that the Premier and Cabinet have listened to not only the people of New South Wales, including the people of western Sydney, but particularly to the people of the Camden electorate, and delivered for my community. I am proud to say that the people of my electorate have been listened to. Too many times in the past the people of Camden and its surrounding electorates were promised services that frankly proved to be nothing more than condescending lip-service. Labor members failed the people of my electorate for far too long.

This Government is changing all that with a positive allocation of funding to the Camden electorate and Macarthur region. It is a well-known fact that Camden is one of the fastest-growing areas in this State, with the population expected to increase from its current 55,000 to 300,000 over the next two to three decades. In my inaugural speech I spoke of the need for provision of and planning for infrastructure in our community and to ensure we are building not just housing estates but communities that people want to live in and are proud to live in. From this budget forward, the Government is doing just that. Through this budget the Government not only will seek to catch up on the former Labor Government's four terms of neglect and shameful attempts to provide infrastructure, but also will seek to provide the infrastructure that is so sorely needed as a result of the growth that the Camden area will undergo.

The State Government promised and has delivered funding for the South West Rail Link. The South West Rail Link will be 10.5 kilometres of track between Glenfield and Leppington and will include two stations—Edmondson Park and Leppington—parking and a train stabling facility at Rossmore. Residents from

growing estates in the area will surely make use of this link and it will provide a much-needed extra avenue of transport for the people of the Camden, Campbelltown and Liverpool areas. I remind members that the former Government announced this project in 2004 at a cost of \$688 million. After 10 announcements rescheduling it by each of the former Labor Premiers, the project was allowed to blow out to its current cost of \$2.1 billion under Labor's stewardship. This is a disgrace and an embarrassment to Labor members.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** Camden commuters also will benefit from the \$25 million upgrade to the F5 between Brooks Road and Narellan Road and the planned redevelopment of the M5 between King Georges Road and Camden Valley Way. I have heard it said by people in my area that travelling north on the F5 when the upgrade is completed will be a great improvement. With the last Government, that would have fallen on deaf ears. However, on 26 March this year the people of New South Wales voted for a new Government, a Coalition Government. This Government not only has listened but also has the foresight to see further up the road and make the necessary provisions.

Fifteen million dollars will be provided for Camden Valley Way to finish Oran Park Drive—which was formerly Cobbity Road—to Narellan Road, and a further \$7.5 million will be provided to complete the planning and preconstruction of Camden Valley Way to four lanes to the north from Cobbity Road to Cowpastures Road to finish the project. The goat track that is Camden Valley Way has been neglected for far too long to the shame of members of the Opposition and to the detriment of people in my community. The Premier, who is also the Minister for Western Sydney, and his Cabinet—we have a wonderful member of Cabinet at the table today; I welcome the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Mr Annesley—have taken an interest in my electorate and in the people of western Sydney, and I thank them for that.

It seems I will be climbing up on my soapbox in Macquarie Street and no longer keeping Camden's jewels a secret because with Camden Valley Way handling the traffic, the jewels that will be produced in my area will become a reality in the not-too-distant future. That is because this Government has listened to the people of Camden. It was just last Saturday that the Minister for Sport and Recreation came to the Narellan hockey complex and handed over a cheque for \$1 million—not \$100,000, but \$1 million—which will enable the sports club to build its third field.

**Mr Paul Toole:** That is six noughts.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** It is six noughts. I thank the Minister for giving the people of my area a cheque for \$1 million. It has been very well received. I will keep my door open for any future funding.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** I turn to another road in much need of attention—Narellan Road. Mention Narellan Road to anyone who has travelled on it and watch their eyes roll. I travel along it in the morning to get to Campbelltown station to catch the train to Parliament on sitting days. Today was no exception. I am one of the eye-rollers too. Narellan Road is a clear example of Labor's arrogance and its neglect of the people of south-western Sydney over the past 16 years. When this road was opened as a pre-election stunt in 2007 it did not meet the demands of the community then, let alone now. That is why it is even more pleasing to know that \$700,000 has been allocated by this Government to plan for the future upgrade of Narellan Road as part of the Government's total commitment of more than \$15 million.

Camden is definitely a winner in this budget. We will receive \$1.9 million to upgrade public housing in Currans Hill, Narellan, Mount Annan, Eagle Vale, Narellan Vale, Raby and Kearns, including \$415,000 for new public housing in Narellan. There is a boost in funding for community transport and Gandangara services, funding for Oran Park School, and pavement rebuilding on Narellan Road from Mount Annan Drive to Waterworth Drive. We will receive funding for improvements to the existing shoulder between Cawdor Road and Smalls Road, Camden, installation of pedestrian refuges with kerb extensions and associated lighting at three locations at Currans Hill Drive and Charles Babbage Avenue, Currans Hill, and \$500,000 for additional public amenities and barbecues for the Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan.

The Australian Botanic Garden is an important asset to our area. I thank the Government again for abolishing the entry fee, and I know that a lot of families are making use of the beautiful gardens because of it. Patronage in August this year has increased by over 400 per cent compared with this time last year. The Premier



stated that the people of western Sydney should be treated equally to those who have been able to access the Royal Botanic Gardens in Sydney for free. Under the former Labor Government the people of western Sydney were disadvantaged and treated with contempt. In this budget, the Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan, will receive \$11.6 million towards the building of a state-of-the-art facility on site to allow it to deep-freeze and store thousands of species of seeds.

This is of great significance not only to the Australian Botanic Garden and our State but also to the whole of Australia and the rest of the world. The Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan, will become not only a world leader in plant conservation and potential research but also the largest native plant conservation facility in Australia. I commend Caz McCallum, chief executive officer of the gardens, for her wonderful efforts and the great job that she does. I look forward to working with her in the future to help enhance the gardens for the benefit of the hundreds of thousands of visitors they receive each year.

It is with great foresight regarding the growth needs of the Camden, Campbelltown and Wollondilly areas that our Government has exceeded its election commitment of \$40 million for Campbelltown Hospital and has delivered a whopping \$139 million to fast-track the upgrade of that hospital. Through my working with members of the surrounding electorates of Wollondilly and Campbelltown and consulting with members of our community, that \$139 million will see the redevelopment and expansion of existing inpatient services by 90 new beds and 30 shelled beds to provide a mix of acute services and enhanced specialist care. This is great news for the people of Macarthur. The former Government lied to the people of my electorate with a promise just before the election of a \$196 million upgrade of Campbelltown Hospital. It could have offered a billion dollars, knowing it was never going to be accountable to deliver.

This shameless promise had been made by the former Labor Government at no less than seven regional hospitals before the 2007 election. Not one cent of that money had been spent on any of those hospitals by the time of the 2011 election. The member for Macquarie Fields, a fantastic paediatrician, should stick to his day job. He has been sold a pup and a dud. I am embarrassed for him that, before the election, he had to spruik these Labor lies and, post election, has been given the dubious task of selling a non-existent Opposition health policy. The member for Macquarie Fields criticised this Government for giving a pre-election commitment of \$40 million, which was funded—

**Mr Nathan Rees:** Point of order: The member for Camden is better than this. The member for Macquarie Fields is not in the Chamber to defend himself.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** I am not sure of the protocol. Can we adjourn the House to call the member for Macquarie Fields to the Chamber?

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The House will not adjourn to suit the convenience of members.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** On that note, I shall continue. The member for Macquarie Fields criticised the Government for committing only \$40 million before the election, which was funded, achievable and a realistically deliverable outcome for Campbelltown Hospital. I look forward to the member for Macquarie Fields complimenting the Government for doing more for Campbelltown Hospital in six months than Labor did in 16 years. I will welcome his well wishes and kind words. In the same vein and to be fair, I give credit where credit is due. I would like to be able to give credit to the Leader of the Opposition for his budget reply. However, I was embarrassed to sit through it. It lacked any content, any vision. But, worse still, it had no direction for the people of New South Wales. It just goes to show that being able to organise a rally and mislead the people of New South Wales does not make you a good leader or representative of the people.

This Government has come through for the people of Camden and of New South Wales. This Government is tackling the backlog of infrastructure and focusing on areas that have not seen any love from a State government for years. The tangled web of neglect and decaying infrastructure is being carefully unravelled and rectified by this Stoner-O'Farrell Government. This budget is only the first step in the process of delivering for my electorate. I assure the House today that I will work tirelessly with the member for Wollondilly and the member for Campbelltown to ensure that the people of our electorates are not forgotten, as they were under the former self-fulfilling, arrogant, Labor Government. I commend the budget to the House.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.37 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure today to commend the budget for 2011-12. I am proud to be able to say it is a sensible budget, a budget that delivers for the whole of New South Wales whether one lives in a metropolitan, a regional or a rural area. The central role of the budget is rebuilding New South Wales. I am pleased that the first budget handed down by the O'Farrell-Stoner Government delivers on that commitment. I point out—and I am not sure whether members of the Opposition are aware of this—that the blue documents I am holding are the budget papers. It seems to me that a few members who have spoken about the budget have not opened these papers. They need to read the budget so they can see what is being delivered for the people of New South Wales.

The budget has been delayed by three months. Why? It had to be delayed because we were left with the biggest mess in political history, after 16 years of Labor. The 16 years of Labor have seen enormous waste, cost blowouts, massive mismanagement and broken promises. The State was in dire straits and in desperate need of change. On 26 March the people sent State Labor a strong message that they are fed up with Labor—and I am sure its Federal counterpart will be heading down the same path shortly. The people of New South Wales did not just plead for change; they begged for change. They were sick of the factional fighting and scandals, and the confusion about who was the Premier, who was going to be the next Premier, who was the Minister for Roads and who was the Minister for Planning.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** So was I.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Even Opposition members admit they were confused. There was statewide confusion. For six months now we have had a stable Government that is starting to rebuild New South Wales. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government delivers for all of New South Wales. Whether one lives in metropolitan, rural or regional areas, we are helping everybody across this State. Some members were complaining yesterday that they have not received any money from the budget. The days of pork-barrelling are over. We will make sure that we look after all of New South Wales and deliver for everybody in this State. We are not just going to look after our mates across the road or in another electorate. We will make sure that we deliver services and build infrastructure that will improve the quality of life of many people.

Many Labor Party members did not know that people lived in regional areas beyond the Blue Mountains or the sandstone curtain. We were treated like second-class citizens. We have seen RailCorp plans that said, "No work is to go beyond Penrith for the next 10 to 15 years." That showed clearly that the previous Government was city-centric and did not realise that the whole State contributed to the economy and the wealth that we all enjoy and want to share. For years, we were promised that Bathurst would receive a 1014 fire station. For many years, we heard the same spin that the funding would be in next year's budget; it never happened. I shall return to that commitment shortly and explain how this Government has delivered on it. I commend the 2011-12 budget to the House. It is a responsible budget that delivers on our commitments and shows that we are rebuilding the State's finances. The budget delivers more teachers and nurses.

Over the next four years we will have 900 extra teachers, 2,475 additional nurses and 550 extra police officers. Rebuilding New South Wales means repairing what was left behind, improving services and building the infrastructure that the people of this State need. The previous New South Wales Government received extra funds from the property boom but failed to invest for the future. Without the injection of funding from the Federal Government's economic stimulus package, the New South Wales budget would have been in deficit for two of the past three years. This budget takes action to regain control of the State's finances and protect its triple-A credit rating. We have been left with a projected \$5.2 billion black hole. I will repeat that because I do not believe Opposition members heard it.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** It's wrong.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The papers clearly indicate a \$5.2 billion black hole projected over four years.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** It's a shame.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It is more than a shame; it is a disgrace.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** It is a fantasy. You should have started with, "Once upon a time."

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** It is a simple mathematical equation: If the revenue coming in is not matched with expenditure, obviously there will be a major shortfall. That is what happened over many years under the

previous Government. This year, with revenue at \$59 billion and expenditure at \$59.7 billion, we will have a \$7 million deficit. But next year the budget will be in surplus, which means more infrastructure and services, and a better State. During the lead-up to this budget all we heard from Labor was a fear campaign with lots of scaremongering.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** Everywhere.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** In the Orange electorate the local member fought hard and continually clarified that the Department of Primary Industries would not lose jobs. It was a complete furphy for all those Labor Party members to claim that 80,000 public sector jobs would be lost across New South Wales. They should hang their heads in shame for their scaremongering and for putting fear into hardworking communities who do their best to serve the people of New South Wales—whether they live in Bathurst, Lithgow, Oberon, Blayney, Wallerawang, Portland, Kandos or Rylstone.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** Portland?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** I know the member for Toongabbie has been to Portland.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** I have been on holiday there.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** My electorate will receive approximately \$164 million: capital programs will receive just under \$73 million, transport will receive just under \$34 million, and roads will receive \$58 million. I now return to the 1014 Bathurst fire station. For years, the Bathurst electorate was told that the budget would provide for the fire station. The people of Bathurst never received that 1014 fire station. However, this Government promised to deliver a 24-hour fire station within its first term. In our first six months in office we now have money in the budget to deliver a 1014 fire station to the Bathurst community.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** Bundy never did that.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Never did it. The shadow Minister, the Hon. Melinda Pavey, made the trip to Bathurst to speak to the firefighters and to make that commitment. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, also visited and acknowledged that the Bathurst electorate needed that service. The budget includes \$1.94 million for that fire station, including two extra station masters and eight additional firefighters. The budget is creating further employment. Only yesterday, representatives of Fire and Rescue NSW met with me. We are getting on with the job of ensuring that this critical service will be delivered as soon as possible.

Fire and Rescue NSW is meeting with workers to let them know that a new fire tanker will be delivered shortly. The service will be up and running by the start of December, which is timely as a busy upcoming fire season is predicted. I congratulate the Treasurer, the Premier, the Deputy Premier and all the Ministers involved in ensuring that this service will be delivered. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has also included in the budget \$20 million to build eight new police and community youth clubs and to upgrade existing clubs over the next four years.

**Ms Sonia Horner:** Point of order. I cannot refer to the specific standing order, but the member may not realise that he is yelling into the microphone. It is quite loud for the monitors and for others in this place.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! That is not a point of order and it is not the subject of a standing order. The member for Bathurst has the call.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** The member for Wallsend has only just walked into the Chamber. She can always watch and listen in her office. I can send her a copy of my notes. She is probably embarrassed by my initial comments that after 16 years of Labor we have enormous waste, cost blowouts, mismanagement and broken promises. The O'Farrell Government has put \$20 million in the budget to build eight new police and community youth clubs and to upgrade existing clubs over the next four years. Premier Barry O'Farrell as Opposition leader made a trip to my community of Lithgow. He walked the streets and spoke to the people of the region.

We visited the police and community youth club. The Premier walked in and said, "We really need to do something about this club". The roof was dilapidated and leaked when it rained. Requests had been made time and time again for funding to repair the building. The kitchen was in disrepair. Children were using the

facility as a gym and people were training for boxing. The Premier announced \$450,000 in funding to fix the roof, build a gym and maintain the building. The community is pleased that the Government has kept its promise and provided \$450,000 in the budget to deliver on that commitment. Over the next four years we will see a record amount of money spent on hospitals and health. Bathurst hospital will benefit from the money that has been injected into the budget.

There is \$3.8 million to upgrade the ambulatory care building; the Nepean Hospital has been guaranteed additional nurses, which will benefit the Lithgow electorate; and there will be \$6 billion for transport infrastructure in 2011-12. That is an increase on previous years. Roads in the electorate last year received \$43 million in funding. This year the Government has seen the need to improve regional roads and a record \$58 million will be injected into the Bathurst electorate for that purpose. Some \$160 million has been allocated to upgrade the Great Western Highway, along with \$10.6 million for continued planning and reconstruction between Victoria Pass and Mount Victoria. An additional \$1 million has been allocated for local government projects within electorates. The projects will be based on the council and government sharing the cost equally. I have five local government areas in my electorate and I will sit down with each of those councils and discuss how to spend the additional funding to assist those communities.

Mr Acting-Speaker, I know that you visited the Bathurst electorate on the bus and we visited Kelso Public School. For years the parents and citizens association has done a magnificent job at the school. The school indicated time and time again that it required flashing lights to ensure the safety of the children who enter and leave the school every day. The school is located on Gilmore Street, which is a busy road. The budget provides funding for those flashing lights for the school, delivering on another promise to the Bathurst electorate. That is another promise to the community kept. Education will receive an increase in the budget of \$1 billion, with \$261 million for literacy and numeracy in particular. There will be upgrades to Lithgow High School and funding for Community Building Partnership projects.

In the Bathurst electorate we started advertising today to inform the community of the \$400,000 available to assist it in building infrastructure. The funding will assist and support volunteer groups who give up their time for their communities. The Premier has stood on the platform of Bathurst railway station and both the Premier and the Minister for Transport have committed to beginning the feasibility study for a fast daily return train service between Bathurst and Sydney. The study will look at all available options. We have never had that commitment before. We now have a Premier and a Minister who take the time to visit electorates to see what services are needed in the community.

Meals on Wheels provides a fantastic service across the Bathurst electorate and it will receive \$100,000 to refurbish its building. The Raglan Group Home for people with a disability was opened by the Minister for Ageing and Disability Services, the Hon. Andrew Constance. It is a five-bedroom, two-bathroom building that provides a safe and secure environment for residents and staff. The staff work around the clock caring for five people who need support. The home employs 11 people—another 11 people who have found employment through this initiative. The Government's Jobs Action Plan is already starting to have an impact in the electorate. Something like 900 jobs are being offered in regional areas. Of those jobs, 112 are in the Bathurst electorate.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** How many?

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** One hundred and twelve—there are 53 in Bathurst, 34 in Lithgow, 18 in Blayney, and seven in Oberon. The Government has a Jobs Action Plan that will create 100,000 extra jobs across New South Wales. Of those, 40,000 will be in regional areas. It is good to see the policies introduced by this Government starting to have an impact across New South Wales. Regional areas play a central role in building New South Wales, and the budget contains record spending for infrastructure and improved services. We have invested in roads, hospitals and services that improve the quality of life for the people of regional New South Wales.

This is a budget that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government, and all the members on this side of the House, can be extremely proud of. They can hold their heads high when they meet and speak to constituents in each and every one of their electorates. The budget takes action to deliver key transport projects in regional New South Wales. There is investment in regional and rural road networks and highway upgrades. More than \$2 billion will be spent on critical highways, including the Pacific Highway, Princes Highway, Hume Highway, Great Western Highway and the Hunter Expressway. All good members fighting for their electorates are raising these issues with the Premier and with Treasury to ensure the projects are delivered. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

This budget delivers better services. We are going to see more nurses, more teachers, and more police—something all communities will welcome. Our nurses go beyond the call of duty and this budget gives them the support they need. We have spent over \$27 million to provide 400 extra nurses in regional New South Wales. Former governments took no interest in regional New South Wales. They did not understand that it is irrelevant whether people live in a metropolitan, a rural or a regional area, we must work together to grow the economy and to deliver for all the people of New South Wales. Mental health services in regional New South Wales will be enhanced with an allocation of about \$500,000 in funding. The New South Wales Government also will increase the size of the New South Wales Police Force. This budget takes action to rebuild the regional economy, ensuring that regional New South Wales plays a central role in regaining control of the State's finances.

Regional people are industrious, hardworking and capable. The New South Wales Government will not stand and watch the emergence of a two-tiered society and two-speed economy. We are delivering on our plan to kickstart regional New South Wales with 30 per cent of Restart NSW earmarked for regional New South Wales. Our payroll tax rebates will encourage employers to create new jobs in regions and our \$7,000 relocation grant will be available to families who move to regional communities. This is a fair budget. I congratulate the Premier, the Treasurer, the Ministers and Government members on delivering a budget that will rebuild confidence. We will rebuild confidence by taking control of our budget and ensuring that the services our communities deserve and need are delivered to them. I commend the budget to the House.

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

## **LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**

### **Report: Legislation Review Digest 4/55**

#### **Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta) [1.02 p.m.]: It is an honour to speak again in debate on a Legislation Review Committee report. As Deputy Chair of the Legislation Review Committee, I take this opportunity to comment on the recent Legislation Review Digest report tabled on 13 September 2011. This is the fourth report by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. As I noted last week, it is expected that a new report will be tabled in Parliament each sitting week. The members of the committee continue to wish the Chair, the member for Myall Lakes, a speedy recovery and look forward to his return soon.

This digest report examined three bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 6 September 2011. The committee considered the Appropriation Bill 2011, which seeks to appropriate from the Consolidated Fund the various sums of money required during the 2011-12 financial year for the recurrent services and capital works and services of the Government. It also includes funding for the principal departments, the various independent statutory authorities and the Legislature. The committee also considered the Duties Amendment (First Home—New Home) Bill 2011, which has the object of amending the Duties Act 1997 to remove the duty exemptions and concessions available to first homebuyers of existing homes under the First Home Plus Scheme.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Shame.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I note that the member for Canterbury is nodding her head in agreement. I thank her for her support. Together these bills gave effect to the 2011-2012 Budget. The committee did not consider that either of these bills gave rise to comment under section 8A (1) of the Legislation Review Act 1987. The committee considered the Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Notification of Pollution Incidents) Bill 2011. This bill seeks to expedite the notification of pollution incidents that cause or threaten material harm to the environment. Again, the committee did not consider that this bill gave rise to comment under section 8A (1) of the Legislation Review Act 1987. The committee tries to ensure that all members of the New South Wales Parliament have the digest report prior to the substantive debate on bills. I take this opportunity to remind members that the digest report is available online soon after the committee concludes its meeting and tables the digest report.

As many members would be aware, reporting prior to the substantive debate on bills is one of the most demanding challenges for the committee. It is particularly challenging in back-to-back sitting weeks. It is in this context that I sincerely thank the members of the committee staff who have worked on the digests during the

Fifty-fifth Parliament, including Carly Sheen, Mel Keenan, Emma Matthews, Jason Ardit, Emma Wood, Leon Last and Jenny Whight. Reports such as this aim at assisting members in their consideration of bills and raising awareness and respect for personal rights and liberties. In this regard, the committee goes to great lengths to focus primarily on those personal rights and liberties, rather than providing any political commentary which, of course, can be and is conducted during other parliamentary occasions. I hope that the digests will continue to be of value to all members.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [1.05 p.m.]: I commend the Deputy Chair of the Legislation Review Committee for presenting "Legislation Review Digest 4/55" to Parliament. Once again, on behalf of the Opposition, I wish the Chair, the member for Myall Lakes, a speedy recovery. I also express my gratitude to the staff of the Legislation Review Committee, who work to a tight deadline in order to ensure that our meeting papers and digests are ready on time. I acknowledge the other members of the committee: Deputy Chair the member for Parramatta, the member for Swansea and the member for Rockdale and from the other place the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, Mr David Shoebridge and the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, a dear friend of many in this House.

I advise the House that the logistical arrangements for this committee continue to be a matter of concern, certainly to me. I understand that previously the committee met regularly during the lunch break of the parliamentary sittings. The committee now meets at 8.30 a.m., which is an inconvenience for parliamentary staff and for members who have family commitments in the morning. I have to undertake care arrangements for three children under the age of six. I raised this matter with the Chair and the meeting was moved from 8.15 a.m. to 8.30 a.m. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the last meeting, having arrived at 8.36 a.m. The meeting had been completed in six minutes.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Point of order: The member for Bankstown has forgotten to include the hardworking members of rural and remote areas and members of The Nationals who make those 8.30 appointments as well and will continue to make them.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! That is not a point of order, but the member's point is noted.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK:** It is not a point of order and it is disgraceful for the member to raise that issue. Unfortunately I was unable to attend the meeting. I arrived at 8.36 on Tuesday and the meeting had completed after six minutes. The meeting was expected to be very quick—the meetings last, on average, eight minutes. I am sure those meetings could be undertaken at any time throughout the day. Once again I put on record my concern that the Government's legislative agenda is in dire straits. The Government clearly is running out of steam, given that the committee had only one government bill to consider.

The Duties Amendment (First Home—New Home) Bill which was considered will certainly have shameful repercussions. I note that the first homebuyer scheme will be cut. Families across many of our electorates, including Parramatta, East Hills, Bankstown and western Sydney are doing it tough, struggling to get out of the rental market and purchase their first home. The O'Farrell Government's decision to cut the first homebuyers scheme is a slap in the face to many families in my electorate and across other electorates in our great State. I hope that this bill is not a sign of things to come, and I put on my record my concern in relation to that bill.

**Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.**

**Report noted.**

*[The Assistant-Speaker (Mr Andrew Fraser) left the chair at 1.10 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

## QUESTION TIME

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*[Question time commenced at 2.19 p.m.]*

## POLITICAL LOBBYING

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. Does the Premier accept that the recent appointment of a third-party lobbyist to the Casino Liquor and Gaming Control Authority was a breach of the Premier's memorandum banning lobbyists from government boards?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** As I said yesterday, that appointment followed a public process. Advertisements were placed and people responded to those advertisements. The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing assessed those applicants and made recommendations that were then endorsed by the Cabinet. But given the fact that three weeks ago the Leader of the Opposition referred the issue to the Independent Commission Against Corruption, I will leave it to the commission to get to the bottom of the matter.

### STATE BUDGET

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** My question is directed to the Premier. What progress has the Government made since delivering its first budget?

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I thank the member for Hawkesbury for his question. I just happen to have the latest research from the Parliamentary Library into the 26 March election. We all remember that election. That was the one in which the member for Heffron led Labor to its worst defeat in a century. As a strong supporter of the Parliamentary Library I am now scratching my head because, according to these figures, the member for Hawkesbury received 37,401 votes or 84.7 per cent of total votes in his electorate, and that makes his the safest seat on our side of the House.

If members with big margins were put on the front bench on the other side of the Chamber, the Opposition would be led by Noreen Hay, who, according to these figures, has a margin of at least 0.8 per cent. I am delighted that, despite all the huff and puff we have heard from the Leader of the Opposition since the Treasurer handed down an excellent budget last Tuesday week, last night the budget sailed through unopposed in the upper House. And why would it not? At the end of the day we all know that this budget will get New South Wales back on track.

This is the budget that will start to put New South Wales on a sound financial footing after 16 years of mismanagement, bungling and waste by those opposite. Importantly, this is the budget that will result in infrastructure that people need being built. That is why \$62.5 billion has been set aside—that is a 12 per cent increase over last year's budget—to get on with building the hospitals, rail lines and roads that people across this State and in particular across this city have long sought. That includes both the Pacific and Princes Highways, which I should not let pass without mention given the people the Speaker has acknowledged in the public gallery today.

This is the budget about which we heard so much from the Leader of the Opposition. He said the budget would "send shockwaves through the markets and to the people of New South Wales". He said that our triple-A credit rating would be put at risk and that he was absolutely horrified that a government would go into deficit to build the infrastructure that Labor had denied the people of New South Wales for 16 years. But at the end of the day the Opposition did not oppose the budget because it knows that not only is the budget responsible, it is also what people voted for in great numbers, not just in Hawkesbury, on 26 March.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The members opposite did not even oppose the changes we made to the First Home Owner Grant Scheme. Why? Because we saw yesterday with the release of the Australian Bureau of Statistics new home construction starts that our strategy is spot on.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** They fell by 20 per cent in the June quarter, the biggest fall in five years. That is why we changed the First Home Owner Grant Scheme so that it was directed at people who were buying either new housing or new units. It is directly linked to getting the construction sector moving again. Why is that important? It is important because the construction sector creates jobs. It employs apprentices and creates economic activity that drives revenues to support those services that people look to government to provide. The good news for New South Wales is that we will now proceed with our commitment to deliver those 4,000 extra front-line staff in our hospitals and schools and on our police force that were referred to in the budget. This year alone we will appoint an additional 200 teachers, 900 extra nurses and 150 extra police.

We will pour more money into disability and mental health services and deliver the roads and other services that are so badly needed in the western suburbs and in regional New South Wales, including the Illawarra,

the Hunter and the Central Coast. The only disappointment from the whole budget process was the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition. He came up with one initiative—to dismantle the Regional Relocation Scheme—and even that contained a \$100 million blunder. There were no new rail projects, no new roads, no costs, no savings, no vision, and no commitment to reverse the public sector job cuts. The good news is that the State is finally in the best of hands. We are getting on with the job and the budget is the first step in that process.

### GOVERNMENT ASSETS

**Ms SONIA HORNER:** Madam Speaker—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Coffs Harbour will come to order. The member for Wallsend has the call.

**Ms SONIA HORNER:** You love picking on women don't you?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order and members will cease such immature interjections. The member for Wallsend has the call.

**Ms SONIA HORNER:** My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. Does the Deputy Premier stand by his 2008 comment that if a party wants to lease or sell a government asset, it must have the courage to take that proposal to an election?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Deputy Premier has the call. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Kiama will come to order. The member for Oatley will come to order.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The House and indeed the public would be well aware that the Liberal and Nationals Coalition did in fact take the policy of the lease of one of this State's assets to the election.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Which one?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** It was the desalination plant at Kurnell. That was part and parcel of our plans to build a new big infrastructure fund to catch up on the backlog of infrastructure that had been neglected after 16 years of Labor. Upon coming to office, we found out how the books had been cooked by those opposite—by the master chef in the other place.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Following the interference of the Treasurer's office the reports that were put to the public and to the then Opposition did not accurately show the true state of the Government's finances.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: The Deputy Premier is misleading the House and he knows it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** He doth protest too much because the budget documents last week showed clearly—

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** —the \$5.2 billion black hole that the Labor Party left the people of New South Wales. Given the shocking revelations of just how badly those opposite had managed the economy for 16 years and how they had left a major financial problem for this State, this Government was forced to consider the lease of another asset, in this case Port Botany.

### INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND WORLD BANK GOVERNORS' MEETING 2015

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** My question is addressed to the Treasurer. What progress has been made on the Government's commitment to bid for the annual International Monetary Fund World Bank Governors' Meeting to be held in Sydney in October 2015?



**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Keira to order. Members on both sides of the Chamber will cease interjecting.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I congratulate the member for Baulkham Hills on the effort he has made in his electorate since the election in May 2011. He is tearing up the ground that was laid for him by the cocky, and he is doing very well. I wish I had better news to tell the House. Before the election the Coalition Opposition made a commitment that if elected we would work with the Federal Government to secure the hosting of the annual International Monetary Fund World Bank Governors' Meeting in Sydney in October 2015—a sensible proposal that we were keen to pursue.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Let me guess, it is not your fault?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields for the second time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Every three years this meeting is held in an International Monetary Fund country outside the United States of America. Around 10,000 people attend this meeting. It is exactly the sort of event and people that we want to bring to Sydney. In 2009, 13,000 people attended the meeting in Istanbul. The next meeting outside the United States is in Japan in 2012, and we had the target of 2015. Requiring up to 1,000 high-quality serviced offices, the event may also have coincided with the completion of the initial stages of Barangaroo. The event would have been of national economic interest, not just State interest, and Australia would have been at the forefront of securing reform from the International Monetary Fund Board of Governors to recognise the emerging economies of Asia and South-east Asia. Hosting the meeting in Sydney would also have helped cement Sydney's reputation as a global financial hub—an ongoing commitment of the O'Farrell Government. The Premier wrote to the Federal Treasurer, Wayne Swan, in May and on many subsequent occasions—

**Mr John Robertson:** So it is Swan's fault?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** He is responsible for many things.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members should listen to the answer before they interject. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** At the moment he is working numbers for Julia. We sought an expression of interest from the Federal Government, which is required to enable the New South Wales Government to co-host the event. The Federal Government has to give its consent for New South Wales to host the meeting. The Department of Premier and Cabinet has been in touch with the International Monetary Fund, but without a formal expression of interest from the national Government to the International Monetary Fund the New South Wales Government is unable to bid to host the event. The New South Wales Government was positioned to commence working immediately on the bid preparations and requirements as soon as an expression of interest was confirmed.

Several meetings with key agencies were held and a property analyst had been identified to undertake the associated property assessment needed to assess costs. Preliminary economic analysis has given an indication of the benefits that this event could bring to the State. The format required for the expression of interest—and this is an important point—was a simple letter from the national Government to the International Monetary Fund. It need only have been a one-line notification. It was made clear to Federal Treasury that the expression of interest, which was required by 9 September, need only be in the form of an intention to bid.

Once intentions to bid are accepted, bidding jurisdictions receive a full bid manual detailing the information to be included, format requirements and all associated bid timelines—all the details to enable a comprehensive bid to be made. It was understood that the bid submissions would not be required until November. It was also made clear that all bids are non-binding and that bidding governments can withdraw their bids. Despite this—and this is my disappointing message to the House; on this last sitting day before a break I would rather have good news to tell the House—Wayne Swan was unable to write the letter required. He was literally unable to lift a finger for the people of New South Wales.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I know I have spoken before about outsourcing the Opposition, but I think even members of the Opposition could have written the letter. It need only have been one line stating simply, "We

support the New South Wales Government's bid for the International Monetary Fund event." That is all that was needed. However, there is still hope, notwithstanding the deadline. I hope to speak to the Federal Treasurer tonight to convince him to support the bid.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** If Opposition members are interested in New South Wales, they should get on the phone to their mates in Canberra and get them to support the bid. It is about time members opposite put the interests of the State first rather than the interests of their political party. They should get on board and support the International Monetary Fund bid, because New South Wales deserves better than Federal Labor has delivered to this State.

#### **CASINO, LIQUOR AND GAMING CONTROL AUTHORITY AND BRIAN ROSS**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. Did the Premier or anyone from his office have any contact with Brian Ross between his appointment to the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority on 24 August 2011 and his resignation from the board eight days later?

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** To the best of my knowledge, no, but I did describe it as psychic journalism when the issue came up previously.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The question that was directed to the Deputy Premier involved statements by those opposite that they were not prepared to live up to in government. Whether they related to donation reform—which, apparently the members opposite are opposing—the lobbyist register or privatisation, there are double standards. A document has come into my hands suggesting that the Labor Party is not totally opposed to privatisation. It suggests that when it comes to the desalination plant, which we announced in the budget we would lease, Labor is suffering from not just hypocrisy but also amnesia or selective recall.

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

**Mr Richard Amery:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Premier appears to be answering a question that the Deputy Premier failed to answer.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That is not a point of order. Standing Order 129 does not apply to the point of order taken by the member.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I thank the member for Mount Druitt for his support on the day of the announcement of Grandparents Day but, unfortunately for the member for Mount Druitt, we appointed Barbara Holborow as the ambassador of that event. I was making a point about the hypocrisy of those opposite, who say one thing today but for 16 years did another thing.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Before the election campaign we committed ourselves to the long-term lease of the desalination plant to free up revenue to invest in infrastructure. Those opposite opposed it in their reply to the budget and they opposed it full stop; they said it was outrageous, that it was not what they would do. The Leader of the Opposition is on record as saying that he is not just ideologically opposed to privatisation; he is opposed to it also because it leads to increased charges to consumers and to assets being sold to multinationals—issues he had no concern about when the member for Heffron flogged off part of the State's electricity assets last year. This Treasury memorandum says there had been meetings, presumably authorised by the member for Heffron and the Treasurer, between March and June of last year about the long-term lease or sale of the desalination plant.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. The Premier does not need their assistance.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The Treasurer requested Treasury to work with the Sydney Water Corporation to pursue the opportunity for Sydney Water to divest the Sydney desalination plant in a form that would free up the balance sheet funding capacity for the State. I am so pleased that the Leader of the Opposition asked this question. A steering committee was formed comprising representatives of Sydney Water, Treasury and relevant advisers—the financial, legal and accounting advisers that the member for Heffron kept busy for years—to Sydney Water. The steering committee was chaired by the Deputy Secretary of Treasury.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Evita has come in just in time. I cannot change the election result, which for Labor was the worst in a century. According to the Leader of the Opposition in the upper House it was cataclysmic; it was a bloodbath. I cannot change that result. The member for Heffron might have and the Leader of the Opposition might have, but I cannot change it.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** In June 2010, after we announced our policy, the Treasurer advised Treasury that he no longer wished to pursue the privatisation.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** After we announced it, they canned it. That is the sort of hypocrisy we have come to expect from those opposite.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Does the member for Maroubra still wish to pursue the point of order? The Premier has indicated that he has completed his contribution.

#### COAL SEAM GAS EXPLORATION

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast. How is misinformation clouding the debate surrounding the issue of coal seam gas exploration and production?

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 128 (2) (g), "expression of opinion". The member for Lismore asked for an expression of opinion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I do not believe the question asked for an expression of opinion. The member is drawing a long bow. I will allow the question. The Minister has the call.

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** The member for Lismore came to this House with a 61 per cent margin. What a result. What was the margin for the member for Macquarie Fields? It was not even 0.6 of 1 per cent. Yesterday my office was alerted to a letter produced by the Hummingbird company that was being distributed in the northern rivers of New South Wales telling people that their homes were about to be invaded by a coal seam gas company seeking to extract coal seam gas and that people would have their proprietorial rights denied. Of course, the letter is false. It is distributed by extremist groups that tend to dominate debate in certain sections of our society. It reminded me about the hummingbird. At its peak the hummingbird can flap its wings 100 times a minute, much like the member for Maroubra when he takes a point of order. That same insane approach to the political process—

**Mr Nathan Rees:** Point of order. I believe it has been measured at 90.

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

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** The problem with the coal seam gas debate and the related extremism is best illustrated by this letter and complaints by certain sections of the debate led by Senator Bob Brown and The Greens that we can move straight from coal-fired generation to renewable generation without any intermediate need for gas. The report commissioned by the Victorian Government showed that by 2030 it would cost \$1 trillion for Victoria alone. Of course, it is a simple equation to the green movement and those who advocate

the abandonment of any proposal for the development of gas and coal seam gas in New South Wales. The integrity of the green movement in arguing that is matched by the integrity of other political parties represented in this Parliament. The Watkins-Chisholm report, which was released after the 2011 election fiasco, recommended only one word for the Labor Party.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** Death.

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** No, it was not death. It was better than death. It was a concept totally unknown to the Labor Party: ethics. The report recommended the importance of ethics. On 5 September members of the Labor Party lined up for a full one-day session on ethics.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order. After the reference to hummingbird, the Minister's comments went downhill.

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** My point of order is that with one minute and 21 seconds remaining—

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

**Mr Michael Daley:** —he has gone nowhere near answering the question. I refer to Standing Order 129.

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

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** This relates to the ethics of the debate on coal seam gas. That is the relevant point. Guest lecturers were Joe Tripodi to talk about how to max your credit card, followed by Eddie Obeid to talk on how not to get caught, and the coup de grâce was Graham Richardson.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: The question was about coal seam gas. The Minister is well and truly off topic.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have asked the Minister to return to the leave of the question. He has only been able to get out a few sentences. The Minister has the call.

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** Graham "*Whatever It Takes*" Richardson launched the book entitled, as the Premier said, not the 'Light on the Hill', but the *Fog On the Hill*. Ethics classes were held on how to max your credit card, how not to get caught and, above all, on whatever it takes. In 2011 whatever it took went from 52 to 20 under the leadership of the member for Heffron.

**Mr Thomas George:** I ask that the Minister be granted an extension of time to conclude his answer.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister has a further two minutes to conclude his answer.

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** I will transgress. I want everybody to hear about the *Fog On the Hill* because that great Labor leader, Ben Chifley, one of the greatest Labor Premiers of all—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order —

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I know what the member's point of order will be.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Madam Speaker, you know what my point of order is not because of my conduct but because of the Minister's conduct. You have twice drawn him back to the leave of the question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have asked the Minister to return to the leave of the question.

**Mr Michael Daley:** He prefaced his two minutes of additional time by saying—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I understand the member's point of order. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. I direct the Minister to return to the leave of the question or to be generally relevant to the subject of coal seam gas.

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** I will. The point I made about the hummingbird is so well illustrated by the member for Maroubra. The coal seam gas debate is intrinsic to the future of the development of an alternative supply of gas for New South Wales. At the present time New South Wales produces only 6 per cent of its gas. If New South Wales is to have energy security for the future it needs to look at the development of alternative sources. This Government is prepared to examine all options as long as they respect our environment, our water and our prime agricultural land, and are within the constraints of the economic development of New South Wales. Our commitment to the people of this State is that the debate will be rational, scientific and in the best interests of the community.

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

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** I understand the cynicism of those opposite because the concept of rational scientific debate is lost in the whole mishmash and problem of the *Fog On the Hill*—the light that once shone for Ben Chifley, the light that motivated the great Labor movement in this State for more than 100 years has been lost and betrayed by those opposite, who reaped the reward.

#### CASINO, LIQUOR AND GAMING CONTROL AUTHORITY AND BRIAN ROSS

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK:** My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing. Was the Minister aware that Brian Ross was a lobbyist when he signed off on his appointment to the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! An Opposition member has asked the question. Opposition members should listen to the answer.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** I was advised as part of the probity check that it was made clear to Mr Ross that candidates could not be appointed to the position if they were on the Lobbyist Register. Mr Ross declared that he had never been on the Lobbyist Register. According to the papers tendered at the completion of the probity audit, the last apparent payment to Mr Ross was on 13 May and I subsequently learned that he remained on retainer until 24 August.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! An Opposition member asked the question. Opposition members should be interested in hearing the answer.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** It has been widely reported in the media that Mr Brian Ross, a former executive with the Australian Hotels Association, was appointed as a part-time member of the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority with effect from 31 August 2011.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: It is Standing Order 129, relevance. The member did not ask the Minister to recite media reports, he asked, "Are you aware that he was a lobbyist when the Minister signed the appointment?"

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra is trying my patience. The Minister's answer is entirely relevant. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** Mr Ross, who is aged 71, resigned that appointment on 2 September citing ill health. On Wednesday 17 August the Office of Liquor Gaming and Racing probity officer directly queried Mr Ross on his status as a registered lobbyist. Mr Ross replied, "I have never been a lobbyist". That represents the extent of my knowledge on the question.

#### GRANDPARENTS DAY

**Mr ANDREW CORNWELL:** My question is to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. How is the Government delivering on its election commitments to grandparents?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I thank the member for Charlestown for his question. I know he has a personal interest in this matter, having moved his mother-in-law into his house nine months before the election, which just goes to show that families across this State, such as the member for Charlestown, are dependent upon the support, love and attention that grandparents give to their grandchildren. Earlier today the Premier announced that the inaugural Grandparents Day would be held on Sunday 30 October and would thereafter be

held on the last Sunday of every October. This is a pre-election commitment that the Liberals and Nationals made in October last year. It is pleasing to have the Premier confirm it today. The role that grandparents play in our community is enormous—some 30,000 grandparents in this State are the primary carers for their grandchildren. Nearly half of all grandparents undertake some role in the care of a grandchild at least once a week to enable parents to meet work and recreational commitments. It can be tough for grandparents when a family breaks down and they are isolated from their grandchildren.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting. I call the member for Bankstown to order.

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** Grandparents make an enormous contribution. The Premier stated that the first Grandparent's Day ambassador would be Barbara Holborow, who is herself a grandmother. Barbara is also chair of the Ministerial Advisory Council for Ageing and is patron of the Mirabel Foundation, an organisation that has been set up to assist children abandoned or orphaned as a result of the illicit drug use of their parents. I cannot think of a more fitting person to take on this role on what will be a very important day. I also recognise that ClubsNSW, in partnership with the Government, will run Grandparents Day events on 30 October. ClubsNSW was very happy to participate in this community-based activity, as an enormous number of seniors enjoy the social activities that clubs have to offer.

I also recognise the Council on the Ageing, which, for the past 10 years, has lobbied the Government and advocated for public policy improvements for grandparents. It does an excellent job in that regard. Today's announcement is particularly pleasing because the Premier made it during the Ageing Roundtable that the Government is hosting in Parliament House today. Leading experts from around the country have come together as the first step in the process of developing a whole-of-Government strategy for ageing, which we will have completed by the middle of next year. The Ageing Roundtable is considering some very important themes, including liveable communities that not only involve the built environment and the role that planning and local government plays but also the important networks that can be built for seniors.

Two other themes include participation, which looks closely at the way in which seniors can be engaged in the workforce and in a voluntary capacity in the community. All members would recognise the voluntary contribution that seniors make to the wellbeing of New South Wales. The third theme is discrimination. It is concerning to realise that 50,000 people over the age of 65 are subjected to elder abuse—we must do something about that. I encourage all members to participate in Grandparents Day. It is a wonderful initiative and will be warmly welcomed by grandparents throughout the State.

### ARMIDALE HOSPITAL

**Mr RICHARD TORBAY:** My question is to the Minister for Health and Medical Research. Given that the Hunter New England Local Health District has allocated number one priority to the staged upgrade of the Armidale Hospital, will the Government honour the previous Government's commitment to again make application to the Commonwealth in support of the jointly funded redevelopment proposal.

**Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER:** I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his question and his interest in Armidale Hospital and the Government's investment generally in infrastructure in regional New South Wales. Before getting into the specifics I am sure that he will not mind my reminding the House that in the recent budget had great news for people across the State. Some \$17.3 billion—\$950 million more than last year—was allocated to rebuild the State's health system in metropolitan and regional New South Wales. In this budget alone \$190 million is allocated to health infrastructure. That includes money that will go to the hospitals I have frequently mentioned that are receiving joint Commonwealth-State funding under the Health and Hospitals Fund: Dubbo, Wagga Wagga, Bega and Tamworth.

I attended the announcement at Tamworth with the newly elected member for Tamworth—an excellent member—and the Federal Minister, the Hon. Nicola Roxon. The Minister was gracious enough to acknowledge that the only reason New South Wales received so much funding in the last round from the Health and Hospitals Fund was that this Government committed such a lot of extra money to regional hospital upgrades. In relation to the Armidale Hospital, in December 2010 the former Labor Government lodged a submission with the Commonwealth Health and Hospitals Fund, but I am sad to say—and I am reading from the record—that it failed.

Why did it fail? It failed because on 6 April the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing formally advised that the application was one of two New South Wales proposals that did not meet the Health

and Hospitals Fund criteria. Specifically it highlighted that there was no demonstration of value for money, that is, there was no increase in service or change in model of care. Some unsuccessful projects were invited to resubmit for round four, and those invited to resubmit were sent a letter. The Commonwealth Government did not offer Armidale Hospital the opportunity to resubmit.

The member for Northern Tablelands knows that this is the case. The former Premier made an announcement about the provision of money for the refurbishment of Armidale Hospital only three days, or maybe a couple of weeks, before the election. She made a commitment to this proposal which she knew the Commonwealth was never going to consider. It was a furphy. It was a false promise to the people in the electorate of Northern Tablelands. The New South Wales Government is considering a small number of proposals to progress under round four, with a closing date in October. About \$475 million is available Australiawide, so our share will be relatively small. We did well in the last round, achieving 39 per cent. That was much higher than the previous Government managed to obtain through any submission.

I believe it achieved only 17 per cent in the first round. Feedback from the Health and Hospitals Funds Advisory Board is that a new Armidale application would not be proposed this time round. Under our newly restructured health system, local health districts will have far more local responsibility and accountability. They will be able to manage their budgets and consult with local communities, including clinicians and local members of Parliament such as the member for Northern Tablelands. In doing so, they will be able to present submissions that include new models of care and innovative measures that will meet the criteria to get a better deal for their patients. In such cases, we will be able to put their considerations into a submission for Commonwealth funding.

#### **HUNTER REGION SPORTING VENUES AUTHORITY**

**Mr TIM OWEN:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. Will the Minister advise the House the results of the recent audit into the management processes of the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority?

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

**Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY:** I thank the member for Newcastle for his question and for recently filling in for me at the Hunter Academy of Sport Awards, which I believe was an excellent night. Members will recall that several months ago I took the decision to remove the members of the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority on the basis of a projected shortfall of approximately \$2 million to \$3 million in a project to construct a new grandstand. It was not only on the basis of the projected shortfall but also on the basis that the authority members could not tell me how or why the shortfall occurred. Since then, following an initial audit, a complete audit of the project has been carried out. I have now received the final audit report from Deloittes.

The audit report paints a picture that is significantly worse than my initial information. In summary, the original budget allocation was \$60.1 million, made up of \$50.1 million from the State and \$10 million from the Federal Government. After the initial budget allocation, in August 2009 the authority advised the former Government of a projected funding shortfall of \$11 million. In March 2011, just prior to the election, the former Government granted an additional \$11 million to complete the project. That took the total budget as at March this year to \$71.1 million. When interest of \$6.5 million is included, the total funds available for the project were \$77.6 million.

Despite identifying and receiving an \$11 million top-up from the former Government, the authority still came up short and required a further \$3.3 million from this Government. Quite simply, the authority ran out of money. It could not meet its debts. It is not too much of a stretch to suggest that it was technically insolvent. As the Minister responsible I had no choice but to take the action I did in removing the authority. The audit report identified numerous shortcomings, including interest incorrectly calculated and not detected by management, the project control group or the project control finance subcommittee. Transactions totalling \$340,000 were made for non-project related expenses, using the western grandstand bank account. The quantity surveyors work was not monitored for accuracy and no contract register was maintained.

A number of contracts or letters of appointment could not even be located. No commitment register was established to record project expenditure and no adequate mechanism was in place to monitor actual spending to budget. The result was a budget deficit of \$3.2 million. When the \$11 million original top-up provided by the former Government was included, the total budget deficit was approximately \$14 million, almost 24 per cent more than the original budget allocation. Despite local criticism of my decision to remove the

authority as a political decision, this report justifies my decision. This review has exposed systemic shortcomings not addressed by the previous Government. I am currently in the process of addressing those shortcomings and will advise the House accordingly.

**Mr TIM OWEN:** Will the Minister elucidate his answer?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister has a further two minutes to conclude his answer.

**Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY:** Who would have thought that so few people could make so much noise?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order. The member for Keira will come to order. The member for Murray-Darling will come to order.

**Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY:** A suggestion has been put forward that this problem was caused by staff freezes. The authority had ample time to address staff issues with the previous Government. If the authority members felt so strongly that they were short staffed, they had the ultimate power to resign their positions. This matter involves good governance and professional management. The interim board, which is made up of local community members, is doing a very good job. The Hunter region deserves to have quality infrastructure. I have never cast any doubt on the quality of the project; it is simply that the appropriate controls were not in place to make sure the project came in on time and on budget. I am in the process of addressing these issues and I will report back to the House as soon as possible.

**Question time concluded at 3.08 p.m.**

## **R U OK? DAY**

### **Ministerial Statement**

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [3.08 p.m.]: Today I recognise R U OK? Day, a national day of action that aims to prevent suicide by encouraging Australians to connect with someone they care about and help stop little problems turning into big ones. It is expected that today up to three million Australians across the country and one million across New South Wales from all backgrounds and walks of life will ask family, friends and colleagues, "Are you okay?" The purpose of the day is to promote the concept that reaching out to someone to ask whether they are okay could potentially help save a life.

R U OK? is an independent, not-for-profit organisation whose purpose is to provide national focus and leadership on suicide prevention by empowering Australians to have open and honest conversations and to stay connected with people in their lives. Madam Speaker, as you know, this morning we hosted a morning tea for all members to help to mark the day, and I thank you for allowing us to use the Speaker's Garden. It was extremely pleasing to see the event well attended by members from both sides of the House. We came together this morning unified by a common goal: to break down the stigma that surrounds suicide and to encourage people to connect with one another. The statistics on suicide concern us all.

More than 2,100 Australians die by suicide each year, with men around four times more likely to die by suicide than women. For each person who dies in that way, another 30 attempt to end their life. Today has special significance to many of us in this House who have lost friends, colleagues and loved ones to suicide. I have spoken previously in this House about the responsibility of all members to take a lead in helping to combat the prevalence of suicide in our communities. I know that I have the support of all members in achieving that aim. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Gavin Larkin and the enormous amount of work he did to encourage Australians of all ages and from all walks of life to talk more openly about suicide.

The incredible success of R U OK? Day is in large part due to Gavin's passionate drive to put the spotlight on suicide. Gavin could not join us today because he is terminally ill, but he has certainly been in our thoughts and he is watching this through Skype. I also acknowledge the work of the director of R U OK? Day, Janina Nearn. I have had the pleasure of working with Janina to help promote the day. I commend her for her commitment and passion in breaking down the stigma that still surrounds suicide. I urge all members to take a little time out of their day to ask those around them whether they are okay—not just today, but every day. That simple question could help save a life. Mental health is everyone's business.



**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [3.11 p.m.]: For those who have not seen it, the *Australian Story* program this week about Gavin Larkin was one of the most inspiring pieces of television one could see. I recommend it to all members. The greatest challenge that we as a society and as a Parliament will face over the next 50 years is that of mental health. Everyone in the community is affected by the rising tide of mental illness. The numbers of people affected by depression will continue to rise. For far too long the associated stigma has meant that those who develop mental illness often have to suffer in silence, and far too often with tragic consequences.

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

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** Completed suicide often has very few warnings, yet the consequences of each suicide last for generations. Those who have untreated depression potentially miss many years of happiness. R U OK? is a wonderful initiative because it recognises the need we all have to look after each other's mental health when those in need of our support are able to ask for help. Members of Parliament are not immune from depression and mental illness. Members of Parliament are elected as role models and they should show each other and the community that they have the forgiveness, compassion and understanding that form the basis of R U OK? It is in everybody's best interests for us all to do so. R U OK? deserves the thanks and support of all of us for its work.

## **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

### **Report**

**Mr Jonathan O'Dea**, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Conduct of the 2009 Review of the Audit Office under section 48A of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983", Report 1/55, dated September 2011.

**Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Jonathan O'Dea.**

## **PETITIONS**

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

### **Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport**

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

### **Pet Shops**

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

### **Mental Health Services**

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

## **PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT AND MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (ETHICS AND PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSIONER) BILL 2011**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry O'Farrell.**

### **Agreement in Principle**

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.14 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce the Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment (Ethics and Public Service Commissioner) Bill 2011. It is a fundamental principle of our democracy that the role of government is

to serve its citizens, not the other way around, and to deliver on behalf of citizens those things that people delegate in limited ways to government, such as regulation, compliance, the provision of public infrastructure and the delivery of certain services.

The more than 300,000 men and women engaged in public service around our State are in many cases meeting some of the most challenging issues that the market or voluntary exchanges cannot or will not meet. For many, their choice is a vocation, not simply a job, because they want to make a difference. Public service is a unique specialisation in our nation's work spectrum. But I believe that too often our public service is characterised as a faceless cohort, an anonymous workforce—an approach which demeans and undervalues the uniqueness of each employee and their contribution. So when we talk about a culture of public service integrity and independence, we know that the culture of the whole relies on the strength and commitment of the individuals who create that culture.

Individuals in public service set the tone of trust and dependability in our civil domain—the basis on which we sustain mature and honest democracy. It is all about good people, and I believe the way to motivate outstanding innovation and customer service to citizens is to foster a public service in which individuals are truly visible and meaningful, regardless of the size of the team of which they are a part. In our Westminster system, the government of the day will look to public service leaders, as well as to the middle and front lines, for frank and fearless advice. My Government believes that Westminster traditions and processes established in the nineteenth century are our strongest resources to take the New South Wales public service into a brand new era of innovation. It is by honouring the institutions of an independent public service and the maturity of its systems and unique specialisations that we have a solid foundation from which to confidently innovate.

Government responsibilities are diverse and complex. The people we look to for these services require and deserve a highly professional, strategic and independent champion to lead the New South Wales public service into the future. This champion must understand the strength, appeal and opportunities of public service, and equally understand that the best public service is focused in all its efforts on the needs of the citizen, the taxpayer and the customer. As service needs change, what matters will be the shape, not the size, of government, and the outcomes it delivers for citizens and customers. My Government has made a commitment to rebuild the economy, to return quality services, to renovate infrastructure, to restore accountability and to strengthen our local environment and communities. As part of our commitment we need the New South Wales public sector to do this with and for us. To date I have been impressed by the professionalism and work ethic of our State's public servants and the goodwill and energy brought to the task of delivering and implementing our reforms.

The Government is determined to make the New South Wales public sector the best in the nation and a leader in the world, with unambiguous goals, clear policy directions, transparent processes and consistent accountability. We are determined to create a new customer service culture underpinned by value and choice in public services, with public sector employees increasingly collaborating with the private and not-for-profit sectors to help shape innovative, relevant and modern public services that are responsive to the needs of our citizens. To drive this vision for the public sector and encouraged by public service professionals who are keen to see overdue reform to strengthen the integrity of their profession, the Government committed to establish a Public Service Commission in New South Wales.

Members may recall that in November 2008 in this place I argued that the then role of the Department of Premier and Cabinet as both the "poacher and gamekeeper" in public sector employment was not in the public interest. I said that to improve the integrity, impartiality, performance and accountability of the State's public sector workforce we would, if elected, establish a Public Service Commission. In July 2010 and February 2011 I was invited by the Institute of Public Administration Australia (NSW Division) [IPAA] to address delegates on further details of our proposals. I am grateful for the advice from the Institute of Public Administration Australia and for its contributions to the deliberations of the Department of Premier and Cabinet working group earlier this year in which professional public servants, under the guidance of the former head of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Brendan O'Reilly, built the organisational and operational detail on the framework to which we, during the campaign, had committed to implementing.

I record my appreciation to Brendan O'Reilly and his team, and to Director General Chris Eccles, who brought their experience and insights to shaping a commission that I am confident will set new standards. We have arrived at a historic moment in the history of our State's public service. I genuinely invite the Opposition, despite its opposition to this idea while in government, to support these important reforms. It would be a powerful signal to the New South Wales public sector if parliamentarians of all sides endorsed this reform, and by doing so strengthened the Westminster traditions of our parliamentary democracy in New

South Wales—as indeed has already occurred in the Commonwealth, states including Queensland, South Australia, and Victoria, and other Commonwealth jurisdictions such as Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The establishment of the Public Service Commissioner is the centrepiece of our plans for the public sector. People have sometimes asked why we call it the Public Service Commission, rather than the public sector commission. By definition, the public service refers to the 20 per cent of people who comprise particular departments under the Public Sector Employment and Management Act, and the public sector includes a broader group of public employees, mostly in primary service delivery. The responsibilities of the New South Wales Public Service Commissioner will include the entire sector—but the word "service" in the title is a significant and active choice to recognise the value and intent of the service ethic in the concept of public service.

In fulfilling his or her role and responsibilities, the commissioner will be expected to use innovation to put the citizen, the customer, the taxpayer, at the centre of public services, delivering improved outcomes and value for money; promote and embed independence and integrity; provide advice and make recommendations on how to implement contemporary practice in public administration; create capability for performance and targeted service delivery to attract and retain a new generation of our best and brightest to public service; define the public service as an admired and competitive career choice; develop a cadre of young professional thinkers; and build and retain public confidence and trust. Investment in public sector workforce management is critical to achieving productivity gains and improving service to customers. Effective management of our human resources, at all levels and in service contexts, will achieve improvements to service delivery and productivity and lead to positive budget outcomes.

The Government made another key election commitment—to introduce a Public Sector Ethics Act. I do not seek to provoke political debate on this occasion and in this historic context, but I think it is important to be honest about the challenge we face in this Parliament to rebuild confidence in our public institutions, as people called for in March. We must confront the uncomfortable truth of the recent past and acknowledge that trust in public institutions has been broken. I have spoken regularly about the need to restore trust between public servants and government through clear plans and mandates, between people and elected representatives through devolution and accountability, and between Government and communities through a strong customer service and accountability culture. The inclusion of a public sector ethics framework in this bill will give strength to important networks in our civil domain whose success depends on trust. Clear rules, boundaries and standards are necessary to ensure appropriate separation between the political and administrative arms of that civil domain.

In a recent speech to the Australia and New Zealand School of Government about trust in government, the Director General of the New South Wales Department of Premier and Cabinet noted research that showed a decline in trust since the late 1960s in most advanced industrialised democracies. He noted that in a 2005 survey, Canadians linked trust and confidence in government to public organisations that provide good leadership and management, equal and ethical treatment, and quality services that meet citizens' and community needs. Those are important signals for self-aware and honest democracies, which I trust we count ourselves among. That is why it is important to provide our public service with effective tools to make good ethical decisions internally and in relation to their stakeholders and to defend their independence, if it is under external threat.

The promotion of integrity, impartiality, and accountability is one of the principal objectives of the commissioner. It is for this reason that the ethical framework is part and parcel of this bill. The Public Service Commissioner and establishing the new public sector ethical framework are significant changes that will impact employment and management in the New South Wales public sector. This bill amends the main employment legislation for the New South Wales public service, the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002. The Act does not apply to employees in local councils as they are not part of the New South Wales public sector. Separate legislation, the Local Government Act 1993, provides for the staffing of local councils while the employment arrangements and conditions are included in the Local Government (State) Award.

Turning to the specifics of the bill, there are three main amendments: the ethical framework, the Public Service Commissioner and the Public Service Commission Advisory Board. In recent months the New South Wales Government undertook consultations on the creation of public sector ethics legislation, as we have committed to in the 100 Day Action Plan. The Government has drawn up a draft ethical framework for the New

South Wales public sector based around the four pillars of integrity, trust, service and accountability. To develop this framework, the Government heard from individuals who are users and customers of public services, taxpayers, and individual public servants across the occupations in the public sector.

A government website encouraged people to have their say about public sector ethics. Consultation was held with stakeholders including government agencies, the Auditor-General, New South Wales Business Chamber, the Council of Social Service New South Wales, National Disability Services, and the New South Wales branch of the Institute of Public Administration Australia. Consultation also was held with Unions New South Wales and briefings were conducted for the Independent Commission Against Corruption and New South Wales Ombudsman. Professor Peter Shergold, Chairman of the Public Service Commission Advisory Board, also contributed to the framework. The feedback gathered during the consultation process helped to refine the ethical framework and the development of the bill.

Part 1.2 of the bill establishes an ethical framework for the public sector, with the twin objectives of recognising the role of the public sector in preserving the public interest, defending public value and adding professional quality and value to the commitments of the government of the day, and establishing an ethical framework for a merit-based, apolitical and professional public sector that implements the decisions of the government of the day. Embedded in the legislation is a single set of values that flow through to principles and standards of behaviour which we believe can reside either in legislation or supporting policy documents. As identified in the bill at clause 3C (4), the ethical framework and values will apply to the public sector as defined in the Public Sector Employment Management Act. In the case of special temporary employees, an ethical framework reflecting the same values and high standards of behaviour will be included in any relevant Code of Conduct under which they work.

The Public Service Commissioner's role will be to promote the core values of integrity, trust, service and accountability by articulating outcomes rather than prescribing or imposing complex processes. This will allow the New South Wales public sector to develop approaches that deliver decisions and outcomes that respond strongly to the customer focus, accountability and diverse service delivery models. The Public Service Commission will assist departments to draft tailored Codes of Conduct that align with and expand upon the values and principles outlined in the ethical framework. So, as outlined in the bill, the four pillars upon which the ethical framework is built are the core values of integrity, trust, service and accountability. These values provide a nucleus that reflects most of the ethical concepts in current use. A set of supporting principles also has been formulated that translates each of the four values into behaviours and actions. These too are included in the legislation.

The key to achieving the required culture change in the sector hinges upon each public sector agency adopting this framework as a central stimulus for the shaping of the culture of that agency and individual employees considering and applying the values and principles of the framework in their daily work. I believe that the ethical framework outlined in the bill will create and nurture a culture of integrity and independence in the New South Wales public sector and will translate to a capable and ethical public sector that is committed to continuous improvement and is worthy of people's trust and confidence. Part 1.3 and schedule 2A to the bill provides for the appointment and functions of the Public Service Commissioner. The appointment and functions of the Public Service Commissioner are in clauses 3D to 3P.

Those provisions outline how the commissioner is to be appointed, the principal objectives and general functions, and the requirement to report annually to the Premier on the work and activities of the commissioner as well as the state of the public sector. The Premier, after receiving these reports, will cause them to be tabled to both Houses of Parliament as soon as is practicable. The Public Service Commissioner is a statutory appointee with a non-renewable term of office not exceeding seven years. Terms of up to seven years will provide sufficient scope for the commissioner to articulate and implement a range of strategic initiatives and priorities. The bill allows for the commissioner to be appointed for a combination of terms as long as the total period does not exceed seven years. For example, this combination could be two terms of three and four years respectively.

Section 3G of the bill also identifies that the commissioner reports to the Premier in connection with the exercise of the commissioner's functions but is not subject to the control and direction of the Premier in the exercise of these functions. This provision recognises both the independence of the commissioner in providing advice and reports to the Government, as well as the responsibility of the commissioner to the Premier to deliver on the Government's key policy objectives for the New South Wales public sector. In role and responsibility, the

commissioner will have coverage, to varying degrees, in respect of the entire New South Wales public sector, including the public service proper, police, health, fire fighters, transport, education and State-owned corporations.

The bill at proposed section 3E outlines the principal objectives of the commissioner: to promote and maintain the highest levels of integrity, impartiality, accountability and leadership across the public sector; to improve the capability of the public sector to provide strategic and innovative policy advice, implement the decisions of the Government and meet public expectations; to attract and retain a high calibre professional public sector workforce; to ensure that public sector recruitment and selection processes comply with the merit principle and adhere to professional standards; to foster a public service culture in which customer service, initiative, individual responsibility and the achievement of results are strongly valued; to build public confidence in the public sector; and to support the Government in achieving positive budget outcomes through strengthening the capability of the public sector workforce.

Proposed section 3F of the bill identifies the general functions of the commissioner with the key focus on identifying reform opportunities for the public sector workforce and advising the Government on policy innovations and strategy for those areas of reform. As I announced, the inaugural Public Service Commissioner is Mr Graeme Head, who is a public servant with more than 30 years experience including more than 18 years in executive positions both in New South Wales and more recently as the Deputy Secretary in the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing.

Part 1.4 and schedule 2B provide for the members and procedure of the Public Service Commission Advisory Board. In confirming our commitment to establish a Public Service Commission, the Government made clear the commissioner would be assisted and supported by an advisory board. The advisory board will comprise an independent chair who is the Public Service Commissioner, the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and four other external members appointed by the Premier. The board members appointed by the Premier will be persons who together have expertise in human resources management, probity and accountability, strategic planning, budget and performance management and service delivery in the public, private, tertiary and not-for-profit sectors.

On Thursday 14 April 2011 I announced that Professor Peter Shergold, AC, had been appointed as the incoming chairman of the advisory board of the Public Service Commission. With a long and distinguished record as a public servant and academic combined with experience in the private sector and social enterprises, Professor Shergold demonstrates the very qualities we are seeking to build in this State's public sector—professionalism, innovation, independence and capability. The objective of the board is to provide the Public Service Commissioner and the Premier with strategic, independent and expert advice concerning the management and performance of the public sector workforce.

Professor Shergold already has provided valuable input through the course of the development of the roles and functions of the commission. I know in his role as the founding chair he will continue to articulate a vision and clear direction for the commission and therefore the public sector. Schedule 2B to the bill also provides for arrangements for the members of the board including the term and disclosure of pecuniary and other interests and some of the procedural arrangements and processes for conducting meetings. These provisions are common across legislation where an advisory board is established. There are a number of other amendments to the Act as a result of establishing the Public Service Commissioner.

A significant number of amendments are as a result of omitting references to the Director of Public Employment, which is a role currently held by the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and replacing the references with the commissioner where the function is one falling within the roles and functions of the Public Service Commissioner, and with the director general where the function is one remaining within the roles and functions of the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet will continue to exercise all functions in relation to public sector industrial relations as identified in part 6.2 of the bill.

There is one change to the existing legislative provisions unrelated to establishing a Public Service Commissioner. In my view, insularity is the enemy of innovation. Combining the textures of different cultures stimulates new ideas and healthy competitive thinking. I have been a longstanding advocate of encouraging and developing two-way secondments with the private sector, tertiary sector and the not-for-profit sector as well as other public sector jurisdictions. The Act will be amended to expand the mobility powers to allow for temporary assignments beyond the New South Wales public sector as outlined

in clause 88A of the bill. This important change will facilitate the temporary assignment of staff between the New South Wales public sector, other Australian public sectors, universities and the private sector, including the not-for-profit sector.

This amendment will greatly expand the opportunities for both employers and their employees to explore joint projects and collaborative arrangements including temporary placements or staff exchanges between employers whether they are public sector, private sector, universities or not-for-profit organisations. Without this amendment, exchanges are limited to local councils, local authorities and the New South Wales public sector only. The change will contribute to the Government's aim to enhance collaboration with the not-for-profit, academic and private sectors in shaping public sector policy and delivery. It also will contribute to developing the public sector workforce through increased career experience, development opportunities and improved understanding of other sectors and their needs.

There is a great appetite for engagement among the business and non-government sectors and, critically, a real and genuine willingness to make a contribution to New South Wales's enhanced performance. These new mobility arrangements will encourage flexible and innovative joint ventures, such as collaborative projects in which the New South Wales public sector and either universities, other Australian public sector agencies, the private sector or the not-for-profit sector could exchange staff for development purposes or sharing of skills and expertise in providing services to our customers, the citizens of New South Wales. Sharing of ideas between sectors can lead to innovation in service delivery. Innovation is the great driver of reform and is a key to shaping a better future. We must encourage new models and ideas and not be limited by existing paradigms. Innovation can be used to create opportunity and inform the way the Government delivers more convenient, effective, relevant and reliable services to people.

As an employer, mobility is a great asset for the New South Wales public sector to promote. It demonstrates that a public sector career can present a diversity of opportunities and scope for the development of a range of skills. This can be attractive to employers and potential employees who are seeking variety, challenges and diverse career experiences. Expanding the arrangements for temporary assignments will allow this to happen effectively. We have asked the Public Service Commissioner to embark on a challenge. The challenge is to establish and enforce high ethical standards by setting clear expectations in the ethical framework, strengthen public sector performance by making the New South Wales public sector an employer of choice, ensure public servants are appointed on merit, put citizens at the centre of service delivery, and ensure that the public sector collaborates with the not-for-profit sector in providing services. This bill puts the necessary arrangements in place to help the commissioner to meet those challenges.

I have great confidence in the energy and commitment of the New South Wales public sector, and the capabilities of men and women across our State and across the spectrum of occupations, to meet the complexities and challenges in our rapidly changing world. Our public sector needs to have confidence that their independence and integrity is strengthened by a Public Service Commissioner who also understands that an effective and valued public sector is one that, as I said at the outset, is there to serve the community. The commissioner will build upon the professionalism, innovation, independence and capability of our public servants so that our New South Wales public sector is the envy of other States and a model for other jurisdictions. I commend the bill to the House.

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

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Notices of Motions**

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

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

### **DEAF-BLIND COMMUNITY AND HELEN KELLER DAY**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON** (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.50 p.m.]: I raise an issue that is ignored far too often but that it is particularly important to give a voice to in this place today. Deaf-blind people

face incredible challenges, and neither the New South Wales Government nor the Australian Government currently provides the services so desperately needed to support the deaf-blind. Recently I attended a morning tea with deaf-blind people from my electorate and representatives of the DeafBlind Association (NSW) Inc. I encourage all members to make contact with the association to gain a firsthand understanding of the problems faced by deaf-blind people, and their urgent need for support.

Deaf-blind people are not looking to be passive recipients of help. Rather, they seek some small level of fundamental support so they can enjoy the basic human right of engaging with their community. Currently, due to a lack of awareness by government and government services, deaf-blind people suffer a great deal. Many are sent to group homes for people with intellectual disability, but they are not intellectually disabled and these services do not provide real support for them. Deaf-blind people live with staff who can see and hear, and who communicate orally and verbally. In many cases deaf-blind people are left to sit alone, shut out of the world. This unfair neglect often exacerbates their condition and leads to challenging behaviour that is often treated with medication and restraints. This sort of treatment is totally unacceptable, and it shames me that it still exists within our society.

I want to raise awareness of the suffering of the deaf-blind and I strongly urge those present in the Chamber to take up this issue as well. In the throes of politics we too often ignore those in desperate need of help, and people such as those who are deaf and blind suffer as a result. The deaf-blind community urgently needs a specialised service that targets the extraordinary challenge of deaf-blindness. To that end, I offer my support to raising awareness both of the plight of the deaf-blind and of international Helen Keller Day. The DeafBlind Association (NSW) Inc. is very supportive of the recognition of Helen Keller Day. In light of the fact that we have just acknowledged Grandparents Day, it is timely—by sheer coincidence—that I raise this important issue today. Community awareness of the deaf-blind is very low and recognition of Helen Keller Day on 27 June, her birthdate, will do much to raise the profile of deaf-blindness in our community. Therefore, I urge New South Wales to recognise Helen Keller Day as the first step towards showing our State's support for a community that truly needs assistance.

Helen Keller is the world's most famous deaf-blind person, and it is fitting that a woman who was such an incredible advocate for the disadvantaged and the downtrodden during her lifetime should be honoured in such a way. Helen Keller was committed to the values of socialism. She believed in a fair society and, despite her disability, was a powerful advocate in both political and social spheres for adequate support for people with severe and chronic disabilities. She believed it was a basic requirement of a civilised society to look after those who need a helping hand. We would do well to listen to her message. I believe the measure of a society is how well the least well-off in our communities are doing. As long as the deaf-blind are ignored by government services, we are not properly representing our constituents.

The deaf-blind are not demanding a handout; they simply want to be able to live their lives in the way the rest of us take for granted. Having a fair go is paramount to our values as Australians, and the situation currently facing deaf-blind people could not be called fair in any way. I urge all members in this House to make a change and to give deaf-blind people the recognition they deserve. I urge the New South Wales Government to give serious consideration to declaring Helen Keller Day as an annual day of recognition. It gives me great pleasure to be able to voice the concerns of the deaf-blind community, and I hope that in time their specialised issues will be given the attention they deserve.

### **NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION WEEK**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [3.55 p.m.]: This afternoon I inform the House of the importance of child protection and my involvement in a number of important activities centred around the welfare of children and young people. National Child Protection Week this year was held between Sunday 4 and Sunday 11 September. On Wednesday 7 September, I had great pleasure in hosting the third annual Friends of Bravehearts Dinner in Parliament House to raise awareness among members of Parliament of the extraordinary work of Bravehearts in our communities educating children about personal safety. I thank the member for Marrickville, Carmel Tebbutt, representing the Leader of the Opposition, and the Minister for Fair Trading, representing the Premier, for attending the dinner.

Wednesday 7 September was also White Balloon Day, an annual event held to raise awareness about child sexual assault in our community and to show support for survivors. This year's White Balloon Day message was simple: "Do the White Thing—Protect Our Kids." For the sixth successive year as part of White Balloon Day Bravehearts volunteers decorated the front and back entrances to Parliament House with symbolic

white balloons to show support for the survivors of child sexual assault in our community. I thank the Presiding Officers of the Parliament for approving my request to dress our Parliament for this important occasion. Bravehearts has many supporters on both sides of the House and in the Legislative Council for many good reasons.

I acknowledge the contributions of Wendy and Roger Woodward, two of my constituents from North Nowra, who established New South Wales Bravehearts in February 2007. Wendy and Roger have since established a South Coast Bravehearts Committee and continue to be strong advocates for Bravehearts, organising a variety of awareness-raising events across the Shoalhaven and South Coast. In February 2008 I was honoured as a councillor to move a motion, which was seconded by the now Mayor of Shoalhaven, Paul Green, to provide \$3,000 in annual funding to support the work of Bravehearts across the Shoalhaven. I am proud that Shoalhaven City Council was the first council in the State to provide Bravehearts with financial support. Whilst councils can support many causes, child protection is certainly worthy of support.

Since 2008 other councils, including Randwick City Council, have supported Bravehearts with funding. I note that my good friend and colleague the member for Coogee as Mayor of Randwick supported Bravehearts with an ongoing contribution of \$10,000 to support the Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure program so that Bravehearts could continue its good work by visiting more schools across our State. Randwick City Council supported the work of Bravehearts in the eastern suburbs. Bravehearts commenced its personal safety education program called Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure in public and independent schools in New South Wales in March 2008. The program is delivered to childcare centres, and to public and independent schools as far north as Port Macquarie, out west to Dubbo, right across western Sydney, the Illawarra and down to the South Coast and the Shoalhaven.

The Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure education program delivers a 30-minute live and interactive performance to children from preschool age to year 3. The Bravehearts lion cub mascot, Ditto, is the star of the performance, which includes interactive songs with children. The show teaches young children the importance of keeping safe, of identifying a safe network of adults, and running and telling someone they can trust if they experience a "No" feeling. In the wider debate about sentencing laws and risks of reoffending it is often forgotten that the work Bravehearts does in our community is an offset to government expenditure. By focusing on prevention and reducing the incidence of child sexual assault, Bravehearts is saving the Government money. The Ditto program, to quote the Hon. Paul Green, MLC, is "an investment—not a cost" to government.

State governments across the country spend extraordinary amounts of money each year—including on counselling and victims compensation schemes—assisting survivors who have fallen prey to child sex offenders. I ask the New South Wales Government to commit to funding the Ditto education program so that Bravehearts can continue visiting our schools and empowering our children to keep safe for many years to come. Radio 2GB presenter Ray Hadley is the New South Wales Ambassador for Bravehearts. Mr Hadley has been involved with New South Wales Bravehearts since it was launched at the Sydney Opera House in 2007 and he continues to be a fierce advocate for a safer State for our children. The New South Wales Chairman of Bravehearts is respected businessman Patrick Walsh, and I acknowledge his contribution to the cause.

A bipartisan parliamentary action committee was formed in 2010 to support Bravehearts, with members including the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Hon. Shelley Hancock; the Minister for Fair Trading, and member for Lane Cove, Mr Anthony Roberts; Mr Deputy-Speaker, and member for Lismore, Thomas George; the member for Tweed, Geoff Provest; the member for Wallsend, Sonia Hornery; and the Hon. Paul Green, MLC. This action committee represents both sides of the House and I commend all members for their efforts to date in supporting the work of Bravehearts, and of increasing awareness of child sexual assault and the need for government to do more to support the cause in our local community.

### **SUPERCHEAP AUTO BATHURST 1000**

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.00 p.m.]: In coming weeks the Supercheap Auto Bathurst 1000 car race will take place in the Bathurst electorate. It is probably one of the greatest events to occur in regional New South Wales, if not in New South Wales, Australia or internationally. The V8 Supercars make the annual pilgrimage to the city of Bathurst each year. It is the pinnacle of Australian motor sport and the grand final of the V8 Supercars Championship, which is held each year. The Holdens and Fords make the pilgrimage to the city of Bathurst to compete in this most recognised event. It is not just a local event; it is recognised nationally and internationally. My electorate is proud to be the home of Mount Panorama, which is a 6.2-kilometre circuit.



The track has honed the skills of some of the best drivers and it gives them the opportunity to display those skills at high speed. The event is important to Bathurst and to regional New South Wales as a whole. It injects \$53 million in the local economy and \$68 million in the region. It attracts around 300 full-time workers and the population of Bathurst doubles for the duration of the event. Each year 850 million people watch the race on television. The event is televised in 130 different countries, and this year it will be televised live in the United States for the first time. I am sure that the increased exposure of this event will see the spectacle of motor racing gain popularity.

Businesses in Bathurst have started decorating their shop windows in support of the event. It is an opportunity for them to showcase their business, support their favourite driver or team, and highlight to visitors the city of Bathurst and the event. The race is held in conjunction with Bathurst Regional Council, B-Rock FM and the *Western Advocate*. The event actually begins on 5 October, when the team pantechs drive up William Street, the main street of Bathurst, and then to the bottom of Mount Panorama, where they park at the back of the pits. There the teams unload the vehicles and prepare for race week. The drivers come down to Kings Parade in the afternoon to promote the event by signing autographs and talking with the fans. There is also a Legends Dinner to promote the event.

Each year, guests are invited to the dinner to speak about their experiences in motor racing and this year we are fortunate to have three racing legends: Colin Bond, Allan Grice and Tomas Mezera. They will speak about their careers during the seventies, eighties and nineties. Between them, these three drivers have more than a century of racing experience, and they have all been on the podium at Bathurst. We look forward to the Legends Dinner. Over the four days around 200,000 people go through the gates and between 30,000 to 40,000 people camp on the mountain, which shows the attraction of the event. Each year people come from outside the region, from other States and from international destinations to attend this endurance motor race. The event is going to be bigger and better each year.

### FORGOTTEN AUSTRALIANS

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [4.05 p.m.]: Before a lady named Maureen McDonogh came to see me at my electorate office I did not know about the forgotten Australians. I do now, and I thank her for that. I refer those members who are not aware of the forgotten Australians to the report of the Senate Community Affairs References Committee entitled "Forgotten Australians: A report on Australians who experienced institutional or out-of-home care as children". This does not include child migrants and Aboriginal children who were the subject of previous reports. The report was released in August 2004, is 438 pages long and contains 39 recommendations. It states:

Upwards of, and possibly more than 500 000 Australians experienced care in an orphanage, Home or other form of out-of-home care during the last century. As many of these people have had a family it is highly likely that every Australian either was, is related to, works with or knows someone who experienced childhood in an institution or out-of-home care environment. Children were placed in care for a myriad of reasons including being orphaned; being born to a single mother; family dislocation from domestic violence, divorce or separation; family poverty and parents' inability to cope with their children often as a result of some form of crisis or hardship ...

The Committee received hundreds of graphic and disturbing accounts about the treatment and care experienced by children in out-of-home care. Many care leavers showed immense courage in putting intensely personal life stories on the public record. Their stories outlined a litany of emotional, physical and sexual abuse, and often criminal physical and sexual assault. Their stories also told of neglect, humiliation and deprivation of food, education and healthcare. Such abuse and assault was widespread across institutions, across States and across the government, religious and other care providers.

Maureen is one of six children; she had three sisters and two brothers. She lived on a farm in Dapto. In 1957 her mother died. Her dad, a farmer, placed five of his six kids in care with a close relative and paid maintenance to her. In 1959 Maureen and her siblings became wards of the State. Maureen was sexually abused by a relative at age 11 and reported the assault to the headmistress at school, which led to a police complaint. Her abuser, a close relative, was charged with the crime and released on bail only to come home and beat her. Consequently Maureen was placed in child welfare and, remarkably, she was institutionalised until 1969.

She endured 33 movements between various children's homes, foster parents and other places where the system failed her time and time again—and continues to do so. Three months shy of her nineteenth birthday Maureen was released into the world with \$12 in her pocket—have a nice life. She is one of the 500,000. She tells me that she knows about 500 people in the same boat just from our local area, and there are others who choose not to revisit the trauma. Monday 16 November 2011 marks the second apology from Kevin Rudd and Malcolm Turnbull to the forgotten Australians. We welcome the apology but Maureen says, echoing the thoughts of so many:

Sorry is not enough. Sorry was never enough. They need to stop ducking and weaving. There were young kids ruined, robbed of an opportunity to lead a normal life. Children who could never now fulfil what they could have been, robbed of mum and dad, brothers and sisters who never had the opportunity to know each other, inheritances stolen, documents withheld, criminal and civil laws impeding, not helping. We want peace, we want reparation.

Maureen wants peace, as do all the forgotten Australians, and she wants reparation. I commend the report of the Senate committee. Of the 39 recommendations, No. 6 states:

That the Commonwealth Government establish and manage a national reparations fund for victims of institutional abuse in institutions and out of home care.

That has not been done. I know the Queensland Government moved some way towards doing that, but other governments have not. Another recommendation on which action is still outstanding is that full cooperation be received from all institutions and that, if it was not, there should be a Royal commission into State, charitable and church-run institutions and out-of-home care in the past century. That has not happened. Today—I will have more to say about this matter in the future—I call on this Government, the Opposition and all members of Parliament to read the Senate report in a bipartisan fashion and to consider our treatment of the Stolen Generations. When I return to the House, as I promised Maureen, I will put forward this issue for conscientious debate. The House has not heard the last from me about this matter—we owe it to the forgotten Australians.

### CENTRAL COAST RUGBY LEAGUE

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE** (The Entrance) [4.10 p.m.]: Tonight it is fitting that I speak about rugby league on the Central Coast, given the National Rugby League semifinals will take place this weekend and the competition's grand final is imminent. Tomorrow night two teams from my electorate, the Ourimbah Magpies and the Berkeley Vale Panthers, will do battle in the Central Coast Division Rugby League grand final at Kanwal. The Ourimbah Magpies are the defending champions and minor premiers. They will want to finish off their wonderful season with a grand final win. I will not say which team I will barrack for.

Both teams are from my electorate and therefore, I wish them both the best of luck. Last night the Central Coast Division Rugby League held its 2011 presentation night. The minor premiers for first grade were Ourimbah, for reserve grade The Entrance, for the open age Erina, for the under-19s The Entrance and for the under-17s The Entrance. The overall club championship was awarded to The Entrance. The Entrance did very well in the awards, but the Ourimbah Magpies will try to take out the first grade honours. The top try scoring club was The Entrance, with 430 tries for the season.

**Mr Paul Toole:** I am going for The Entrance.

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE:** The member for Bathurst is going for The Entrance. With the National Rugby League semifinals being played this weekend and the conclusion of the 2011 season looming, the National Rugby League will see the retirement of Australian captain Darren Lockyer. I place on the record the foreword by Wayne Bennet in Darren Lockyer's book, which states:

I am on the record many times dismissing the assertion that footballers or other elite sportsmen and sportswomen are "role models" for our youth, because I strongly believe that responsibility lies with parents and family.

But there is an exception to every rule, and Darren Lockyer is that exception.

The example he sets in every aspect of his life, on and off the sporting field, is one to which all young people could aspire if their desire is to lead a rewarding life achieving their potential.

But Darren is an enigma. By nature he is shy, modest to a fault and happiest when he is sitting alone in a corner watching friends have a great time.

He does not need to be the centre of attention, the life of any party.

He is a perfectionist to the point of obsession, whether it is combing his hair or passing a football, but he is strong-minded enough to not allow this trait to completely dominate his life.

Throw all that into the mix, and it is understandable for you to ask how it adds up to a brilliant athlete, a leader of men, and a fierce competitor in what is the toughest sport of all—rugby league ...

I am regularly asked to identify the qualities that made Darren the champion footballer also the great leader of his state's and nation's football teams for almost a decade. This has been one of his outstanding achievements, because he was not born with leadership qualities or aspirations. He just wanted to do the best he could and not be the centre of attention.

But he had the captaincy of the Broncos, Queensland and Australia thrust upon him, and typically he considered what was required to fulfil the position, took advice from those he trusted and accepted the challenge. The biggest change was to his own personality. A captain of an elite sporting team cannot expect to just lead by example. He has also to speak out, demand performance, inspire, be involved in game and personality analyses, and be the public face of the team, handling criticism in those times when things are not going well.

This was anathema to Darren, but he made himself change. He accepted the challenge, and history shows what a success he made of it.

What has most impressed me about Darren is his sportsmanship. He has never been sin-binned or sent off for foul play, never been penalised for arguing with a referee's decision, never been suspended and never thrown a punch on the field.

His sportsmanship has been unparalleled in my coaching career. Nobody ever tries to cheap-shot Darren Lockyer because these players have played with and against him many times, and they respect him too much to stoop to such conduct.

Youngsters—anybody for that matter who wants to better him or herself—should read this book and learn what makes Darren tick. The Darren Lockyer way is to do your best on and off the field, and that is all he has ever done—his best.

That is his legacy to sport, and to us all.

I support the words of super coach Wayne Bennett in his appraisal of Darren Lockyer. Many young people on the Central Coast look to Darren Lockyer as a leader and role model—although I am sure plenty of people in New South Wales would be happy to see Darren Lockyer retire as Queensland captain and player. He is a role model for junior rugby league. I look forward to seeing him play his last game on Australian soil as captain of the Australian rugby league team in Newcastle in October. I wish him well in the future.

### **TED NOFFS FOUNDATION**

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [4.15 p.m.]: Recently I attended the Street University in Liverpool, a program inspired, founded and run by the Ted Noffs Foundation. I visited the centre at the invitation of Matt Noffs, grandson of Ted. Matt, Wesley and other members of the family commit themselves to making easier and worthwhile the lives of young people in our community who have met with difficulties and challenges that no young person should have to endure. These young people may have faced family breakdowns or mental health issues that have led to the chronic abuse of drugs and/or alcohol. The Ted Noffs Foundation offers a way back, a new chance, a life that all members would agree should be a basic right for all young people.

The Ted Noffs Foundation is based in my electorate of Coogee in the grand old post office in Randwick. The building was purchased by Eastern Suburbs Leagues Club, the club of the Roosters, for the exclusive use of the foundation. I have been a regular visitor to Easts House, as it is named, and have met with members of the board. The Ted Noffs Foundation runs a variety of programs. The Street University in Liverpool is a drop-in centre that specialises in offering young people on-site training opportunities in music production. It is an innovative program and the youngsters I met were grateful to be able to have the opportunity to learn and create in a positive environment. The technology that is made available to the young people is outstanding.

The Ted Noffs Foundation also runs the Program for Adolescent Life Management, or PALM. This residential program is for 14- to 18-year-olds with serious drug and/or alcohol abuse problems. The initial program is for three months but, importantly, a 12-month follow-up program helps ensure that the young people transition into a new and hopefully sober and clean life. The Program for Adolescent Life Management is run in Coogee. Earlier this year I visited and met with young people in this program. With the assistance of Mallesons, Stephen Jaques law firm, the Ted Noffs Foundation also runs a free legal advice service called ASK! This free service is available to 14- to 25-year-olds. The school counselling service run by the foundation gives secondary school students access to counsellors either by self-referral or referral by a school staff member. The counsellors are in the schools half a day every week. They are just a few of the examples of the great work undertaken by the Ted Noffs Foundation.

All the facts and figures in the world do not give as clear a picture of the value of the foundation's work as does a firsthand account, which I heard from one of the young people who has been helped by the Ted Noffs Foundation. This lad, whom I met at the Street University, told me of his strife-ridden life, something that no young person deserves. It is truly unjust. But for the intervention of the Ted Noffs Foundation his future would have been even more bleak. He now leads a constructive, active and thankfully happy life building an independent and secure future. I congratulate and, most importantly, offer my sincere thanks to the Ted Noffs Foundation on the invaluable and very much appreciated service it offers to young people in Coogee and across the State, as it has done since Ted founded the organisation back in 1970.

### **SOUTHERN CROSS UNIVERSITY**

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE** (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [4.20 p.m.]: This afternoon I recognise the contribution and support that Southern Cross University provides not only to the city of Lismore but to Coffs

Harbour and the Tweed. Tomorrow I will have the privilege of attending a graduation ceremony which, like last year, will be different to previous ceremonies. The graduands will walk through the streets of the city of Lismore to the Trinity Catholic College where they will use the auditorium to celebrate the graduation of about 200 students. The reason the students walk through the streets of the city is to reinforce their support for and dedication to the community.

I had the pleasure of attending a graduation ceremony of the university in May and tomorrow I will attend its spring graduation ceremony. Southern Cross University is a very important part of the North Coast of New South Wales. Whilst it has the footprint of the North Coast it also has a great interest in and supports the South-East Asian community in that it has facilities and provides classes throughout South-East Asia. Earlier this year, and for the first time, the university's inaugural VC Awards for Excellence were held in Lismore. The awards are an opportunity for the university staff to show their appreciation for the professors who provide the university with tremendous support. Awards were given for excellence in teaching and learning, and the award winners were recognised by not only the university and the vice-chancellor but also their peers. Awards were also given for excellence in research, professional staff performance and excellence in community engagement.

It was a very successful night not only for the winners but also for everyone who attended that evening. Professor Peter Lee, who is the Vice-Chancellor of Southern Cross University, together with the staff of the university have a great interest in delivering their courses to local students and giving them the opportunity to obtain a degree. When I went to school back in the middle of the last century, it was just a dream for anyone who lived on the North Coast of New South Wales to be educated there, go to university there and then teach in the area. That dream can now be a reality for many of our young people on the North Coast. Students used to have to go to Newcastle, Sydney or Brisbane to attend university.

Southern Cross University now provides the realisation of a dream for many young people who live not only on the North Coast but also in the western areas of the State who come to the North Coast footprint of Southern Cross University. Southern Cross University makes a contribution to the economy and its staff are great corporate citizens. They have an understanding of and an involvement with community that could only be described as being well above what one would expect. I pay tribute to Southern Cross University and its chancellor, John Dowd. I will have the honour tomorrow of walking through the streets of Lismore to the Trinity Catholic College auditorium for the spring graduation ceremony.

### LAKE MACQUARIE COUNTRYLINK SERVICES

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [4.25 p.m.]: The needs of rail travellers from Lake Macquarie and other electorates could be better served if the CountryLink stop at Fassifern was relocated to Morisset. There is no argument that the existing stop at Fassifern is of value to residents of the Toronto area, but a greater number of people from a larger area would be likely to benefit from a stop at Morisset. I have received correspondence from a number of parties on this matter, in particular from the Southlake Business Chamber and Community Alliance. These correspondents identify, I believe quite correctly, that the current location disadvantages many travellers. They point instead to the obvious benefits that would be available to CountryLink customers if the service made use of Morisset station.

Last year a joint project between RailCorp and Lake Macquarie City Council delivered a much-needed bus/rail interchange at Morisset, which has increased the importance of Morisset as a transport node. Morisset is also the destination for bus services from Belmont and Swansea to the east and from Cessnock and Kurri Kurri in the north-west. In this regard, I believe the member for Swansea and the member for Cessnock would share an interest in a change that would be of benefit to residents of both of their electorates. Services from both of those areas are limited, with Newcastle Buses route 352 from Belmont and Rover Coaches route 163 from Cessnock each running twice daily. Whilst this is a modest level of service, it acknowledges that Morisset is a logical location for connectivity to the broader region. Using Morisset as the CountryLink stop would foster a growth in the use of these routes and of public transport overall.

The connectivity advantages are not limited to public transport. Morisset has the advantage of being on both the F3 and State Route 133, making it more easily accessible by road for more people. The new transport interchange at Morisset is on State Route 133 in Morisset's commercial centre and it is two kilometres from the Morisset interchange on the F3. I am advised that use of Morisset as a drop-off point for coach services is increasing, and it is reasonable to anticipate that this would increase further if passengers could also board CountryLink services. Central Toronto may have a larger population than central Morisset, but the broader issues of regional connectivity and functionality should be the main criterion for selecting the appropriate location for a CountryLink stop. On these criteria Morisset would appear to be a better option for more people.

Indeed, Morisset and surrounding suburbs are undergoing significant population growth, which has been well identified in the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy and in Lake Macquarie City Council's strategic plans, which predate the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy. Whilst the Government may see the need to reconsider the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy, the fact remains that it was based on residential growth that is actually occurring in the Morisset area. In early 1997 a six-month trial of the XPT stopping at Fassifern commenced. The member at the time, Jeff Hunter, correctly sought to fix an anomaly that had the local government area with the highest population in the region not serviced by the XPT. Fassifern may well have been the correct decision at the time, but, in hindsight, it is remote from a commercial centre and has reduced amenities for those waiting for a train or for a transfer to another mode of transport.

I have received correspondence requesting the change to Morisset because of the availability of coffee shops and automatic teller machines at the adjoining shopping centre and I am advised that there is a more timely service for checked luggage. Also, Fassifern is criticised because it is not secure and safe for elderly people, and at times the toilets are locked. A number of correspondents from the Morisset area have confirmed that they undertake more complicated arrangements involving additional movements just so they can avoid Fassifern. The security concerns are understandable, because Fassifern is relatively remote and isolated compared with Morisset.

Changes in population also point to the increasing relevance of Morisset. The 2006 census shows the population in the five postcode areas surrounding Morisset is 23,038. Developments planned or already underway will bring this close to 42,000, but that understates the remaining potential for further growth. Relocating the CountryLink stop from Fassifern to Morisset would appear likely to produce a net benefit and I expect that it should be relatively easily achieved with no changes to the Morisset station necessary to accommodate the change. I am pleased to bring this matter to the attention of the House, but in so doing I recognise that significant argument may be raised against the proposal. For that reason I believe that the two options should be reviewed and the community consulted as to what would best suit the needs of CountryLink customers in that area.

### **BANKSTOWN CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [4.30 p.m.], by leave: The Bankstown Children's Festival will be held in two weeks time in the great city of Bankstown. Having been celebrated in Bankstown since 1999, this year the festival celebrates its twelfth anniversary. I have had the pleasure of supporting the children's festival for several years, particularly in my previous capacity as the Mayor of Bankstown. Since 2001 Bankstown City Council has been a key supporter of this great initiative. Other important supporters include the New South Wales chapter of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, the New South Wales branch of Scouts Australia and the Bankstown Multicultural Youth Services. The former Labor Government was also a great supporter and the New South Wales Community Relations Commission continues to be a supporter. I also wish to acknowledge the Bankstown Torch which is a key supporter of the festival. In its 12-year history, participation in the festival has skyrocketed from 4,000 children in 1999 to 15,000 last year. The festival aims to increase multicultural understanding among local children and young people. The vision statement of the festival reads:

To contribute to a more tolerant Australian society by bringing children and their parents and friends together at a children's festival.

The children's festival is a testament to the vibrant multicultural community in my electorate. It involves cultural and community groups including Indigenous Australians and people from African, Arabic, Chinese, Cook Islander, Greek, Indian, Irish, Lebanese, Macedonian, Nepalese, Polish, Sikh, Spanish and Vietnamese backgrounds. Unfortunately multiculturalism has become a political football in recent years, but events such as the children's festival can be a source of hope for future community cooperation and cohesion in Australia. Children are both the most impressionable and the most inspirational age group. The children's festival provides an opportunity for children to experience other cultures and for the adults accompanying them to be reminded of the open mindedness of children and their impressive ability to accept diversity. I hope that the children's festival will be an opportunity for families who do not often get a chance to socialise with each other to spend a day together having fun.

The children's festival is also an opportunity to acknowledge the value of children in our society. Children are a vibrant demographic that contributes to our community. My own children are a source of endless joy in my life, as I am sure each member's children are for them. The success of the festival would not be possible without the dedicated children's festival organising committee and the hundreds of volunteers who

work tirelessly to bring this colourful family event to Bankstown. I acknowledge and pay tribute to the unwavering efforts of the committee. I offer my congratulations on their success and I hope that this wonderful festival continues well into the future. I look forward to working with the organising committee for many years to come. I acknowledge particularly the president, Thuat V Nguyen, OAM, who has previously been recognised as a Citizen of the Year in Bankstown. This gentleman has been a passionate advocate for the children's festival right from the start.

I also acknowledge the rest of the executive, including secretary Karen McPhillips, vice-president and Bankstown Children's Festival committee chairman Mike Weatherly, vice-president Keith Oldfield and treasurer Rishi Dhillon. I also acknowledge the many cultural groups that contribute on the day. There are many performances and the entertainment is worth experiencing. There are also many stalls that offer a diverse range of cultural food available in Bankstown. This year for the first time the event will move away from Paul Keating Park and be held at the Bankstown Paceway due to size of the event—it is growing each and every year. Again I congratulate the organising committee and I look forward to the twelfth Bankstown Children's Festival.

### **R U OK? DAY**

**Mr DARREN WEBBER** (Wyong) [4.34 p.m.], by leave: Today is R U OK? Day, which is a suicide-prevention initiative. Suicide affects many people within this State and nation. It is an issue that is not easily discussed or addressed. But it is an issue we have to understand and it must be talked about. In 2008 around 2,100 people nationwide took their lives. For each person who dies in this way, another 30 attempt to end their lives. These statistics are shocking. Suicide does not only affect the individual's immediate family. Many people are affected by such tragic deaths: their friends, the people they went to school with, the people they worked with, the nurses and the doctors, and the list goes on. The triggers for suicide are multiple, and in some cases those around the individual may not be aware that he or she is suffering at all. Depression, anxiety, relationship breakdowns, bullying and unemployment are common causes.

In my electorate of Wyong on the Central Coast suicide is a serious issue. Unfortunately the region has one of the highest rates of suicide in New South Wales. In 2007, 32 people on the Central Coast took their lives; 32 families were changed forever. It can be difficult to comprehend how far reaching the impact of losing someone to suicide can be on their family and friends, but it is a pain that does not subside. That is why it is so crucial to fight the stigma surrounding suicide and its causes. We must make a collective effort to provide the support needed when people feel helpless and that they have nowhere to turn. Unfortunately the statistics in Wyong are telling. A total of 41 per cent of the people who committed suicide in Wyong in 2007 were connected with local mental health assistance groups.

Statistics like these show that there is more we can do as individuals and as a community to support people in need. Many tremendous community organisations operate to provide this support and guidance. One of them, the Iris Foundation, was developed as the Central Coast Suicide Prevention Group in 2006, providing help and support for individuals in need and to families who have experienced suicide. I commend the efforts of these organisations. I bring this matter to the House today because today is R U OK? Day. The day began in 2009 in an attempt to bring an awareness of suicide to Australia. The day focuses on suicide prevention by having open and honest conversations with loved ones, just to see if they need a hand and to make them aware that we care about them. Most people will not share their feelings openly, particularly if they are struggling.

It can be difficult for all of us to open up and talk about what is getting us down. We must all trust our instincts and look out for those closest to us. I ask everyone in this House to get involved and to reach out to their families and friends today and simply ask them, "Are you okay?" This simple action could be the start of a conversation that could save a loved one's life. Every one of us can help. Every mother, father, brother, sister, professional, doctor, nurse, member of Parliament and teacher can help. We can all go some way to making sure that a little issue does not manifest into problems that appear too big to overcome. Suicide is heartbreaking. I support the efforts of R U OK? Day as it seeks to address the tragic consequences of suicide and reduce the number of lives lost.

### **MINING SAFETY**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR** (Cessnock) [4.38 p.m.], by leave: Last Sunday I was humbled and privileged to attend the Northern District Branch of the United Mineworkers' Annual Memorial Service at the Jim Comerford Memorial Wall in Cessnock. The wall was unveiled by Prime Minister Paul Keating in 1996 and bears the name of each coalminer in the Hunter Valley who has died in the course of his work since 1801. This

year Prime Minister Julia Gillard attended. In her keynote address the Prime Minister spoke with great empathy about the lives lost and the dreadful hurt these losses can cause a community. Mining coal is a dangerous business and there are plenty of ways it can go wrong. The clearest proof of this is the list of names on the Jim Comerford Memorial Wall. There are 1,795 of them.

When the wall is next refurbished that number will exceed 1,800. That is far too many lives to be lost in the pursuit of earning a wage. Let this House be in no doubt: Miners risk their lives every single day, and this State and this country prospers off the back of their willingness. I make special mention of the family of Peter Jones, who attended the day. Peter died in a coalmining accident just 13 weeks ago. I have dozens of friends who work in the industry and every single one of them can tell a range of stories that usually include phrases such as, "I had just been standing there a minute before the fall", or "The one-metre bolt went flying past my head and implanted itself in the wall."

It is often said that Australia's mining safety laws were written in blood—that they have been a response to some of the terrible accidents we have seen around this country and in this State. In my electorate the Bellbird Colliery mining disaster of 1 September 1923 stands out. Twenty-one men lost their lives that day after an explosion underground. Nine decades later the grief caused by the disaster still permeates the town. However, as the Bellbird memorial states, "This appalling disaster resulted in the formation of the industry's central mines rescue stations." It is a cruel irony that it took the accident to make that happen.

I believe memorials such as that serve two purposes. Firstly, they give the people who have lost someone—a relative, a partner or a friend—the chance to remember them. However, attending the service on Sunday did something else. It reminded me and, I would think, everyone who was there, of the importance of maintaining safe working standards. This last year has been a particularly bad one for mining safety around the world. Twenty-nine men were lost at Pike River in New Zealand in November, and shortly before that 33 men in Chile survived through the most extraordinary good fortune. In each of those instances, and dozens of others across the world, it is predictable that the tragically affected will put in a call to Australian miners who are the best in the world when it comes to mine rescue.

While we talk in this House about making New South Wales number one again, we must ensure that New South Wales and Australian mine rescue and mine safety continue to be the best in the world. Being in a civilised Western country is no guarantee that workplace safety and conditions are assured. Attendees were reminded on Sunday that even in the United States of America 1,000 people each year die of black lung. That can be prevented by having ventilation in mines. In Australia, every mine is ventilated. On Sunday, the Prime Minister announced the Government's intention to ratify Convention 176 concerning safety and health in mines, which has been proposed by the International Labour Organization. I commend this intention. It is not just in the interests of miners and their unions that international standards are raised; it is in all our interests. I trust it has the support of all members of this House.

The United Mineworkers' annual memorial service is an emotional occasion because it touches the hearts of so many people. In Cessnock and the Hunter Valley more people than not would have been affected in some way by a mining fatality. That is the nature of the Hunter Valley's history, and it has only recently become a history. All men at some time either have known someone who worked in a pit or have worked in a pit. The Jim Comerford Memorial Wall records that history and reminds us of our responsibility as legislators to try to ensure that no more names are added to it.

### **APIA LEICHHARDT TIGERS FOOTBALL CLUB**

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [4.42 p.m.], by leave: I draw to the attention of the House a very important community sporting club in the electorate of Balmain. The APIA Leichhardt Tigers Football Club is based in Leichhardt, the heartland of Australian football. APIA Leichhardt Tigers is one of Australia's pioneer football clubs and was formed in 1954 in the suburb of Leichhardt. It is a club that has great presence and commands respect not only from our local community but also national and international communities. APIA Leichhardt Tigers is a multicultural club, and although it still reflects Leichhardt's Italian heritage it has included successful players, administrators, and a whole range of people from countries around the world.

APIA Leichhardt Tigers has been selected by Football New South Wales to represent the district and region at the highest level of football in New South Wales. APIA Leichhardt Tigers represents the inner west region at the New South Wales Premier League level, seniors and under 20s, and at representative Premier Youth League level in under eighteens, sixteens, fifteens, fourteens and thirteens. There is no other club in the

region that has this role. APIA Leichhardt Tigers is a club of national significance, having produced the greatest number of Socceroos of any football club in the history of Australian soccer during its illustrious 57-year history. It has also had the most national team captains.

Some recent club achievements are the National Soccer League champions 1987 in which the club was undefeated for the entire season; the National Soccer League Youth League New South Wales championships in 1981 and 1989; the New South Wales Premier League championship 2003; the New South Wales Continental Tyres Cup, in which the club was runner-up in 2006; and the Johnny Warren Cup, in which the club was the winner in 2007. The APIA Leichhardt Tigers women's first grade team was crowned the 2011 Super League champions.

Lambert Park has been the Tigers' home ground since the club's inception. I am delighted that the New South Wales Government has made a commitment of over \$2 million dollars to upgrade Lambert Park. Leichhardt council owns Lambert Park and for many decades the facility has provided the community with a fantastic sporting resource. I was very proud to have been involved in supporting the club as a councillor and Mayor of the Leichhardt Municipal Council. The club now has a 15-year lease for the site, which helps in securing its wonderful home ground for the future.

But the club and the beautiful game can only be as successful as the people who work in it. I pay particular tribute to Mr Anthony Raciti, the honorary president of the board of directors, who has been integral to the survival and success of this great club. He is a man with unswerving focus and commitment. Thank you, Tony—you should be incredibly proud of your achievements. I also commend the members of the board of directors: the vice-president, Tony Monticciollo; the treasurer, Paul Pettenon; the secretary, John Mellino; the directors, Tarek Madani, Terry Wilkinson, Vince Ciolino, Emanuele Ziino, and Jim Apostolovski. I have had a lot to do with Jim whom I met when I was mayor. He is a great advocate for the club. The other directors are Joe La Ianca, Joe Calabro, Sam Barletta, Frank Primerano, David Feller and Alex Kaltenegger.

I acknowledge all administration staff and players in all areas of the club, including the Premier League, Premier Youth League, the nursery cubs, the under six Tigers, the under seven Tigers, juniors, women's and girls' summer sixes, the New South Wales Women's and Girls' Super League and of course the Balmain Soccer Club Inc. in division 1 of the State League. I acknowledge the club's sponsors, in particular Wests Ashfield Leagues and the great Navarra Venues people at Le Montage. I thank them for the fantastic gala dinner held at Le Montage in Leichhardt.

Finally, I look forward to working with the club in the coming years to see Lambert Park upgraded, their financial future secured and, most importantly, the love for the game grow, not only in our community but throughout Australia. It is because of clubs such as APIA Leichhardt Tigers that we have such a fantastic sporting community that keeps our kids healthy and keeps people focused on a game that they can play not only in Australia but internationally. I was pleased to attend the gala dinner with over 600 people from the local community. It was an opportunity to talk about the beautiful game as well as to recognise the achievements of the players and administrators, the board and, in particular, Mr Tony Raciti.

### **MATER DEI FOUNDATION DINNER**

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [4.47 p.m.], by leave: It was my great pleasure to attend on Saturday evening the Eleventh Annual Mater Dei Foundation Dinner—a fundraiser that was attended by more than 600 people. I acknowledge my parliamentary colleagues, Andrew McDonald, Jai Rowell and Bryan Doyle and Federal members of Parliament Russell Matheson and Chris Hayes, who also attended the dinner. Mater Dei was established by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, who have served many disadvantaged people on the Mater Dei site since 1910. Mater Dei began as an orphanage, but in 1957 the Bishop of Wollongong approached the sisters to establish a school for girls with intellectual disabilities. The sisters undertook this and, with their guidance, caring and spiritual support, Mater Dei has grown and prospered over the years. It now offers a kindergarten to year 12 coeducational school.

The school is located in beautiful Camden, with the chapel offering a beautiful backdrop to many a wedding—including my own. I married my wife, Vicki, in that very chapel nearly 15 years ago, and what a wonderful 15 years it has been. Mater Dei School is renowned across the State for being a leader in the provision of care for children with disabilities. It has a reputation for the wonderful caring Catholic education that it provides and that is a credit to its principal, Tony Fitzgerald, as well as to the wonderful staff who work at



Mater Dei and obviously the Sisters of Good Samaritan. A student from Mater Dei attends my office one day a week for work experience. Dee is a wonderful asset to my team and a breath of fresh air within the office. Dee is a credit to herself and to the school.

The highlight of the night was watching a number of the school's students perform music and dance numbers. I particularly enjoyed the *Dancing with the Staff* segment that saw the students perform with staff members of the school and compete for the highest score. They were judged by Mr Jim Marsden. Needless to say, the competition was too close to call and all participants were declared winners. The dinner committee comprised Phil McCarroll, the chair, Jim Marsden, Martin Cascarino, Angus Cox, Kevin O'Keefe, Tony Fitzgerald, the principal, Debbie Gates and John Adam. All those people must be congratulated on the wonderful effort they put in, and on helping to make this event one of the highlights of the Macarthur social calendar each year.

I thank Mrs Gina Walsh for sharing her heartfelt story of the journey her family has travelled with twin sons who have Down Syndrome. That was a truly remarkable and moving part of the evening. The idea for this great event came about when Phil McCarroll, Jim Marsden and John Adam had a few beers with the then principal, Frank Pitt, and Debbie Gates after a Mater Dei charity golf day and decided to put on a fundraising dinner. From this original idea the dinner raised more than \$2 million in its 11 years, with its biggest contribution coming from last Saturday's \$250,000. That is a fantastic achievement and goes to show how wonderful the Macarthur community is when it comes to looking after their own.

Fundraising events are successful due only to the generosity of many. I single out Inghams Enterprises and its chief executive officer, John Hexton, the Campbelltown Catholic Club, the Perich Group, Bradcorp and Max Tegal. I also single out Marsden's Law Group, through its senior partner Jim Marsden, and John Adam, its managing partner, who have contributed tremendously not only to Saturday's event but to all of the events over the past 11 years. Their involvement was evident by the roles they played on the evening and also by the many clients of Marsden's who attended and sponsored the event. Mater Dei is a wonderful school of which the Camden community is extremely proud. Tony Fitzgerald, his fantastic staff and the Sisters of the Good Samaritan are beyond peer. I know that all the people I have mentioned gladly give of their time and make donations to support these wonderful children at this wonderful school.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 4.52 p.m. until  
Tuesday 11 October 2011 at 1.00 p.m.**

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