

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 18 October 2011

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 13 October 2011.

Ms CHERIE BURTON (Kogarah) [10.00 a.m.]: I lead on behalf of the Opposition on the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011. At the outset I inform the House that New South Wales Labor supports the intent of the bill; however, it considers that some minor amendments need to be made. The main objects of the bill are to transfer responsibility for regulation of on-site plumbing and sanitary drainage work from water utilities and councils to NSW Fair Trading and to require compliance with the prescribed standards for plumbing and drainage work with the Plumbing Code of Australia.

I congratulate the Government on continuing the consultation process started under the previous Government to improve the oversight framework of this important industry and on adopting some of the key concerns of those involved in the industry. Opposition members support moving towards a national standard for the regulation of plumbing but we must ensure that no unintended impacts are associated with that transition. Minister Roberts has indicated that there are no plans to change the licensing arrangements for the plumbing sector—the bill has minimal impacts in that regard—and I urge him to not renege on that promise in the future. The Master Plumbers Association of New South Wales has raised further concerns. I thank the Government and the Minister for the ongoing negotiations that have occurred in an endeavour to accommodate those concerns, but the Opposition reserves its right to move amendments to the bill in the other place.

Some of the proposed amendments are intended to ensure that the relevant Acts contain consistent definitions in home maintenance and construction. Other amendments are intended to ensure that adequate training is undertaken by those who perform plumbing works. Importantly, the Opposition seeks to introduce an amendment to create an advisory council to ensure that a formal framework is in place for industry members to raise their views with government. It is my understanding that the Government is open to discussions on that but how it will work is still a matter for negotiation. The Opposition has consulted with the Minister about the proposed amendments and he has agreed to consider them before the final passage of the bill through the other place.

Achieving the best possible outcome for the industry is what matters most. I congratulate Minister Roberts on his consultation with the Opposition on this extremely important legislation for plumbers. As the stakeholders want to have an input into the operation of the legislation, agreement has been reached with the Government that a roundtable of plumbers will be held in six months time to review the effect of the legislation and to determine whether any changes need to be made. Refreshingly, Minister Roberts has put this matter above politics. This is an example of sensible government endeavouring to find the right public policy response in consultation with key stakeholders and other members of Parliament. Hopefully, the industry will benefit from any agreement reached.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [10.05 a.m.]: I support the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011. The bill will reform the New South Wales on-site plumbing and sanitary drainage regulatory framework. The current regulatory framework for plumbing and drainage work is overly complex and fragmented. It is regulated under seven separate legislative frameworks, with more than 100 separate regulatory bodies including local councils and the Sydney Water and Hunter Water corporations. The framework allows each regulator to impose different technical requirements. Each regulator has a specific set of different technical requirements based on the New South Wales Code of Practice for Plumbing and Drainage, but with his or her own local variations. This creates inconsistency and uncertainty, leading to unnecessary costs for business, consumers and government.

The reforms proposed in the bill were initially suggested by the Better Regulation Office, which undertook a comprehensive review of on-site plumbing and drainage arrangements in 2009. The Better Regulation Office found that current arrangements in New South Wales are unnecessarily costly, complex and inconsistent and that they have not kept pace with the introduction of competition or developments in the water industry. It recommended that NSW Fair Trading become the single regulator in on-site plumbing and drainage in New South Wales and that New South Wales adopt the performance-based Plumbing Code of Australia as the single and consistent plumbing standard across the State.

Multiple regulators mean high administrative and compliance costs. Industry must bear the cost of duplicative reporting. Unnecessary compliance costs also arise as businesses work under different requirements and interpretations of requirements in different areas. Costs to users include navigating a complex framework and dealing with a number of different regulators. Government also bears the cost of coordinating and administering a multiregulator system. Inspection and compliance processes also vary widely from one area to another under the current arrangements. Each local council water utility has its own inspection and compliance processes. One might have a risk-based inspection system focusing on inexperienced plumbers and complex installations, while another might focus primarily on new developments. Consolidation of regulatory power and the adoption of a single technical standard will result in a more effective inspection regime and consistency applied across all water areas. It will remove the problems of duplication, overlap and gaps that currently occur.

Under the model of the single regulator, compliance efforts will be targeted to those plumbing activities that pose the most risk to consumers and public health and safety, and the requirements for plumbers undertaking work anywhere in New South Wales will be applied consistently. In practice this means that plumbers will be able to work across the State more easily, knowing that the same compliance regime will be applied wherever they work and without having to worry about local-based variations to the standards for plumbing and drainage work. This will reduce red tape for industry, consumers and government. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.10 a.m.]: I support the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011. My research showed that a similar bill introduced in the last Parliament highlighted some of the issues. At the outset I congratulate the Minister for Fair Trading. The Master Plumbers Association raised some concerns late in the debate, and there was a series of negotiations, including last night and this morning. I commend the Minister for adopting a hands-on approach to get these matters resolved. Within the conversations the Master Plumbers Association advised me that the Minister has agreed in principle to a range of matters, including the creation of a ministerial advisory council for plumbing, implementation of amendments agreed upon with the Master Plumbers Association and as outlined in the response document—the Master Plumbers Association sent me a list of the amendments; as I said, it has in-principle agreement so the details have to be worked through—and to create better liaison with industry, especially in relation to the preparation of regulations. I commend the Minister for taking such a good faith approach to these discussions.

When I originally received the briefing note I did what I always do—I had my office contact the stakeholders to ensure that there is in-principle support on the ground. There is overwhelming support for the bill. When I was doing my research I found that fundamentally this bill is the same as the one introduced by the previous Government last year. I acknowledge that there have been some changes of a minor nature, but the bill is worthy of support. During debate on the 2010 bill the then shadow Minister, the member for Albury, said that the Master Plumbers Association criticised that bill because it was a bureaucrats bill—we have had some discussion about that today. Ironically, he said:

This bill is driven by the needs of the bureaucracy.

So much for consultation with industry. Last year in debate on the Plumbing Bill, which is fundamentally the same bill, the member for Hawkesbury said:

This is the most moronic piece of legislation I have seen in the time that I have been in this Parliament.

Mr Ryan Park: Where is he?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hawkesbury has gone home.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: There is a bit of a division so we will not see him. The member for Hawkesbury said that the 2010 bill was moronic because it proposed to establish a regulator and that the establishment of Fair Trading as an industry regulator was "another level of unnecessary bureaucracy". I am

glad he has seen the light. Different Government, same briefing note. Opposition for opposition's sake is not a good thing for parliamentary democracy. If legislation is good and in the public interest it should be supported by all sides. Having read the bill, I wanted to make a couple of points. I could have made some points about the member for Davidson, but I decided to let those go in deference to his great chairing skills in the Public Accounts Committee. If the arrangements with the Master Plumbers Association are taken on board in good faith, as the Minister has indicated, the bill should be commended to the House, which I do.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.14 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the Plumbing and Draining Bill 2011. As I have said in this House on numerous occasions and as I indicated on my member's return, I have been in the building industry for 30-odd years and I have a couple of building companies. Over the years I have met both good and bad plumbers and I have worked closely with them. I think this is a great bill. The member for Northern Tablelands quoted debate on the 2010 bill. That bill is completely different to the bill before the House today, which will fix most of those problems. This bill incorporates some important new provisions that stakeholders have told us will make it better legislation from the bill that was put forward by the former Government last year.

The 2010 bill included a requirement for plumbers to provide the owner of a property with a certificate of compliance after completing a job. The bill before the House today now includes a requirement for the plumber to provide this certificate to the person who contracted him or her to undertake the work, in other words, either a head contractor or the owner. Stakeholders have advised that it is vital that a builder is able to answer the question of whether work on his or her site complies with relevant legislation and standards as it is the builder who has ultimate responsibility for the job as a whole. Earlier I mentioned working with bad plumbers. There are always good plumbers who can fix the problems caused by bad plumbers, but it is the builder's responsibility. The new provisions provide that assurance to builders.

It will be the builder's responsibility to ensure that a copy of the certificate of compliance is provided to the owner of the site or the owner's agent. The bill also addresses problems that can occur when a new plumber takes on a job part way through. In these circumstances new plumbers could be held responsible for substandard work undertaken by their predecessor. This does not normally happen in residential construction; it is something one tries to avoid but when a plumber abandons work or has done shoddy work the new plumber should not be held responsible for that, although it is usually fixed by him. To ensure that the work of each plumber is properly identified and inspected, a new notice of work will be required if there is a change of plumber undertaking the work or if the scope of the work changes substantially from that described in the original notice of work.

Another change from the 2010 bill is that a broader exemption power is now granted to the regulator. This power will allow NSW Fair Trading to identify, by regulation, minor works to be exempted from the pre-notification, inspection and other administrative requirements of the Act. Under the current regulatory framework, there are no specific exemptions for work that does not pose a serious risk to the health and safety of the community. This means that plumbers are technically supposed to have all their jobs inspected, even if they are simply installing a water-saving shower head or fixing a leaky tap. This amendment provides an assurance to plumbers that when they undertake a small, simple job they do not have to comply with all the legislative requirements that are designed to protect the community from poor work that has a high risk of affecting public health and safety.

This does not mean that anyone can do the work. The bill still requires that a licensed plumber undertake these jobs, that the work meets the requirements of the Plumbing Code of Australia and that authorised fittings are used. The kinds of works that might be excluded include replacement of tap washers and fitting of water-saving devices, minor repairs such as fixing a broken pipe, like-for-like replacement of a fixture such as a toilet or a basin and home renovations where no plumbing has been changed. The bill has been substantially redrafted to ensure that the functions and powers of the regulator are clearly set out. The bill is much improved from the rushed job that was put forward by the former Government at the end of the last year. Some parts of the bill are excluded, and I refer to things such as stormwater drainage or roof plumbing.

Stormwater drainage is the responsibility of local councils. On most sites the plumber would carry out that work. Roof plumbing, such as metal roofs, gutter and fascia and downpipes, do not need a plumber to do that work. Other types of work that are not within the scope of the plumbing bill include fire suppression systems, which are installed by specialist contractors, domestic and commercial irrigation systems that cause no risk to public health and plumbing on vehicles, boats and aircrafts, as one would expect. I congratulate the Minister on introducing good legislation. I am sure New South Wales plumbers will be happy with it.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [10.19 a.m.]: I support the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011 which has as its objects:

- (a) to regulate the carrying out of plumbing and drainage work, including by prescribing the standards and requirements that must be complied with in carrying out such work, and
- (b) to provide for a single plumbing regulator to oversee the regulation of plumbing and drainage work regardless of where the work is carried out in the State.

This bill builds on legislation that was introduced to the Parliament under the former Labor Government. I also commend the Minister and the Government for continuing the consultation process. It is no surprise to those in the plumbing and drainage industry that the current system could be improved as it is highly complex and at times confusing and costly for industry. From my experience as a former tradesperson working as an electrician for Prospect Energy it is important to get right the legislative framework for such work. Trades men and women have a difficult enough job and do not need the added headache of having poor legislative frameworks hanging over them.

I applaud the move towards a national standard for the regulation of plumbing. The Opposition supports this proposal, but needs to ensure that no unintended impacts are associated with that transition. The Minister said that there are no plans to change the licensing arrangements in the plumbing sector. I urge him to stick to that promise and not go back on his word. The Master Plumbers Association, the lead plumbing industry organisation, has raised some concerns with the bill, which the Opposition will address through amendments. The object of the amendments is to make sure that the various Acts affecting home maintenance and construction have consistent definitions. Other amendments will ensure that people undertaking plumbing works undergo adequate training.

The New South Wales Labor Opposition will move an amendment seeking the creation of an advisory council to ensure that a formal framework operates through which plumbing industry members have appropriate channels to raise issues and views with the Government. I understand that the Minister is currently considering this proposal and our foreshadowed amendments. It is not often that I speak well of members sitting opposite, but on this occasion I congratulate the Minister on his consultation with the Opposition on this bill. I applaud his agreement with the shadow Minister to convene a roundtable of plumbers every six months to review and finetune the legislation. This is sensible government legislation following appropriate consultation. I congratulate the Minister for Fair Trading on his compassion and farsightedness. I encourage other Ministers to follow his good example.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [10.22 a.m.]: I am pleased to support the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011. I commend the Minister for Fair Trading for his hard work on this bill, especially in respect to the consultation process. From my knowledge of and involvement in the building industry, I was surprised to learn that of the seven or eight plumbers I approached after the introduction of the bill, probably six were not members of the Master Plumbers Association. They support the Minister and expressed concern about the comments of the association. They believe this bill is the best way to move the industry forward. One of the major reforms recommended by the Better Regulation Office and contained in this bill is the adoption of the Plumbing Code of Australia as the technical standard for on-site plumbing and drainage work in New South Wales.

The current New South Wales Code of Practice for Plumbing and Drainage is inflexible and unnecessarily complex. It includes more than 100 variations and additions to the Australian standard with many variations applying only to plumbing work in a single area of the State. Examples have been reported where a plumber has been required to install a specific type of tempering valve on a hot water system on one side of a street but no valve at all was required on the other side of the same street. Obviously, this is confusing not just for plumbers but also for builders, home owners and regulators. Adopting the Plumbing Code of Australia will do away with this confusion and put in place a single, nationally consistent set of technical plumbing standards across the State. The Plumbing Code of Australia is a performance-based standard that allows for a greater degree of innovation than the prescriptive standards under the current New South Wales code in the introduction of new processes and new technologies.

For example, use of alternative water sources, including recycled water, is encouraged where technical requirements provide for a flexible approach. This is expected to contribute to significant environmental benefits as new plumbing technologies contribute to more efficient and effective use and reuse of water. Developers, builders and home owners are increasingly seeking out new, smarter plumbing and drainage solutions, and

consumers are demanding more environmentally friendly approaches. Continuing with the New South Wales Code of Practice for Plumbing and Drainage would leave New South Wales out of step with an industry that seeks a more flexible and innovative standard and with other jurisdictions that have recognised the benefits provided by a national approach.

The Council of Australian Governments recognised that national consistency across building and construction standards should be a priority for all jurisdictions, and agrees that all States and territories will adopt a National Construction Code by October 2012. The National Construction Code will, for the first time, provide a single national set of technical standards for both building and plumbing work by bringing together the Building Code of Australia and the Plumbing Code of Australia under one standard. Adopting the Plumbing Code of Australia now will make sure that New South Wales is ready for this change. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [10.27 a.m.]: The Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011 will establish New South Wales Fair Trading as a "one-stop shop" on-site plumbing regulator. It will create a single point of contact for plumbers, builders and home owners, and streamline administrative and regulatory processes. It will also leverage the existing industry regulation roles of NSW Fair Trading, which include licensing plumbers regulating home building, and investigating and resolving building disputes. Consolidating all these roles, including standard setting, on-site inspection and licensing, into one authority will provide consistency, fairness and accountability while also reducing duplication and complexity.

As both licensing authority and regulator, NSW Fair Trading will be able to directly link information from the inspection process to a plumber's licence profile, making it easier to identify poor-performing plumbers and improving compliance and enforcement. The new regulatory arrangements will also create a one-stop shop for both the plumbing industry and consumers. Plumbers will be able to access information, renew their licences, book inspections and address complaints all in the same place. Consumers will be able to check licence details, have their plumber's work inspected and lodge complaints on residential building and plumbing matters all with NSW Fair Trading.

The transfer of regulatory responsibility from water utilities to NSW Fair Trading also removes potential conflicts of interest. Under the current framework, water utilities are both regulators and service providers. The new framework will ensure competitive neutrality in situations where there is the potential for the entry of competitive providers of water, sewerage or recycled water services. NSW Fair Trading will take direct responsibility for all plumbing inspection and regulatory activities in the Sydney, Blue Mountains, Illawarra and Hunter regions. In regional areas, NSW Fair Trading will be able to delegate specific functions to local councils that already have the expertise required to undertake regulatory activities. NSW Fair Trading will provide support and advice to local councils and will have ultimate responsibility for coordinating regulatory matters.

This will allow for local expertise to be retained, while at the same time ensuring that a consistent interpretation of requirements is applied across the State. Consolidating all regulatory power into one body means a more effective inspection regime with consistent application across all areas, and the ability for the inspection regulator to immediately suspend the licence on the basis of non-compliant work. It also removes the problems of duplication, overlap and gaps that currently occur with a system of over 100 regulators. The regulatory framework outlined in this bill will improve certainty, reduce costs and ensure the integrity of the plumbing and drainage network. It is the best way to protect the health and safety of the community and to ensure fairness, consistency, and accountability for the industry.

This will specifically benefit the residents of the Wollondilly townships that will be receiving sewerage following the recent release of the State's budget. This Government has allocated many dollars to provide sewerage services, which is essential yet overdue infrastructure. These townships will be requiring the services of the plumbing and draining industry and will be demanding excellence in service provision. I am pleased by the implementation of this bill as it will ensure a high quality of infrastructure is constructed within Wollondilly for the betterment of residents and the region as a whole. The plumbing and drainage industry represents an integral component of the trades industry which supports the maintenance and development of the State's infrastructure.

The Government has already demonstrated its commitment to strengthening the State's infrastructure through Infrastructure NSW. This Government will continue to work towards improving the State's infrastructure by supporting key industries, such as plumbers, to ensure a productive and efficient State. Make

no mistake, we are addressing the infrastructure deficit. To ensure such improvements to the industry are effective, the Government ensured that an in-depth consultation process was held in order to gather insight and expertise from key industry and government stakeholders. This process has enabled a comprehensive reform of the current system. I welcome these initiatives of the Government and commend the Minister for Fair Trading for his commitment to ensuring the positive reform of the current legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [10.31 a.m.]: I wish to speak today on the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011. For years the plumbing industry has dealt with more than 100 separate regulators of on-site plumbing and drainage work in New South Wales. Unlike the previous Government, the O'Farrell Government listens to small business people. With the regulations placed upon tradesmen these days, running a business is almost impossible. Businessmen are working longer hours and needing to employ office workers to negotiate their way through the unending paperwork required to be completed by government bodies. This bill seeks to address these anomalies and, with true consultation with industry stakeholders and government bodies, the regulatory burden and number of Acts has been reduced from five to one. This will reduce the complexities which created additional costs for plumbers, home owners and businesses.

The plumbing industry has been frustrated for years with the red tape of regulations it has had to deal with. This has only reduced the industry to doing more paperwork, rather than getting on with business. As a local government councillor in one of the fastest growing regions in New South Wales, I have often been approached by constituents who are building a home in one of our beautiful housing estates and who have found inconsistencies in one home or another with the multitude of regulations and rulings regarding the plumbing and water industries. In a move to improve regulation of the New South Wales plumbing industry, the New South Wales Government has announced that Fair Trading, under the stewardship of the wonderful Minister for Fair Trading, will become the State's single plumbing and drainage regulator.

Mr Nick Lalich: He is good. I do not know about wonderful—but good.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I am happy to acknowledge that point of order—the good Minister for Fair Trading. This decision followed a 2008 review of the New South Wales plumbing and drainage regulatory framework and recommendations for reform by the Department of Water and Energy and the Better Regulation Office. Under the new-look plans, standard setting, on-site regulation and licensing for the plumbing industry will be consolidated, providing a more effective and consistent regulatory framework across the State and enabling a greater focus on compliance by linking licences to plumbing and drainage work. This bill will integrate functions, reduce administrative inconsistencies for industry and consumers, and provide a one-stop shop to access information and address issues or complaints.

Consolidation of all plumbing and drainage regulatory power in one agency will ensure a more effective inspection regime, with consistent application across all water supply areas, and will provide the inspecting regulator with a range of measures when investigating non-compliant work. Problems of duplication under a multi-regulatory system will also be avoided, with the adoption of the performance-based Plumbing Code of Australia as the technical standard in New South Wales for plumbing and drainage work, in place of the New South Wales Code of Practice for Plumbing and Drainage. The Plumbing Code of Australia will provide a more flexible, outcomes-based approach and allow for new and innovative alternative plumbing solutions. This in turn will enable the industry and its workers to provide a service to the community and others that the industry has not been able to provide for years.

Finally, the plumbing industry will have clear guidelines to enable the industry to do the work it is supposed to do, and take away the red tape and bureaucracy that was stalling the progress and expansion of a well-respected trade in New South Wales. The Government has made a commitment to make the New South Wales economy number one again and to do that we need to support all sectors of the building industry, of which plumbers play a major part. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.35 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure this morning to discuss the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011. At the end of last year, I made the comment that the plumbing bill introduced by the former Government was the most moronic piece of legislation ever to come before Parliament. I stand by that comment, because that is exactly what it was. However, I am very proud to say that this pro-active Government has sought to consult extensively with all the key stakeholders in relation to the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011. I also want to heap credit on the Minister and on the Minister's staff. We are pretty quick to pat ourselves on the back—there is a lot of one-upmanship in politics—but the hardworking staff members in the office of the Minister for Fair Trading have worked hard and tirelessly on bringing this bill to Parliament.

One of the features of this Government is that we will always consult broadly with the community. I am sure the many people in the gallery this morning are overwhelmed that we are discussing the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011 here today. It is one of those in-depth debates that we have to have. We are certainly happy to do the heavy lifting on behalf of the people of New South Wales. However, as I said, one of the key features of our Government is the fact we will always be happy to consult broadly with the community, as we should. We have to be sure the legislation we bring into this place will improve the lives of the workers in New South Wales.

One of my great criticisms of the bill that was rushed into Parliament in the last two days of the previous Government, was the fact that it was going to impose so much more regulation and so many more obligations on to normal tradesmen. Just to give members some idea, under that bill, a tradesman called to fix a leaky tap washer would have to apply to the Department of Fair Trading and then fill out some huge number of documents, some 32 pages, in order to undertake that work. It was absolutely ludicrous that we should be imposing that type of red tape and bureaucracy on ordinary tradespeople. As I have said many times, I am a tradesperson some four or five times over, so I understand the complexities of small business and certainly the complexities and red tape that tradespeople have to go through. That was my major criticism of that bill.

However, I am very proud that this bill does what it was intended to do—to bring in national standards across Australia. It is important that we have planning regulations that are very similar right across the board. We have that sort of regulation right across New South Wales. From Albury to Tweed Heads we have planning regulations in place that are very similar. That is good, because people change jobs from time to time, and they need to know the same standards apply in the various areas to which they travel.

The purpose of the bill is to reduce regulatory burden and consolidate the number of Acts regulating plumbing in New South Wales from five to one by establishing New South Wales Fair Trading as the single plumbing regulator of on-site plumbing and drainage work in New South Wales and to adopt the Plumbing Code of Australia as the technical standard for the work. Currently more than 100 separate regulators of on-site plumbing and drainage work operate in New South Wales including Sydney Water, Hunter Water and more than 100 council and local water utilities. Each of these regulators has imposed multiple and often differing requirements on top of the New South Wales code of practice for plumbing and drainage. That is why we have introduced the one national standard across the board which will reduce a lot of that regulation.

In June 2009 the Better Regulation Office and the New South Wales Office of Water published the report reforming arrangements for regulating plumbing and drainage in New South Wales. That report found the current system was complex, fragmented and inflexible, creating additional cost for plumbers, home owners and others. Any costs or red tape that is created for business, plumbers, or any tradespeople will be passed on to the consumer. It is important that as a responsible Government we try to reduce the cost of living as much as we can. In 2010 the former Government's plumbing bill was withdrawn—and no wonder after my comments. I thought it was the most moronic piece of legislation that had ever entered Parliament and very short sighted. Absolutely no consultation had been undertaken. This Government has sought to consult broadly. I am aware that consultation with the Master Plumbers Association has continued up to the last 24 hours as it still had some minor concerns. Those concerns have been addressed and attended to. It is a pity that the former Government did not consult on the bill prior to presenting it to Parliament in December 2010.

We will continue to consult broadly on this legislation. The Minister has set up a ministerial advisory council. That means as work practices and business codes change we will be able to consult at all times with the major stakeholders across New South Wales. One of the features of this Government will be that we will always consult broadly, and will continue to consult. Even though the legislation is going through the House at this time, we have put instruments in place, such as the ministerial advisory council, that will ensure that the Minister will be able to discuss face to face with the Master Plumbers Association and any other stakeholders on the advisory council any issues that come up in the future.

I have covered the majority of things in the bill that I wanted to. The legislation will deliver historic reform and cut much of the red tape for plumbers across New South Wales. Relevant stakeholders have been consulted broadly. The Master Plumbers Association has agreed to terms in the last 24 hours. Other members who have spoken, including the Minister, have covered the bill in detail and I do not need to go back over any other aspects of the bill. I greatly appreciate the fact that we have a new Government in New South Wales and it has picked up this bill, talked to the people that needed to be consulted and it will now bring the legislation up to national standards for the benefit of everybody. I am more than happy to commend the bill to the House.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [10.44 a.m.]: I support the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011. The bill has a threefold aim: to decrease the regulatory burden on the plumbing industry by establishing New South Wales Fair Trading as the single plumbing regulator; to adopt the Plumbing Code of Australia as the technical standard for plumbing and drainage work in place of the New South Wales Code of Plumbing and Drainage; and to adopt a risk-based inspection regime targeting those plumbing activities that pose the greatest risk to consumers and public health and safety. Reform of the regulation of plumbing and drainage in New South Wales was initiated by the Better Regulation Office and the Office of Water in November 2008 in a discussion paper examining the current arrangements. Submissions were received from stakeholders from industry and local government and a review report was published in 2009.

Further extensive consultation has been undertaken with key industry stakeholders that include the Office of Water, Hunter Water, Sydney Water, Department of Health, Department of Planning, the Division of Local Government, Master Plumbers Association and the Housing Industry Association. A series of forums for plumbers and local councils were also held. All possible stakeholders have been listened to over an extensive period. This bill addresses one of the Liberal-Nationals Government's commitments of reducing red tape and regulation. As the current regulation stands there is significant non-compliance in the industry, unnecessary cost for business consumers and Government. There are inconsistent standards for compliance across the State. These reforms will streamline the regulatory framework and apply consistent standards across New South Wales.

Currently the plumbing and sanitary drainage framework covers plumbing work that poses a particular risk to consumers or public health and safety and is regulated by seven legislative frameworks. As a result, more than 100 bodies regulate on-site plumbing and sanitary and drainage work across New South Wales. This bill would consolidate this to one Act and establish New South Wales Fair Trading as the single plumbing regulator of on-site plumbing and drainage work in New South Wales. This fulfils one of the key recommendations of the 2009 review by the Better Regulation Office. This will, in effect, create consistency in regulation across New South Wales. The plumbing regulator, New South Wales Fair Trading, may delegate these responsibilities to local councils where appropriate, but ultimate responsibility rests with New South Wales Fair Trading.

Current licensing regimes will remain unaffected. One of the reforms of this bill is adopting the Plumbing Code of Australia to replace the current New South Wales Code of Practice for Plumbing. The Plumbing Code of Australia provides a more flexible, outcomes-based approach. This code is part of the Council of Australian Governments National Construction Code which the New South Wales Government is committed to implementing in late 2012. The Plumbers Code of Australia will ensure nationally consistent technical standards. The Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011 proposes sensible reform to the regulatory framework. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [10.48 a.m.], in reply: As honourable members have heard, the primary aim of the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011 is to establish New South Wales Fair Trading as the single regulator for on-site plumbing and drainage and to apply national consistent performance standards across State. This will replace an ad hoc and complex system that currently has over 100 regulators and numerous local variations to the plumbing standard. I now turn to some specific issues raised by the member for Kogarah and shadow Minister. I reiterate the point that this bill proposes common sense reforms to the regulation of plumbing in this State, to reduce red tape for industry and update the technical standard that applies to work done under the Plumbing Code of Australia. The bill contains reforms that are good news for plumbers on the ground and will make their daily duties more streamlined.

I have agreed with both the Opposition and the Master Plumbers Association to establish a ministerial advisory council which will advise me on issues surrounding the regulation of plumbing in New South Wales. The council will have broad cross-sectional representation from across the industry. I will work with stakeholders towards specific terms of reference for the council. I also confirm today my earlier commitment to sit down with all relevant stakeholders at a round-table discussion six months after commencement of this legislation and conduct a comprehensive review of its implementation.

This will give all interested parties the opportunity to provide valuable feedback on how this legislation is being implemented on the ground, including considering any issues or problems that plumbers on the ground are experiencing. This will provide an important opportunity for us to take stock of the bill's implementation and allow us to triage any emerging problems and nip them in the bud. The bill will streamline and enhance the regulation of on-site plumbing and drainage in New South Wales.

I thank all members representing the electorates of Kogarah, New England, Cabramatta, The Entrance, Port Stephens, Granville, Wollondilly, Hawkesbury, Camden and Blue Mountains for their contributions. Importantly, I also thank all the stakeholders who have contributed to the development of this bill. I particularly thank the member for Kogarah for her positive contribution to this process and her willingness to work with me to deliver the best piece of legislation possible for those tradespeople on the ground. I make particular mention of and acknowledge Susan Dixon, Madeleine Boulton, Emily McKosker, Stuart Smith, Tim James, Belinda Russell, Shane Evans, Kurt Graham and Toni Dickson for their hard work in putting this bill together. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

PAYROLL TAX REBATE SCHEME (DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT) BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Andrew Constance.

Agreement in Principle

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [10.51 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011 provides for a new Act to implement the Government's commitment under Stronger Together 2 to provide a payroll tax rebate to employers of new employees with a disability. I am particularly pleased that the Treasurer is in the Chamber. The Treasurer has been very involved in the development of this bill and I thank him for the dedication, time and commitment that he has shown to supporting people with disabilities in this State. No greater evidence of that has been shown by his work in relation to the Stronger Together reform and the delivery and provision of some \$2 billion in growth moneys over the next five years. The Government is fully committed to protecting the most vulnerable members in the community and giving people with a disability the best chance of securing a job.

NSW 2021, a plan to make New South Wales number one, has outlined the following targets aimed at increasing the participation of people with disabilities in employment or further education. The first is that 60 per cent of transition to work participants will move into employment or further education by 1 July 2014 and 65 per cent of transition to work participants will move into employment or further education by 1 July 2019. It is also the Government's clear aim to close the gap in the unemployment rate between people with a disability and the overall community by 50 per cent by 2016. This bill supports these targets by providing a \$4,000 payroll tax rebate to employers of new employees with a disability from 1 January 2012. Employers will receive the rebate in two equal parts, \$2,000 after three months of employment and \$2,000 after six months of employment.

The Government has committed \$2 million per annum over the next five years for this initiative which I indicated when the budget was delivered a month ago. The Government made it clear at the time that it wanted these reforms put in place in order to provide people with disability opportunity, hope, the ability to have access to employment and certainly it will move people away from the specialist support system into employment opportunities. For employers to obtain the rebate an employee must be in the target group under the Disability Services Act 1993, as well as completing the Transition to Work Program. The Transition to Work Program is a two-year program provided by the Department of Family and Community Services primarily aimed at young people with a disability with moderate to high needs and assists them in gaining employment after completing year 12 studies.

To qualify for the rebate, the employee must have commenced employment on or after 1 January 2012 and before 1 July 2016 and the employee should work an average of at least 12 hours a week. There is discretion

to pay the rebate if the reason for not achieving the 12 hours average work is beyond the employer's control, such as illness of the employee. The employer must be liable for payroll tax, either during the period of employment or in a financial year during which an eligible employee is employed. Similar to arrangements under the Jobs Action Plan, certain employment arrangements will not be eligible for the rebate; for example: employing people who have worked for the employer within the past 12 months, the employer is part of a group and the employee has worked for another member of that group within the past 12 months, employing people under a labour hire arrangement where the liability for payroll tax applies to employment agents and engaging independent contractors who are not engaged as employees.

Employment agents will be able to qualify for rebates in respect of their own employees provided they satisfy the criteria. In addition, employers will not be eligible for the rebate if they are exempt from payroll tax—for example, charitable bodies who have no commercial undertakings—or if they receive other rebates such as the rebate for apprentices and trainees under the Payroll Tax Act 2007 or rebates under the Regional Development Act 2004 or the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Act 2011. State Government departments and non-business statutory authorities are excluded from the rebate scheme because they are largely funded from appropriations from the Consolidated Fund.

Like the Jobs Action Plan, which commenced on 1 July 2011, this bill further demonstrates the Government's intention of increasing employment in New South Wales and encouraging employers to expand their operations; in particular, it is designed to provide people with disabilities employment opportunities. When the Government announced this measure during the State Budget it received an incredibly positive and warm response from the sector. I know the Nova chief executive Martin Wren said the budget measure was an absolutely fantastic initiative and was definitely appreciated. He said:

We are thrilled by the announcement—and it will only help to find work for the extremely talented disabled workers who are yet to find employment ...

We have helped thousands of workers find good, well-paid jobs and we certainly don't think that being disabled in any way should prevent people from contributing in the workforce.

As the Minister for Disability Services I share those sentiments, and they are shared by the Treasurer and the Government. The legislation will come as no surprise to anybody in this place, given that it was announced in the State Budget. The Government is keen to have the scheme up and running by 1 January and that is why the bill has been introduced today. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mrs Barbara Perry and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RESERVATIONS) BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Robyn Parker.

Agreement in Principle

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage)
[10.59 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011 makes amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 to achieve four positive outcomes for the people of New South Wales, each one balancing protection of our State's environment with the need to support our economic growth and prosperity. The Government is committed to national parks and to nature conservation in New South Wales. That is why creating Dharawal National Park was one of our headline commitments in our Protecting our Natural Environment election policy, in our 100 Day Action Plan and in our NSW 2021: A plan to make NSW number one. Also in our NSW 2021 plan was a commitment to continue the New South Wales reserve establishment program to create sensible and strategic additions to the national park network. Our green corridor plan will support that by building connections across the landscape in key locations through programs such as the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative.

This bill is about meeting the Government's commitment to national parks, especially through the upgrading of Wianamatta Regional Park at Cranebrook to a nature reserve. It is also about rectifying some

administrative errors of the previous Government. Much of my job is taken up with legacy issues of the former Government—issues that it failed to deal with. When I became environment Minister a too-hard basket had been left by five environment Ministers and we are simply addressing a number of those legacy issues. The first proposal in this bill is an upgrade in protection for approximately 181 hectares of land currently included in Wianamatta Regional Park, which will create Wianamatta Nature Reserve. This commitment has been very well received in the area. When we make election commitments we deliver.

The second proposal contained in the bill extends the time frame under which logging in Yathong and Wilbertroy State forests can be completed—without conservation losses—before these areas are transferred to the national parks reserve system. The third proposal will correct a boundary error that occurred when Ash Island was added to Hunter Wetlands National Park in 2009, excising about 18.5 hectares from the park so that an important coal-loading terminal can be expanded. The land is only 50 metres wide and it was intended for a rail track. The fourth proposal contained in the bill is the addition of approximately 22 hectares of high conservation value land to the Hunter Wetlands National Park.

The bill delivers on the Government's pre-election environment commitment to establish Wianamatta Nature Reserve at Cranebrook, some 45 kilometres west of the Sydney central business district. The bill will give the highest level of protection to a site of rare natural and cultural values. Just prior to the St Marys community Cabinet I met with local stakeholders on the Cranebrook site. They told me of their joy at the site becoming a nature reserve and expressed their overwhelming appreciation for the \$1 million made available to repair the site to bring it up to standard. The member for Mulgoa, the member for Londonderry and the member for Penrith have all welcomed the news. I acknowledge that the member for Penrith is currently in the Chamber.

This unique site, totalling approximately 181 hectares, was formerly owned by Air Services Australia. It has a long history of a range of uses, including as a former telecommunications site. Public access has been uncontrolled for many years, leading to degradation of some of the site's environmental values by trail bikes, rubbish dumping and weed invasion. However, many of the site's biodiversity and cultural values have held on, and this Government has pledged to step in and put a halt to the degradation to preserve these important environmental and cultural assets for future generations.

The site contains seven threatened plant species, 23 threatened animal species and 10 per cent of the remaining area of the endangered Castlereagh swamp woodland. The site also has significant Aboriginal heritage values, including known archaeological sites. These need to be preserved for the benefit of future generations as they are part of our State's history. The lands were added to Wianamatta Regional Park earlier this year but the protection offered by a regional park does not go far enough for this very special site. This bill will give the site and its unique values the fullest environmental and cultural protection possible.

The bill also revokes approximately 181 hectares from the Wianamatta Regional Park and creates the Wianamatta Nature Reserve. This category of protection is the highest available under the State's National Parks and Wildlife Act—we are upgrading the section—and it is set aside for lands with special conservation significance. Establishing the Wianamatta Nature Reserve will be much more than a change of reserve category. In addition to re-categorising the reserve, the Government has committed \$1 million for necessary remediation and land management actions that will address damage from past land uses, will deal with pests and weeds and will improve the site to a nature reserve standard.

The nature reserve will still provide opportunities for low-impact recreation that is sympathetic to the protection of the natural and cultural heritage of the site. That will likely include the provision of trails for bushwalking. There will also be opportunities for the local community to participate in bushland restoration. Visitors who want to engage in more active pursuits such as cycling and picnicking will still have a wonderful, extensive regional park available for recreational use. The nearby Wianamatta Regional Park will contain 900 hectares of parkland—64 hectares are currently reserved with 836 hectares soon to be added—and this bill does not change the status of that land. Preserving neighbouring biodiversity in Wianamatta Nature Reserve will only enhance the experience of visitors to the remaining Wianamatta Regional Park.

I now turn to the second important amendment in this bill: the extension of the time frame for logging in Yathong and Wilbertroy State forests before these areas are transferred to the national park estate. I heard that ABC radio ran a story this morning led by Henny Penny, the sky is falling shadow Minister for the Environment, Luke Foley, about this Government supposedly unwinding the south-western cypress national parks. I can inform the Parliament that Henny Penny Foley is wrong: the sky is not falling in; we are not

unwinding those national parks. He should check his facts before he bolts outside for yet another attempt to politicise environmental issues. We are providing an extension of time for the exit cut in two State forests before they become national parks.

Consultation in this regional forest process was rushed by the previous Labor Government and industry was not listened to. The amount of time provided for these exit cuts was not sufficient so we are providing a small extension. Not one extra log above what was agreed in the forest process will be taken. Not one less hectare of national park will be revoked. I repeat: Not one extra log will be taken. The sky is not falling; we are simply allowing for extra time. Considering the incredible rains this year it is only reasonable we do so. We believe in working with the community and industry and getting environmental gains through consultation, not by ramming things through. This arrangement was made during the time of the former Government, and it was scheduled to continue until 31 December this year.

Delays to the planned logging operations have been caused by the wet season and problems in accessing remote areas. Extending the time is sensible and allows the job to be done before the area is drawn into the national park. Logging will comply with the same strict standards applied across the region's State forests. No additional area of State forest will be logged, and the commitment to transfer these areas to the national parks estate will remain enshrined in legislation. The bill extends the time for harvesting in Yathong State Forest to 1 January 2015. The bill also extends the time for harvesting in Wilbertroy State Forest until 1 January 2014. These changes will deliver good results for the local communities and economies, with very little impact on our reserve system.

I now turn to the third important amendment in this bill: the correction of a boundary error in Hunter Wetlands National Park, located along the Hunter River estuary near Hexham. The former Government could not even get its mapping right. A fault in the process gazetted a national park right next to an internationally significant port—it could not draw lines properly on the map. This is what happens when there is no consultation between departments and things are rushed through. In May last year the Newcastle Ports Corporation transferred an area known as Ash Island to the State Government and the area was added to the Hunter Wetlands National Park in February this year. Ash Island was a welcome addition to the State's reserve system because it contains the last remaining green and golden bell frog habitat in the Newcastle area and also because it contains important habitat for migratory birds.

Ash Island is to the west of a larger island known as Kooragang Island, which comprises reclaimed land and a number of small islands. Port Waratah Coal Services operates a coal terminal on 255 hectares of Kooragang Island. The reservation of Ash Island by the previous Government inadvertently included a 50-metre wide strip of land that is zoned for port-related activities under the Three Ports State Significant Site Proposal. The area covers about 18.5 hectares. Port Waratah Coal Services is proposing to expand terminal number four at Kooragang and the 50-metre wide strip of land is required for railway lines leading to a coal stockpile area. With this expansion the capacity of terminal number four could be increased by between 60 million and 100 million tonnes a year.

I make it clear that the land will not be transferred from public ownership and possible future reservation unless it receives State and Federal planning approval. If that is received the approval should address potential impacts on the green and gold bell frog and migratory bird habitats and include a requirement for conservation land offsets. This bill corrects a boundary error to enable expansion of the coal terminal, which will facilitate employment and benefit the local and the State economy. This expansion is consistent with the area's zoning and it will fix yet another mistake or stuff up that is the legacy of the Labor Government.

The fourth amendment to the National Parks and Wildlife Act deals with a separate addition of about 22 hectares of wetlands to the Hunter Wetlands National Park. This is a perfect example of how this Government will be looking for smart and strategic additions to our national park network. This addition provides an important buffer between the existing national park boundary and a new 111-hectare industrial development. The land is a freshwater estuarine mosaic that is part of the Tomago wetlands and is adjacent to the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site. The Government is very pleased to welcome this land to the national parks system. This bill provides sensible amendments to the National Parks and Wildlife Act that balance the importance of preserving high conservation value lands against the need for economic growth and development of our wonderful State.

In conclusion, the bill is designed to deliver two things: this Government's election commitments and, I am proud to be able to deliver for the communities of western Sydney, an upgrade to the Cranebrook site to

become Wianamatta Nature Reserve. I am also happy to be able to fix some of the messes left by the former Government. This Government is seeking to provide an extension for the agreed exit cut for two State forests. As I said, no extra logs will be taken. The Government is committed to protecting our natural environment and providing full consultation with our communities on the decisions that affect them. I commend the bill to the House.

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

HERITAGE AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Robyn Parker.

Agreement in Principle

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage)
[11.15 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I am pleased to introduce this bill as the Minister for Heritage—indeed, the first Minister for Heritage in more than 20 years. While the Labor Government was in power the Minister for Planning was also the Minister responsible for the protection of heritage. That arrangement created a conflict of interest for the Minister for Planning and that was compounded by the previous Government's relocation of the Heritage Office in the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. I am committed to being the strong, independent voice that heritage deserves in the Coalition Cabinet. The O'Farrell Government is again delivering on the commitments it made to the people of New South Wales. We know that excessive red tape in decision-making impedes heritage conservation and frustrates the economic development of New South Wales.

The O'Farrell Government is working to make New South Wales number one again, and that means refocusing its efforts on supporting the conservation of significant heritage assets and ensuring heritage conservation and economic development are not mutually exclusive goals. The Government's election policy is focused on removing delays and increasing the transparency associated with the Heritage Act. It is critical for the economy of New South Wales and for the preservation of this State's many heritage assets that decisions about proposed heritage conservation be made expeditiously and transparently. This bill outlines the legislative changes required to implement the Government's election commitments.

The Government will reduce the number of appointees to the Heritage Council to no more than nine members to improve its efficiency and workability. Importantly, it will retain the six skills-based members of the council. Those members are appointed on the basis of their knowledge or qualifications in key areas relevant to the work of the Heritage Council, including New South Wales history, archaeology, Aboriginal heritage, property economics and planning. The O'Farrell Government is committed to diversity in the membership of the council to ensure that it makes balanced decisions that have the confidence of the community. While the Government Architect will no longer be a member of the Heritage Council, he will continue to sit on the council's approvals committee, where his expertise in finding innovative solutions to the adaptive reuse of State-significant heritage items is most valued.

These changes to the membership of the council will ensure an adequate and balanced representation of skills, perspectives and experience that will equip the council to deliver today and to meet future challenges. The reviewed membership of the council will ensure more efficient and workable meetings in keeping with community expectations of a modern government board. Labor's Ministers for Planning made it a practice to refer Heritage Council recommendations to ministerial review panels appointed personally by the Minister. This added an extra level of red tape that unreasonably and unnecessarily delayed the listing process. This bill abolishes ministerial review panels and retains the Heritage Council as the prime body for recommending State Heritage Register listings. This is an important step in increasing the community's confidence in the heritage listing system. The commitment to abolish ministerial review panels will remove a significant source of delay in the listing process.

The accountability of the Heritage Council is important and the Heritage Act will retain my ability as the Minister to refer a recommendation of the Heritage Council to the Planning Assessment Commission for an independent review. The bill further addresses the slowness and a lack of transparency in the heritage listing process by introducing additional statutory timelines. Currently there is no deadline for the Heritage Council's listing recommendation to reach the Minister. The Heritage Act states this should occur "as soon as possible".

This is not good enough and the bill therefore states that notification to me must take place within 14 days of the Heritage Council's decision to recommend listing. These reforms will be complemented by administrative improvements that I have directed the Office of Environment and Heritage to implement.

Regular public performance reports will be made to ensure that the Heritage Council, and I as Minister, adhere to timeframes for State listing nominations. In addition, a website will be established that identifies the stages of the listing process and the progress of all nominations through each stage. This is an important improvement to the transparency of the listing process and it will give the community the opportunity to monitor the listing process more easily. Further, new guidelines will be published to implement a more efficient approach to all aspects of the process, including a more disciplined approach to rejecting nominations that do not meet the standard required for prompt consideration. The Government's election policy included a commitment to require me as Minister for Heritage to publish reasons for my decisions about State heritage listings.

This will improve heritage conservation outcomes and provide greater certainty to all stakeholders. It will also improve the effectiveness of the Heritage Council, remove delays to heritage decisions and provide transparency about heritage decision-making. Accordingly, the Heritage Act 1977 will be amended to require the Heritage Branch of the Office of Environment and Heritage to publish my reasons for decisions on the internet to explain whether the Heritage Council's recommendation has been accepted and, if not, why not. This is important to give the community greater confidence in the listing process. The effect of listing on the State Heritage Register is that generally under the Heritage Act approval of the Heritage Council is required for subsequent development.

The exception to this is where a development was assessed under the previous Government's part 3A process, or now where development will be declared as State-significant development or State-significant infrastructure. In these cases the Heritage Council is consulted by the Department of Planning. When consulted, the Heritage Council and the Office of Environment and Heritage provides comment on development affecting items listed on the State Heritage Register or items of State heritage significance not yet added to the register. The Government's election commitments require that I make public any recommendation from the Heritage Council or the Office of Environment and Heritage regarding development recommendations. This bill requires this advice to be published on the internet, in particular where the Heritage Council would have had an approval role but that role has been switched off by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979.

This Government puts people first. The community will be better able to track the assessment of development involving State heritage items and will be able to gauge the extent to which the comments of the Heritage Council have been taken into account. A minor administrative amendment to the Heritage Act is also proposed to improve the operation of the Act. It is proposed to no longer require the Minister to carry out the administrative function of approving application forms under the Heritage Act, instead moving that function to the Heritage Council. The approving of application forms is considered to be an administrative matter that the council is best placed to determine.

The O'Farrell Government is committed to heritage conservation working hand in hand with economic development. We want our heritage assets to be part of the solution for making New South Wales number one again, not part of the problem holding our State back. This bill improves the functioning of the Heritage Act, which will lead to improved transparency and accountability in decision making while also cutting red tape. The O'Farrell Government is once again delivering on its commitments to the people. 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 later hour.

CLUBS, LIQUOR AND GAMING MACHINES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 17 October 2011.

MR PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [11.22 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in this place on the Clubs, Liquor and Gaming Machines Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. Shadow Minister the Hon. Steve Whan has responsibility for this matter in the other place. We saw this bill for the first time when it was introduced

yesterday. It is proceeding under the suspension of standing orders moved yesterday. This is the only time in 16 years that I have seen a suspension such as that. It reminds me of the enabling legislation of the Reichstag in 1933. Because of this, obviously, the Opposition will consider the matter further and perhaps put up amendments if appropriate in the other place. We will not oppose the passage of the legislation in this Chamber. The object of the bill is to make a range of miscellaneous amendments to a number of pieces of legislation, including the Registered Clubs Act, the Liquor Act and the Gaming Machines Act. There is a significant number of amendments, some of which are fairly complex. It is certainly a cumbersome piece of legislation.

Amongst other things, the amendments seek to: include additional requirements in relation to corporate governance that will apply to clubs; modify the manner in which clubs can amalgamate and provide a process under which amalgamated clubs can subsequently de-amalgamate; provide additional rules for clubs in relation to the election and membership of their governing bodies; confer honorary membership of all RSL or services clubs on former Defence Force personnel who are service members of the RSL; impose requirements in relation to certain loan contracts that are entered into by clubs and contracts involving the management of the affairs of a club by private persons or businesses; delete provisions relating to the holding of formal inquiries about corrupt or improper conduct in relation to clubs; modify the current exemption under which liquor may be sold or supplied without a licence when it is part of a gift; and enable hotels to continue to provide services or facilities, including gambling and entertainment, during periods when liquor is not being sold or supplied in the hotel.

The amendments also seek to: provide that it is a defence for club managers accused of certain liquor-related offences if it is proven that they took reasonable precautions to avoid the commission of the offence concerned; modify arrangements relating to gaming machine entitlements and permits that are held in respect of hotels and clubs; remove, in the case of a club that has more than one set of premises, the forfeiture requirements for gaming machine entitlement transfers between the different club premises; exempt de-amalgamating clubs from the local impact assessment process and from forfeiture requirements when gaming machine entitlements are being transferred to club premises as part of the de-amalgamation process; enable the director general to approve of arrangements for the transfer of permits that were issued under the former Liquor Act and continue to be held in respect of hotel licences; remove provisions relating to the approval of "hardship" gaming machines and the keeping of approved amusement devices; rename the Casino Liquor and Gaming Control Authority as the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority; rename the Act under which the authority is constituted and make some other consequential amendments.

A number of issues has emerged within the 24 hours since the introduction of this bill, a couple of which relate to de-amalgamation. The bill contains a large degree of material about what happens to clubs when they de-amalgamate, but there seems to be little detail about what happens to employees. What happens to their ongoing entitlements? Is this simply a mechanism to allow various employers who happen to be clubs to dud their employees by not giving them their ongoing entitlements? That must be clarified. There is also an issue about poker machine numbers and forfeitures. As we understand the legislation, the forfeiture does not apply to de-amalgamated clubs. Is it simply the case that machines can remain in the clubs they were in before they were amalgamated, or is the bill allowing forfeiture to be avoided by permitting machines to be retained but then moved anywhere that one of the clubs happens to want them? I request that the Minister clarify that.

The Opposition is a little uncertain about some of the trading hours provisions. The concept of decoupling liquor from gaming is not something that we necessarily have a problem with—for obvious reasons. It makes some sense on the face of it. Our concern is that if this bill allows a mechanism to extend trading hours to provide breakfast, for example, is it really just a backdoor way of expanding the capacity for gaming? It is not clear from the legislation that that is not the case. We have concerns if in fact it is a backdoor way of extending gambling. If it simply means that clubs do not have to serve alcohol during existing hours without those hours being extended we do not have a difficulty with that on the face of it.

The Opposition is also a little concerned about the removal of the inquiry provisions contained in part 4A, division 6 of the Registered Clubs Act. Given the scale and the size of the clubs and ongoing community concern, one would think that a much more powerful case would be needed than has been made to date to remove those inquiry powers. At the least the Minister in reply should clearly indicate what inquiry powers there are. If in fact it is safe to get rid of those inquiry powers, nonetheless there must be rigorous process for those sorts of issues to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction. As I indicated, at this stage we do not oppose the bill here, but we reserve our position in the other place.

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [11.28 a.m.]: I support the Clubs, Liquor and Gaming Machines Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. This bill yet again demonstrates the Government's commitment to securing

the long-term financial viability and sustainability of New South Wales registered clubs. It builds on the reforms already implemented by this Government to assist clubs and the communities they support. Those reforms resulted in a reduction in gaming machine taxation rates from 1 September and the establishment of the new club grants scheme that are expected to benefit clubs by around \$300 million over the next four years. The key elements of the bill that I will focus on will help ensure the long-term future of clubs through better corporate governance and management. Improving club corporate governance structures, viability and sustainability were key issues identified in the memorandum of understanding signed between the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals and ClubsNSW last year.

The need for reform in these areas was first acknowledged in the 2008 review into the New South Wales registered clubs industry by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. In its review, the tribunal reported that stakeholders had expressed concern about deficiencies in the skills of some board directors, including that some directors did not have a strong grasp of financial concepts and lacked business acumen, did not clearly understand their role and responsibilities, and did not have a strategic focus but instead opted to deal with more minor operational matters. To address these deficiencies the tribunal recommended that directors be required to complete appropriate training. Mandatory training for club directors as well as club managers is strongly supported by ClubsNSW as a club viability issue.

ClubsNSW has previously advised that about 4.5 per cent of club directors had completed its directors' duties course and that around 1.3 per cent had completed its financial management course. The bill inserts regulation-making powers in the Registered Clubs Act to allow for the development of a mandatory training framework for club directors and managers. This approach is consistent with the current responsible service of alcohol and responsible conduct of gambling training framework models. It will allow comprehensive discussions to occur with the clubs industry and registered training organisations to develop training frameworks that meet the individual needs of directors and managers. It will also allow the Government to examine how training can be progressively introduced to reduce the cost impact on clubs.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal also considered that action was needed to improve board effectiveness by addressing difficulties in electing appropriately skilled directors and addressing difficulties in attracting directors. The tribunal noted that many clubs experience difficulty attracting suitably qualified persons to club boards and that some club constitutions limit the number of board positions that social members can hold and who is eligible to vote in club elections. It is claimed that this can narrow the pool of persons from which to elect to the board and inhibit people with appropriate skills from being elected.

There are also industry concerns about ensuring appropriate diversity of club directors, including representation of various classes of members. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommended that clubs be encouraged to remove constitutional restrictions and restrictions on voting eligibility. However, the tribunal also noted that some club members are concerned that broadening voting eligibility may lead to boards seeking to change the objects of their clubs. These issues are contentious and need to be approached sensitively. Ideally, the Government and clubs industry representatives will be able to encourage and support clubs to voluntarily address these issues and statutory intervention will not be necessary.

However, to ensure action can be taken in the event that the issues are not voluntarily addressed, the bill inserts regulation-making powers to enable matters to be prescribed relating to voting eligibility for various classes of club members, a definition of the core features of a registered club and the circumstances where a club board will be permitted to appoint up to three club directors. Given the complexity of these issues, any proposed reforms via regulation will be progressed only in close consultation with the clubs industry should intervention be necessary in the future.

The bill also inserts further regulation-making powers into the Registered Clubs Act to facilitate mandatory three-year rolling elections if required in the future. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommended that ClubsNSW encourage clubs to voluntarily move to three-year rolling elections. However, ClubsNSW has requested that the requirement for three-year rolling elections be mandated as it will enhance board stability and may lessen the opportunity for factional control of boards. It will also help to address other issues such as whether funds spent on director training are wasted because of the short time that some directors are appointed to club boards.

While the Registered Clubs Act already provides for clubs to voluntarily adopt three-year rolling elections, inclusion of regulation-making powers to mandate this requirement in the future will send a message to the clubs industry about the importance of this issue, as well as provide flexibility to act if necessary. I am

advised there are approximately 80 registered clubs with 10 directors or more, with the largest board consisting of 14 members. The clubs industry reforms in this bill will contribute to real improvements in club governance and management over the next few years, but there is still much work to do. The Government will continue to work with the clubs industry to develop and implement reforms to ensure clubs' long-term viability and to protect the many benefits they deliver to our society and economy. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [11.33 a.m.]: I support the Clubs, Liquor and Gaming Machines Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. Our clubs are an integral part of our community. They give much-needed support to local sporting clubs and community groups and they provide thousands of jobs and community services to the State's towns and cities. The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting the vital role that clubs play in our community. The Coalition made the commitment before the election that it would ensure the sustainability of our clubs into the future. The previous Government proved itself to be no friend of our clubs, as evidenced by the closure of nearly 100 clubs after the imposition of excessive taxes. The Clubs, Liquor and Gaming Machines Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 will provide much-needed reforms in the governance of clubs around our State.

Amalgamations and de-amalgamations will be made much easier under the conditions imposed by this bill, allowing clubs to be more easily merged or to de-merge, depending on their circumstances. In order to promote this, the Government is removing forfeiture requirements for poker machines and allowing liquor licences to be transferred to de-merged clubs so that the process is simplified. Section 73 of the Registered Clubs Act 1976 will be amended to mandate that those involved in the management and governance of our clubs undergo training courses relating to financial management and other matters that are relevant to their function. This is a crucial reform as it ensures that those elected to administer our clubs are qualified to do so. Another crucial reform is implemented through new section 15A of the Liquor Act 2007.

The new section enables hotels to continue to operate and provide services and facilities, including entertainment, conferences and lawful gambling-related activities, during trading periods, even though liquor is not being sold or supplied at that time. Indeed, hotels can even open for breakfast without selling liquor. This is important in order to move our clubs and pubs away from being just liquor barns where one swills liquor towards becoming community hubs—places where people can gather without needing to drink. Previously the Act stated that a hotelier's licence should be enforced on the grounds that the primary purpose of the business carried out on the licensed premises was the retail sale of liquor.

This is a great win for our clubs as they will be permitted more flexible opening hours, which will potentially bring in new business. Many of the clubs in our community are surviving on a shoestring as a result of lower patronage, higher staffing costs and many other reasons. This means that clubs are often vulnerable to private interests who may seek to exploit and compromise the interests of members and the community. This bill ensures that there is government scrutiny of management contracts between these honourable clubs and private interests so that the interests of members and of the community are protected. Our clubs should always put community first and they should never be restricted from doing what is in the best interests of their community. By cutting the constraining red tape and excessive taxes levied on our clubs, the New South Wales Government's club reform package will ensure the long-term viability of our clubs so that they can continue to provide services well into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [11.37 a.m.]: In contributing to debate on the Clubs, Liquor and Gaming Machines Legislation Amendment Bill 2011, I point out that I have concerns in relation to the Government's underlying agenda. It has been seven months since Barry O'Farrell took government, and what have we seen so far? We have seen the attack on our public service workers, we have seen the removal of the independent umpire in the Industrial Relations Commission and we have seen the corporatisation of local government.

Mr Mark Coure: What has that got to do with the bill?

Ms ANNA WATSON: I am getting to it. We have seen broken promises and the debacle those opposite made of the Solar Bonus Scheme.

Mr Jai Rowell: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. We are debating specific legislation, not legislation that we have debated over the past seven months. The member should return to the leave of the bill.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Shellharbour will return to the leave of the bill.

Ms ANNA WATSON: I intend to do so, but to get to that point I need to give this preamble. We have seen the Orica cover-up and the "protection of Robyn Parker" bill, not to mention the 40,000 protesters. I will return to the leave of the bill, but I will make one final point so that members can see where I am heading with my contribution. The myths about the big budget black hole that has never existed—as proven by the Parliamentary Budget Office, the Treasurer's own department and the Lambert report—

Mr Jai Rowell: Point of order: We are a minute and a half into the member's speech; this is the longest preamble in the history of preambles. My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance.

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

Ms ANNA WATSON: I am highlighting the broken promises of this Government. My concerns lie with the club employees who will no doubt be the next victims of the industrial dinosaurs who sit opposite. Nowhere in the legislation is there mention of the impact of this legislation on workers in these clubs. The people of New South Wales are starting to get the message loud and clear that this Government does not care about workers or their families. The Government is concerned only with the privatisation of New South Wales. Club employees deserve the respect and dignity associated with secure employment. They are often women and students who have worked consistently and regularly, usually casually, over a long period—five, 10, 15 and, in some cases 20, years. Will the Government move to ensure that these loyal, hardworking people have some protection in relation to this bill?

The Government needs to throw a blanket over these workers' accumulated entitlements such as annual leave, long service leave and superannuation—everything that those opposite enjoy. Clubs in my electorate of Shellharbour employ hundreds of people, mostly casual workers. What has this anti-worker Government done to enshrine conditions of employment for these workers? I cannot see anything to that effect in the legislation. I would like to see the Government transmit some sort of business statement to protect these workers. It is disappointing that this Government did not give these workers a thought when drafting this amendment bill. They clearly did not bother to consult any of the stakeholders, including United Voice. Why is the Government ramming through this legislation? Is it just a further attack on the workers of New South Wales? Sadly, I think it is.

[Interruption]

I am talking about the workers in these clubs. Nowhere in this amendment bill is there one word about the workers. I am stating this for the public record. The workers in clubs in my electorate and throughout New South Wales surely need to know, and have a right to know, what is going to happen to them.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [11.42 a.m.]: I support the Clubs, Liquor and Gaming Machines Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The bill makes several reforms to the Gaming Machines Act. Clubs are important community assets that make major contributions to the communities they serve and are a vital part of the social fabric of those communities. This is why the Government has committed in its memorandum of understanding with clubs to take action to help secure the financial viability of the clubs industry. One area in particular involves taking action to help facilitate amalgamations and de-amalgamations. A significant barrier and cost for clubs considering amalgamation, or de-amalgamation for that matter, are the forfeiture requirements associated with gaming machine entitlement transfers. Currently, no forfeiture is required for entitlement transfers between amalgamated clubs in the same local government area. A lesser forfeiture rate applies for transfers between amalgamated club premises situated in different local government areas.

A key reform in this area is the removal of the forfeiture requirements for entitlement transfers between amalgamated club premises regardless of their location. This is an important reform for clubs that may seek an amalgamation partner or consider merging with another club as entitlements are an important club asset and it is not always possible to find an amalgamation partner situated in the same local government area. This reform will reduce costs and allow the movement of entitlements between amalgamated club premises while providing greater flexibility to clubs when establishing the most appropriate site for their gaming across the different

premises of an amalgamated club. It is important to note that, while the Government is delivering on its promise to remove the forfeiture requirements for amalgamated clubs, the local impact assessment requirements remain unchanged ensuring any proposed increase in gaming is properly assessed.

The amendments in the bill also help clubs that previously merged or amalgamated to de-amalgamate. Clubs may choose to de-amalgamate for a range of reasons, particularly if financial circumstances have improved or the prospect of a formerly dissolved club operating once again in its own right may be achievable and more beneficial than remaining tied to another club. The reforms will provide appropriate controls around the process while reducing costs and enable the seamless transfer of club licences, property transfers and gaming machine entitlements. It is likely that when the de-amalgamated club initially amalgamated, some of its entitlements may have been relocated from its premises to another venue of the amalgamated club. In these cases it is likely that an agreement may be reached regarding entitlements. This may include restoring the number of gaming machine entitlements that a de-amalgamated club held prior to the amalgamation. The amendments in the bill will simply allow gaming to operate as it did prior to the amalgamation.

To enable this to occur, clubs situated in lower gaming machine density local government areas will be exempt from the local impact assessment requirements when transferring entitlements back to the club premises where they were located before the amalgamation occurred. A class 1 local impact assessment will be required where the entitlements are being transferred back to club premises in a higher gaming machine density area, and applicants must demonstrate that the proposed increase will have a positive impact on the local community. This is not an ongoing exemption and is only available to clubs during the de-amalgamation process. All other proposed increases in gaming will be subject to the usual local impact assessment requirements. It is important to note also that the reforms will not result in additional gaming machines in New South Wales. The Liberal-Nationals Government stands by its commitment in the memorandum of understanding with clubs to maintain existing caps on gaming across the State as well as venue caps. This commitment is further demonstrated by other reforms in the bill that ensure the integrity of the gaming machine threshold scheme.

The bill makes a range of miscellaneous amendments to the Gaming Machines Act 2001 regarding the cap and trade scheme that controls the distribution of gaming machines in clubs and hotels. Changes to the Gaming Machines Act proposed in the bill will permanently close a loophole that was previously exploited by a number of hoteliers when trading poker machine permits between each other in order to increase their gaming machine threshold. Since 2009 the Act has required a venue's gaming machine threshold to decrease when transferring entitlements. The same requirement was not applied to permit transfers due to an oversight in the development of the legislation. Approximately eight hotels, some with common ownership, collaborated during 2009 to transfer a small number of permits between each other in order to increase their gaming machine thresholds. As the threshold does not reduce when transferring permits, these hotels were able to retain the increased threshold before transferring those permits back.

Consequently, some of these hotels achieved a threshold increase when they would otherwise have needed to undertake a local impact assessment, which would have subjected the transfers to analysis and review. The increases occurred predominantly in higher gaming machine density local government areas such as band 3 areas. While the actions of these hoteliers were strictly not illegal, they were not in the spirit of the law. An amending regulation was introduced in 2010 after the loophole was identified to prevent more hoteliers taking advantage. However, this is not a satisfactory long-term solution as it has created unnecessary red tape for venues transferring permits in lower-risk band 1 areas. Other amendments to the Gaming Machines Act in this bill will modernise the permit trading arrangements, tighten controls and bring permit trading into line with gaming machine entitlement trading in order to create a level playing field for all participants.

The reforms do not impact on the well-established harm minimisation controls in the Gaming Machines Act such as the provision of a self-exclusion scheme, restrictions on the location of gaming machines and automatic teller machines [ATMs], prohibiting inducements to gamble such as offering free credits, and the display of gambling warning notices and information about the chances of winning, including contact details for problem gambling counselling services. The gaming-related reforms in the bill are largely technical and clarifying in nature and aim primarily to improve the operation of the gaming machine threshold scheme while also providing some assistance to clubs that choose to merge or separate. This package of legislation, which is the second stage of reforms, demonstrates the Government's clear commitment to helping the clubs industry and that the Government has wasted no time in implementing a comprehensive range of measures to secure the financial viability of the clubs industry. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.48 a.m.]: I am conscious of the time so I will be brief, but it is important to address a few questions. I am glad the Minister is in the Chamber because I would like more detail

on some issues that have arisen in the short time that we have had to consider the Clubs, Liquor and Gaming Machines Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. There are some measures in the bill that The Greens do not have any problems with and that seem to be worthwhile. They include the development of the mandatory training framework for club directors and managers, the insertion of other regulation-making powers to enable matters to be prescribed relating to voting eligibility for various classes of club members, and the circumstances where a club board will be permitted to appoint club directors. The bill provides for a maximum of nine directors for registered clubs. Many of these provisions are worthwhile and it is important that they be brought before the House.

The Greens seek clarification of several key issues and I ask that the Minister respond to those issues when he replies to the debate. The issue of entitlements for de-amalgamated clubs has been discussed. Workers' entitlements need to be protected in that de-amalgamation process. Members have also raised the issue of the abolition of inquiry powers. But what other powers will there be to promote transparency and accountability in the sector? The bill follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding in support of the Stronger Clubs, Stronger Communities pre-election commitment given by the then Coalition, which has resulted in a \$300 million "gift" to the clubs in tax breaks on gaming machine profits.

The Greens are particularly concerned by the proposal to remove all forfeiture requirements for gaming machine entitlement transfers between amalgamated club premises. The bill does not address the significant problems associated with clubs' addictions to gambling losses in order to sustain their businesses. We have all seen the report of the Productivity Commission. It is well known that problem gamblers contribute a significant portion of the losses that sustain clubs. The Greens believe we need to cure clubs of this addiction to gambling machine losses and encourage them to diversify. We need to see what we can do to support clubs so that they do not have to rely on such losses. Is the Minister concerned that with no forfeiture requirements in the de-amalgamation provisions clubs in higher income areas will attempt to move to areas with lower incomes? It is well known that if a gaming machine is moved from the North Shore or Rozelle to Auburn or Bankstown—

Mr George Souris: You are confusing two items.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I am seeking clarification of this point from the Minister, who I appreciate is being very attentive. A key reform in the bill is removing all forfeiture requirements for gaming machine entitlement transfers between amalgamated club premises. It is my understanding that the amalgamated clubs retain all their poker machine entitlements when relocating from their old premises. The concern is that the forfeiture provisions in de-amalgamation laws will not be present. Is the Minister concerned that clubs will attempt through this process to transfer their machines to areas where they can generate more revenue? The Greens are also concerned that if clubs that have merged wish to de-amalgamate under the legislation they are allowed to transfer their poker machine entitlements to the other club rather than retaining them. This may lead to the conglomeration of poker machines in areas of the State where they will generate the largest profits and cause the greatest damage.

Mr George Souris: Where are you getting this from? It is not in the bill.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: What is not in the bill? Do you mean the forfeitures?

Mr George Souris: No, what you are now alleging.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: That is why I am asking the question. Under the current arrangement machines need to be forfeited.

Mr Mark Coure: That's what question time is for.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: If we had more than 48 hours to examine the bill we would be able to go through it in detail.

Mr Richard Amery: You got 24 hours more than we got.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: We like that.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Balmain will make his contribution to the debate without the assistance of Opposition members.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I encourage the Minister to address the issue of forfeiture requirements when he speaks in reply. Currently, when clubs amalgamate there is a forfeiture requirement but there is no such forfeiture requirement in the bill. Is the Government not concerned that that will result in an increased number of gambling machines in lower income areas, where they will generate the largest profits and cause the greatest damage? The Greens are also concerned about the changes to the Liquor Act affecting trading hours and gaming machine operations. With the coupling of the provision of alcohol and trading hours does an opportunity exist to increase the amount of time available for people to use gaming machines? I appreciate that the Minister is under time pressure but will the amendment to the Liquor Act as to trading hours and gaming machine operations provide an increased opportunity for gaming machine use?

Mr George Souris: No.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I appreciate the Minister's positive response. The Greens have had only a short time to consider the bill. I ask the Minister to respond to the issues that I have raised. No doubt they will be discussed further in the other place.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [11.55 a.m.]: I speak to one specific aspect of the Clubs, Liquor and Gaming Machines Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. Recently the Government identified several circumstances where licensed and unlicensed operators have sought to exploit various aspects of the liquor laws. As well as undermining the spirit and intent of the liquor laws, the action of those operators has the potential to lead to significant public disturbances and/or serious alcohol-related harm. On one occasion significant concerns were expressed about the use of a caterer's licence to host hundreds of patrons at a function held on a Saturday night in a nightclub setting at Newcastle. On two previous occasions that nightclub operator had been refused an application to remove a hotel licence to the premises where the function was being held. As a result, the operator sought out a licensed caterer to supply liquor during the event.

The Government acted swiftly to prevent further events being held by making a regulation prohibiting the use of a caterers licence on premises previously refused a liquor licence. The Government then requested a review of the caterers licence provisions in the Liquor Act to ensure that this category of licence could not be used to undermine the integrity of the liquor laws in any other manner. The review identified that there may be additional circumstances when it would be appropriate to prevent the use of a caterers licence for an event not captured by the regulation that prevented its use on premises that had previously been refused a licence. Such events may be proposed to be held in public places such as parks, beaches or other locations, which has the potential to lead to disturbances. This approach will ensure that the director general can respond promptly to events where the use of a caterers licence raises significant public concerns or is not considered to be in the public interest. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [11.56 a.m.]: I support the Clubs, Liquor and Gaming Machines Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. The bill implements the changes agreed to in the memorandum of understanding that ClubsNSW signed last year with the then Opposition. I commend the Minister on honouring those commitments, which were made in good faith with ClubsNSW. The key idea behind the memorandum is to improve corporate governance in clubs by addressing the size of club boards and by allowing for a club's amalgamation or merger process that not only makes it easier for clubs to decide on structured options but also makes it a more attractive option for those clubs interested in thinking strategically about their future. This will allow clubs to determine their future using a flexible and individual approach.

Due to time constraints I will not go into significant detail about the great work done by clubs, particularly those in regional areas—and the clubs in Northern Tablelands are no exception. I commend all clubs for the crucial role they play in supporting communities and sponsoring many great initiatives. They also maintain bowling greens, golf courses and playing fields and organise social activities that otherwise would not be available to those who live in smaller communities, in particular. As the Minister intends, I hope the bill makes it easier for those clubs that, with the support of their communities, want to merge. For example, in Guyra, in my electorate, the golf and bowling clubs wanted to merge because of financial difficulties but it was a very difficult and time-consuming process. If the bill makes that process easier while protecting the integrity of those services in country communities then I support it. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [11.59 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Monaro, Coogee, Shellharbour, Coffs Harbour, Balmain, Newcastle and Northern Tablelands for their contributions to the debate. I thank also the acting shadow Minister, the member for Liverpool, for his contribution. I acknowledge that

a number of speakers were unable to gain the call because of time constraints, especially the member for Wollondilly, the member for East Hills, the member for Oatley and the member for The Entrance. A number of questions have been raised, and it is important to respond to some of them. The acting shadow Minister asked three questions relating to section 41X, the decoupling of liquor and gaming, and industrial relations.

Section 41X, which has only been used once and that related to the Temby inquiry, was hurriedly moved as an addition midway through the Temby inquiry to enable Mr Temby to make a finding of corruption. Such a finding never eventuated. Clearly, this section was designed capriciously by the then Government to continue its attack on the clubs movement and particularly to enhance the opportunity for political gain by creating the availability of a finding of corruption in that case. It is an obnoxious clause. There are sufficient opportunities for Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing inspectors who are empowered to conduct any inquiries they deem appropriate. These powers allow investigations into clubs to determine if a disciplinary complaint should be made. These powers, which are longstanding, can result in disciplinary action when clubs act against the requirements of the law and the interests of their members.

These powers are more than adequately provided for, and have always been provided. This section of the Act had its genesis entirely in political motivations. The second question raised related to decoupling powers. The overriding point to be made is that only existing hours are able to be decoupled and again only on application. Consequently if—this example was given—a hotel wishes to open for breakfast it can certainly do so. However, as to whether it operates either a liquor service or gaming machines, if those hours are an extension of the hours provided in the licence the hotel would have to make an application to the Casino Liquor and Gaming Control Authority, which will be renamed after the passage of this legislation. If that is the case, and depending on other circumstances, a local impact assessment will have to be completed. That is the case whether or not a licence application for decoupling is made.

Any application for extended trading hours must be made under the existing provisions. This bill does not provide for the automatic passage of an application to extend trading hours for any purpose. So that remains the case. The purpose of these decoupling provisions is to enable liquor service to cease during the existing trading hours of a licensed venue. That will be an aid to those who are playing gaming machines and/or those who have in the past demonstrated a problem by emerging from licensed premises in an intoxicated state. This will assist with general behaviour in the immediate vicinity of a hotel by enabling that hotel to cease the service of alcohol within existing trading hours. That is the intention and that is the reality of that provision.

The third question raised by the acting shadow Minister related to industrial relations. I point out that nothing in this bill alters existing entitlements or arrangements. Employees involved in a de-amalgamation will carry their entitlements back to the original club. The essence of the de-amalgamation provisions is to reinstate the circumstances, with not only employees but also gaming machines, that existed at the point of amalgamation. These provisions are purely to reinstate what was there at the time of amalgamation, not to create any additional entitlement or loss of entitlements for employees or to create a new entitlement to move poker machines. An application to increase the number of poker machines in any location subsequent to a de-amalgamation will be dealt with under the same provisions as would be applicable if no de-amalgamation was involved.

Extended trading hours, gaming machines and so on, particularly if they are in a high incidence area of poker machines, will nonetheless require an application to the Casino Liquor and Gaming Control Authority. Depending on the circumstances, a local impact assessment will need to be completed and lodged, and in high incident areas a local impact assessment 2, as it is called, would have to be assessed. That is required now and it will be required after a de-amalgamation. The passage of this legislation will not alter those requirements; it will merely facilitate a return to the circumstances that existed prior to an amalgamation and refers particularly to the forfeiture provisions. De-amalgamation is not the same as the commercial trading of poker machines, for which the forfeiture entitlements were originally designed.

With those remarks, I thank members who contributed to the debate. I thank also Mr Peter Cox of the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, and Mr Frank Marzic and Mr Jinesh Patel of my office, for the considerable effort involved in this complicated bill. I note that the shadow Minister made that exact observation. The bill contains more than a dozen provisions in the complex area of liquor and gaming, licensed clubs and licensed premises generally. It is never an easy or quick path to either an understanding or an amendment to legislation. I appreciate that members have had only a limited opportunity to study the bill in detail since its introduction. I place on record my thanks to those members who have nonetheless studied the bill and been able to make a contribution. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RESERVATIONS) BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.07 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in this place in debate on the Nationals Parks and Wildlife Legislation Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011. I note that the key proposals in the bill will revoke approximately 181 hectares of land at Cranebrook from the existing Wianamatta Regional Park in western Sydney and recategorise it as Wianamatta Nature Reserve; reserve approximately 22 hectares of land at Tomago as part of the Hunter Wetlands National Park; revoke approximately 18.5 hectares of land from the Hunter Wetlands National Park for use in the expansion of the Kooragang coal terminal; and amend the National Park Estate (South-Western Cypress Reservations) Act 2010 in a range of ways that would defer or extend the timeframe for exit harvesting.

The Opposition will not oppose the passage of the bill through this Chamber, but I make it absolutely clear that we reserve our right to move amendments or oppose the legislation in the Legislative Council. The Minister gave her agreement in principle speech only this morning, and the legislation has now been brought on for debate. Effectively, the Opposition has had less than two hours to examine the bill in detail. So between now and when the matter comes on in the Legislative Council we will look carefully at the bill, consult with stakeholders and determine our position.

I do not believe that this is the best way to handle these sorts of issues. Certainly, from time to time legislation relating to national parks needs to be amended. That certainly happened under previous Ministers, but it should be done properly and in a timely manner by introducing the legislation and then providing the Opposition with the opportunity to examine it, consult stakeholders and come to a considered view about it. That is the way the parliamentary process should work. The approach the Government is taking with this legislation is disappointing. National parks legislation is technical and complex and often it is necessary to take time to make sure that what the Government proposes does not wind back protections for our national parks. This legislative approach is disappointing and speaks volumes about this Minister's and this Government's attitude to the environment and national parks. When we were in government we introduced legislation—

Ms Robyn Parker: You made a mistake that we're fixing today.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The Minister has made plenty of mistakes and she has been here for about six months. Let us see how many more she makes, if she lasts the four years. The Labor Government introduced legislation after a comprehensive review by the Natural Resource Commission to establish national parks and provide protection to the river red gums in the Riverina district in the south-west of the State. We also added high-conservation value cypress forest lands to the national park system. We created more than 100 hectares of protected areas in that part of the State. I remember commencing this process when I was environment Minister.

We are very proud of our achievements with regards to the river red gums. Of course, it was the last area of the State that had not been subject to a comprehensive forestry assessment. We put that in place and acted upon those recommendations. It was a balanced decision of the government of the day. We paid due regard to the very legitimate concerns of the local communities in that part of the State. We put in place a structural adjustment package and measures to support the communities in order to ensure that we achieved a balanced outcome and that we could protect those important values, but at the same time legitimately respond to the needs of the local community.

Ms Robyn Parker: This has nothing to do with the bill.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The Minister says it has nothing to do with the bill. The briefing provided to me by the Minister makes clear that this bill extends the timeframe for exit harvesting of some 4,000 hectares of Yathong State Forest by three years to 1 January 2015 and of over 1,000 hectares of Wilbertroy State Forest by two years. The last time I looked, we believed they were part of the high-value cypress forest lands that we reserved. Therefore, I think it might have something to do with the bill.

Ms Robyn Parker: Without consultation.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: There was extensive consultation. It is not surprising that the Opposition is suspicious of the actions of the Government with regards to the river red gums and the cypress forest lands in the south-west of the State. We have seen already that the Government does not have a strong commitment to the decisions we took when we were in government. For example, The Nationals already have called for a moratorium on the establishment of national parks. John Williams, the member for Murray-Darling, whom I am sure will speak in this debate, time and again called on the Government to wind back protections for river red gums.

Mr John Williams: When did I call on that?

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: You have done it publicly.

Mr John Williams: You're wrong.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I have a letter from you.

Mr John Williams: You are exactly wrong. I haven't sent that at all.

Mr Jai Rowell: Point of order: I ask that the member for Marrickville be directed to make her remarks through the Chair and not to individual members in the Chamber.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Interjections are disorderly at all times and should be ignored. The member for Marrickville has the call.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: The member for Murray-Darling wrote to the Legislative Assembly Committee on the Environment and Regulation requesting that it undertake an inquiry into the findings and subsequent recommendations of the Natural Resource Commission in its report on the river red gums and woodland forests. The member can say that he has not called for these actions to be wound back, but the reality is that he has. He has asked the Committee on the Environment and Regulation to undertake an inquiry into that very issue. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Opposition is concerned and does not trust the Government when it comes to river red gum national parks. I point out that during the debate on the establishment of the national parks in western New South Wales the Opposition moved amendments to try to block key conservation areas, including Yathong State Forest.

Now, surprise, surprise, with no consultation or time for the Opposition to carefully examine these amendments, the Government introduces legislation that will defer the establishment of national parks in this important part of the State. The Opposition is right to be suspicious of the Government and to take its time to determine its position prior to the legislation reaching the Legislative Council. The Yathong State Forest is an environmentally important part of our State. It is one of the most important wildlife habitat areas in the region. It has 24 threatened species, including the Little Pied Bat and Major Mitchell's cockatoo. The Yathong State Forest is an important part of the State. Perhaps what the Government proposes is sensible, but on my cursory examination of the proposal I must question the need to extend the time frame for exit harvesting by three years in Yathong State Forest and by two years in Wilbertroy State Forest. That seems to be a long period of time.

However, the Opposition cannot examine the bill carefully in the time frame it has been allowed in this debate. We will undertake a careful examination of the legislation and reserve our position to respond with amendments or oppose the legislation in the Legislative Council. We will not oppose the passage of the legislation through the Legislative Assembly. If the Government is serious about proceeding with legislation that makes changes to our national parks, a sensible way would be to allow everyone enough time to consider it. That way no suspicions will be aroused that the Government is trying to rush legislation through and taking

retrograde steps regarding the protection of our forests and national parks. It would be more sensible for the Government to do this in a timely fashion. I do not understand the reason for the rush or why the legislation has to undergo the agreement in principle debate within two hours. It is incumbent on the Government to show—

Ms Robyn Parker: Because it never happened under you.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: We never did it like this, no.

Ms Robyn Parker: Oh, no.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I challenge the Minister to find an example of when we made changes to the national parks estate—

Ms Robyn Parker: What about the sale of electricity?

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: We are talking about the national parks estate. As I was saying, I challenge the Minister to find examples of when we made changes to the national parks estate and did not allow time for consultation, proper examination and debate by the then Opposition. As I said, the Opposition will not oppose the passage of this legislation through the Legislative Assembly.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [12.19 p.m.]: I support the National Parks Wildlife Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011. The bill, introduced by the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, is a step in the right direction by establishing the Wianamatta Nature Reserve in my electorate of Londonderry—delivering a key election commitment made by the Liberal Party and The Nationals. The bill strikes a balance between the economic and environmental interests that always is a difficult issue to manage. It is vital to achieve a sensible balance between the competing economic and environmental interests to ensure that we protect our environmental heritage for future generations.

The bill contains a number of provisions relating to the management of environmental reserves in Sydney and the Hunter. I intend to focus only on the provisions relating to the Wianamatta Nature Reserve. Over many years I have had the pleasure of working with a number of stakeholders who are passionate about preserving the old Air Services Australia site in Cranebrook as a site of special conservation and environmental significance.

The bill transfers 181 hectares of the former Air Service Australia land from its current status as a regional park to that of a nature reserve. This nature reserve categorisation gives a high level of protection to the site that acknowledges the extensive biodiversity values, protects threatened flora and fauna, and respects the significant Aboriginal heritage that existed prior to European settlement in 1788. I acknowledge the original custodians of the lands and their Elders, past and present. The bill protects areas of high conservation value but also contains provisions that will allow low impact public access to allow passive recreational activities, such as bushwalking.

Until now this unique parcel of land has been left to rot, allowing weed invasion, damage through trail bike riding and the regular dumping of rubbish. The former Government paid only lip service to its conservation. The Liberal-Nationals Government is not only strengthening the provisions that will recategorise the status to protect the corridor but is also putting up \$1 million for immediate action to address damage, neglect and inaction of the past. We will bring the site up to a standard expected of a proper nature reserve. Unfortunately, over the past 16 years in New South Wales, we have seen nothing more than spin when it comes to the environment. The former Government announced the creation of new parks and reserves for future generations, but did nothing regarding appropriate protections and resources to ensure protection of their unique conservation and biodiversity aspects.

This site contains one of the last remnants of the Castlereagh swamplands that is not properly managed—and if it does not continue to be managed, this ancient piece of our national heritage will be lost forever. The enhanced protection for the 181 hectares of the old Air Services Australia site as a nature reserve is a vital addition to the local regional park. That local regional park comprises 836 hectares of the former Australian Defence Industries site, which is well known in the local community as the ADI land. It will be an asset for western Sydney residents and provide needed open space for passive recreation. More than 800 hectares of land on the ADI site can be provided for recreation for western Sydney residents. Close by will be a nature reserve in the form of the Air Services Australia site in which the flora and fauna and aspects of Aboriginal heritage are protected.

The realisation of the Wianamatta Nature Reserve has come about because of hard work and commitment. I acknowledge local environmental groups—professionally led by Lisa Harrold of Mulgoa Landcare and Wayne Olling of Blacktown and District Environment Group—that have worked hard over a number of years to highlight the importance of the need to protect the old Air Services Australia site for future generations. In the past their efforts fell on deaf ears, but their concerns were heard by the Liberals and Nationals in Opposition, and they are now being delivered by this Minister in Government. Over the years I have visited the site to meet with stakeholders and see the issues first hand. I was convinced that something needed to be done to protect the high conservation value of the site and the terrible state in which it had been left by the previous Government.

I acknowledge the member for Penrith, Stuart Ayres, who holds a neighbouring seat. He and I hosted the Hon. Catherine Cusack, the then shadow Minister for the Environment. She visited the site and made a commitment on behalf of the Liberals and Nationals to create the nature reserve. I also acknowledge the great leadership of the Minister, the Hon. Robyn Parker, who has in government driven this process hard to introduce a bill before Parliament that will make the commitment a reality. Recently the Minister met with me and stakeholders on site to go through the issues that are important for that nature reserve's future, including meeting with national park employees and environmental groups. They are thrilled by the idea of this reserve being named and the work that will be able to go into it by stakeholders and the local community. I congratulate the Minister and the local community, especially the way the professional Labor and local environmental representatives have handled themselves in this matter. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [12.24 p.m.]: The National Parks and Wildlife Legislation Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011 is particularly important to me as my electorate of Wollondilly includes expansive rural lands, such as the Dharawal land, which featured heavily in this House yesterday. It is my firm belief that we must cherish and preserve these lands, including the native fauna and flora that reside there, because we will get only one chance at this. I look forward to the day when my children and my children's children can visit the same national parks that I have had the opportunity to visit. This can be achieved only through amendments to legislation.

There are four objects of this bill: to establish the Wianamatta Nature Reserve in western Sydney; to restore land as part of the Hunter Wetlands National Park; to revoke the reservation of other certain land from the Hunter Wetlands as a boundary adjustment; and to allow completion of logging in Yathong and Wilbertroy State forests by deferring the transfer of parts of these State forests to national parks and nature reserves. These are important measures and a further sign that the Government is taking an active approach to the environment. These measures are a sign that we recognise the importance of growth for our State and the need to restore our fiscal health, but also the need to preserve our most vital resource: our environment.

In addition, we are delivering on yet another election commitment. In the Wollondilly electorate we are blessed by an abundance of natural beauty, which is a haven for many species of plant and wildlife. Sadly, those opposite do not share our view. As *Hansard* shows, just yesterday the Opposition voted down our motion to accord priority to the Dharawal National Park proposal, and no doubt it will vote this legislation down. Opposition members do this because they have nothing left to do after sitting on their hands during 16 years in Government, except to complain and complain. If they had it their way the 181 hectares of land in western Sydney, which has extensive biodiversity values, would not be made into a reserve, the sacred Aboriginal sites of great heritage value would not be preserved and the archaeological sites would not be protected.

If Opposition members had it their way, the parcel of land of Tomago, north of Newcastle, would not be added to the Hunter Wetlands National Park. If they had it their way the boundary adjustment to correct an error in the Hunter Wetlands National Park would not be resolved. If they had it their way the exit harvest of the Yathong State Forest would not go ahead before it was included in the Yathong Nature Reserve on 1 January 2015. If they had it their way New South Wales would still be in a downward spiral. However, thankfully, sanity has prevailed and they are now left to banter and fight amongst themselves for their leadership aspirations in the corner, on the opposite side of the Chamber. The introduction of the bill is yet another example of an election commitment fulfilled in the declaration of the Wianamatta Nature Reserve. It means that we are one step closer to the declaration of Dharawal National Park, in my electorate of Wollondilly, together with the electorates of Oatley, Heathcote and Campbelltown.

While I stand here today to discuss this bill and its benefits to national parks in New South Wales, I should mention the hard work and dedication that goes into maintaining these parks. The dedication of our national parks and wildlife rangers is to be commended. I had the pleasure of talking to a number of them last

weekend at the Warragamba Dam Festival. I competed against them in a tug of war contest to raise money for the local Rural Fire Service—they were a difficult adversary—and I can attest to their dedication to the task at hand. These measures will assist the good work they do and ensure that parts of our great State remain protected forever. I thank the Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Robyn Parker, for her commitment to the people of Wollondilly, to the environment and to the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [12.29 p.m.]: I wish to make a brief contribution on the National Parks and Wildlife Legislation Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011. The two parts of this bill that are of particular importance to my electorate are the modifications in the Ash Island and Kooragang area. The first part is the addition of 22 hectares at Tomago. This is a high value conservation area that will certainly enhance the environment and help provide a green belt linking the coast through to the mountains, west of Newcastle. The inclusion of this land provides an additional buffer between the existing reserve boundary and the proposed development. It is also adjacent to the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site and contains a coastal salt marsh endangered ecological community.

The second part, which is the revocation, is basically an adjustment of one of the boundaries on Ash Island. The previous amendment actually included an area that formed part of a transport corridor. The amendment tidies up the previous legislation. The most important thing about this region is that Ash Island and Kooragang were once a large wetland with coastal rain forest throughout the centre. The site has been a dairy farm since the 1850s and, on the face of it, would not appear to be of the same conservation value it once was, but it is a great example of how adaptable our wildlife and environment can be. Since dairying on the site finished in the 1970s a substantial amount of work has been done to the area. I encourage members who are in the area to have a look at the interpretive centre and its boardwalk on Ash Island. It is a fantastic piece of rehabilitation.

The eastern end of Kooragang, which is perhaps the most degraded part of the site given its history of heavy industry, seawalls and fill, is one of the most highly valued Ramsar conservation sites locally. It is another example of how adaptable our wildlife can be under difficult circumstances. The bill will make a very valuable change to the site. Some of the wildlife in the Ramsar wetland, even after 100 years of industrialisation, includes migratory birds such as the Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper, Red-necked Stint and the Pacific Golden Plover. The non-migratory waders include the Black-winged Stilt, the Red-necked Avocet, the Red-capped Plover, the Red-kneed Dotterel and the Black-fronted Dotterel. On one side of the road is heavy industry with coal loaders and literally on the other side of the road is a fantastic wetland that provides a safe haven for migratory birds and a continual environment for non-migratory birds. I appreciate the opportunity to make my contribution and I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [12.31 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011. I thank Minister Parker, who is in the House, for introducing the bill and for the changes it will bring to the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011. The amendments relate to the area of Western Sydney that covers my electorate of Mulgoa. This amending bill is another example of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government following through on an election commitment: to revoke the reservation of part of the Wianamatta Regional Park and reserve that land as a nature reserve known as the Wianamatta Nature Reserve. It is pleasing to note that the change of reservation does not affect native title rights or interests.

In 2009 Approximately 181 hectares of the former Airservices Australia site at Cranebrook in Western Sydney was purchased for reservation under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974. The site has extensive biodiversity values including several endangered ecological communities and threatened plant species. It also has significant Aboriginal heritage values, including known archaeological sites. In mid February 2011 the lands were added to the Wianamatta Regional Park. The existing area of Wianamatta Regional Park is to the south-east of the Cranebrook lands and comprises 64 hectares of land. A further 836 hectares of the former Australian defence industry site will be added to the regional park.

The legislation proposes to change the Cranebrook lands from regional park to nature reserve. This is a further demonstration of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government's commitment to election promises. When the former shadow Minister, the Hon. Catherine Cusack, made the announcement I got a phone call from the co-ordinator of the Mulgoa land care group, Lisa Harrold. She was overwhelmed and thrilled that an O'Farrell Liberal-National Opposition recognised and accepted the value and great worth of this particular land to the Western Sydney region. More specifically, she was pleased to see how this piece of land, which will become a nature reserve, can fit into what is emerging as the Cumberland conservation corridor that we want to fully extend through the Western Sydney region.

It is understood that there have been issues with the land under its previous uses and uncontrolled public access, and regrettably this has degraded some areas of the site. I am pleased to note that the Government will provide resources to redress this damage, to manage pests and weeds and to improve the site to nature reserve standard. Local volunteer bush regeneration programs will be supported to engage our local community and engage the ownership of the conservation of the site. I thank the Minister for introducing the bill and I wholeheartedly recommend it to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [12.35 p.m.]: I support the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011 as another example of the environment Minister's legislative activism. First, this bill will establish the Wianamatta Nature Reserve, fulfilling a Government election commitment. The 181-hectare former Airservices Australia site at Cranebrook was purchased for reservation in 2009 and has extensive biodiversity values, including several endangered ecological communities, threatened plant species and Aboriginal heritage values. This legislation will change the Cranebrook lands from regional park to nature reserve, fulfilling the Government's election commitment. The Government will provide resources to address past degradation of part of the site, to manage pests and weeds, and to improve the site to nature reserve standard. Second, this bill will reserve 22 hectares at Tomago as part of the Hunter Wetlands National Park.

This additional land will provide an additional buffer between the existing reserve boundary and the proposed development. The site is adjacent to the Hunter estuary wetlands Ramsar site and contains the coastal salt marsh endangered ecological community. Third, this bill will revoke separate land from the Hunter Wetlands National Park to enable Port Waratah Coal Services to expand its Kooragang coal terminal. When Ash Island was a reserve, as an addition to the Hunter Wetlands National Park in February 2011, a 50-metre wide portion of the lands required for railway lines was inadvertently included in the national park as a result of conflicting figures and documentation. In that respect this legislation will correct the previous Government's boundary error. Any planning approval that Port Waratah Coal Services receives will consider and manage potential impacts on the Green and Golden Bell Frog and bird habitats, and include a requirement for conservation land offsets.

Fourth and finally this bill will allow the completion of logging in Yathong and Wilbertroy State forests by deferring the transfer of parts of these State forests to the national park system. Legislation introduced last year added high conservation value cypress forest lands to the national park system. That legislation provided for exit harvesting of five areas of State forest before they are added to the national park reserve system on 1 January next year. Exit harvesting has been completed in three of the five forests, but is incomplete in Yathong and Wilbertroy due to the wet season, problems of access to remote areas, and logistics of harvesting a large and complex timber resource.

The bill extends the time for the exit harvests of these forests to be completed. It is important to emphasise that no additional area of harvest is sought; it is simply an extension of time to enable the harvesting to be completed. To conclude, the most significant changes introduced by this bill, namely establishing the Wianamatta Nature Reserve and reserving land as part of the Hunter Wetlands National Park—similar to legislation introduced last week to strengthen the Environment Protection Authority and our recent announcement of the declaration of the Dharawal National Park—continues the long tradition of New South Wales coalition governments protecting our precious natural environment. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [12.40 p.m.], in reply: The National Parks and Wildlife Legislation Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011 will lead to good outcomes for the people of New South Wales. The impact of the positive amendments in this legislation will, in some cases, make a remarkable difference to the communities they affect. Wianamatta Nature Reserve will protect valuable Cumberland woodland and its Aboriginal cultural heritage. An additional \$1 million will make a huge difference to its management and upgrade. The former Government increased the number of national parks, but it did not provide sufficient money to properly care for and manage them. However, this Government always includes a package of funding to upgrade any degraded areas to ensure that they are well managed. Last week the Government introduced a package to increase by 90 the number of front-line firefighters across New South Wales in an effort to upgrade bushfire management and hazard reduction. Those two things go together.

Members have said that this proposal is the result of consultation with local members—candidates at the time—community groups, conservation groups, in particular Lisa Harrold, and many others. They have worked for these amendments for many years, but the previous Government gave them the deaf ear. However, the former Opposition, now this Government, is delivering on another election commitment. The Government

can be proud of turning Wianamatta Nature Reserve at Cranebrook into something for future generations. The site has degraded over time. I have seen its biodiversity and cultural values. It will be a remarkable legacy to hand on to future generations and it will certainly protect the endangered swamp woodland as well as its Aboriginal heritage. I am delighted to make this announcement today.

The Opposition has turned this legislation into something negative, but it is a positive result. Today members representing the electorates of Londonderry, Wollondilly and Mulgoa were delighted with this legislation and yesterday they were similarly delighted with the creation of the Dharawal National Park. If one listened to the Opposition, one would think that the sky is falling in but in reality this Government is getting on with creating national parks and nature reserves, increasing our biodiversity and green corridors, and delivering on its election commitments. I agree that more time for consultation would have been a good thing, but for the community whose livelihoods centre around logging in the Yathong and Wilbertroy State forests, it was important to introduce this legislation.

The existing arrangements are due to expire on 31 December this year; therefore something had to be done as soon as possible. This is a call from the local community and from industry; it is about supporting local communities and still delivering environmental gains. Parts of these forests will come into the national park system after logging operations are completed. This year logging has been delayed by incredible rainfall, which is not the fault of government—it is nature. It would be ridiculous if we did not allow an extension of time to complete logging operations in Yathong and Wilbertroy before they became part of the national park system. The bill does not create more logging; it simply provides for what was already arranged under the former Government, that is, extra time for local industry to get the job done. Once this work is done the forests will come into the national park system.

The legislation also corrects an error in the Hunter Wetlands National Park boundary, which was created under the former Government—a failure to draw the right lines on the map. It is a logical change and we are introducing it so that the fourth coal loader, which will have all of the strict requirements in place, can go through the planning processes. I refer to a 50-metre wide corridor that is needed to get coal from one part of the site to the other. It is absolutely essential and it should never have been included in the Hunter Wetlands National Park—it was certainly a stuff-up by the former Government that this Government is happy to fix, which will enable the fourth coal loader to go ahead.

It is important to the Hunter economy and an important part of this legislation. The other positive amendment to which the member for Charlestown referred relates to an area known as Ash Island, which is a really interesting part of the Hunter Wetlands that has some really good walks and incredible biodiversity despite the impact of heavy industry. It is surprising that Kooragang Island is home to some rare species, considering some of the impacts of heavy industry on the environment. Adding extra land to Ash Island for our green corridors is a really positive step. I am pleased for the local community, which is passionate about our commitments to green corridors that are home to threatened species, for example, migratory birds.

In the Hunter Valley one can see the green corridors very clearly. It is a great win for the park and for the unique wildlife that call it home, and it is our way to preserve the high conservation lands. In conclusion, I thank members representing the electorates of Marrickville, Londonderry, Wollondilly, Charlestown, Mulgoa and Cronulla for their contributions. The Government is pleased to introduce this bill, which provides sensible amendments to State legislation. They balance the importance of preserving high-value conservation lands against the needs of economic growth and development. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

RIVER RED GUM LOGGING

Personal Explanation

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation about comments made by the shadow Minister in regard to a request that I have made of a committee of Government to investigate a report that was done by the Natural Resources Commission into the red gum forestry industry. Unfortunately, the shadow Minister read far too deeply into my motives. I made that request in response to information from about 8,000 people who approached me to tell me that the report is biased. In the event of that report being investigated and the consequences, I can go back to them and say either that the report was not biased or that the report was loaded. The shadow Minister should think about the consequences of what he was suggesting—quite honestly, the Opposition is going far too deep.

HERITAGE AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debated resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [12.49 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Heritage Amendment Bill 2011, which in many ways is fairly innocuous and changes many of the mechanical aspects of the Heritage Act. About an hour and a half ago the Opposition was advised that this legislation would be introduced. That is not great form. The Government is in power and makes decisions to introduce bills as it sees fit, but the process must have an element of fairness.

Surely the Opposition could have been given notice yesterday that the bill would be introduced, thus giving the shadow Minister time to go through the bill to make sensible debating points. I received a very good briefing this morning, but that was only a little while ago. It might be useful for the running of Government business if the Government had a plan. Yesterday we were advised that three bills would be debated today. However, it has been a very different story today. Yesterday I had no knowledge that two bills within my shadow portfolio responsibility would be introduced. The running of Government business is not as fair or as organised as it could be.

I will now turn to the Heritage Amendment Bill 2011. The Opposition agrees in principle with the bill, which changes the definition of "approved form" in the Act so that the Heritage Council rather than the Minister is responsible for approving forms for the purpose of the Act. The Labor Opposition supports reforms that remove potential conflicts of interest in all aspects of the planning system and that provide greater clarity to the public on decision-making. I presume it is clear to the Minister—only time will tell—that the planning system will absorb aspects that were not previously within the planning system as a result of changes that underpin this legislation. That intermarriage of the two systems is an important aspect of the legislation Mr Dyer and Mr Moore may consider in their review of the planning system. The Minister has just indicated that it has been considered.

The second point is that the membership of the Heritage Council has been reduced from 11 to nine. I am a great supporter of smaller councils, but I make the point that two of the three non-appointed members have been removed and the number of appointed members remains unchanged at eight. I do not read anything into that; I simply note that two of the three non-appointed members will be removed. I understand from the briefing I received this morning that those two members will continue to have a connection with the council by way of ex officio membership, and will still have some sort of role in the process of decision-making within the council.

The third point deals with the abolition of ministerial review panels, which will remove a layer of decision-making and make way for decisions to go to the Planning Assessment Commission. However there will still be a level of scrutiny. I note that although the ministerial review panels will be abolished, their role will be replaced by the Planning Assessment Commission. We must ensure that checks and balances are in place in relation to the abolition of the three-member ministerial review panels and the reduction in the number of non-appointed members to the Heritage Council. It is very important, particularly if the Planning Assessment Commission is to make decisions, that the commission consist of the correct mix of people who are able to make wise and proper decisions on heritage issues. I hope that will be the case, because if it is not something significant may be lost.

My next point is non-controversial. The Minister will publish electronically all decisions and reasons for decisions. That is a good step forward and something that more and more government agencies are moving towards. When Labor was in government and I was responsible for the Community Services portfolio it was moving towards making reasons for decisions and policies much more available to people via the internet. The Opposition commends that aspect of the bill. We also support new section 21B—the amendment that any written submission in relation to a State significant development that is made by the Heritage Council is published on the internet within 14 days. That is an honourable ambition, but my experience of 30 years or more in government and around government is that sometimes that 14-day time frame slips. I hope that does not happen.

I am sure that if it is part of the legislation people will have greater incentive to meet the 14-day time frame in which to publish written submissions. Labor aims to take the uncertainty out of all aspects of planning decisions, to grow confidence in the system and to encourage sustainable investment. That is very much my philosophical point of view and it is also a practical point of view. We agree with the overall intent of the bill, its move to improve the integrity of the system and the capacity for heritage considerations to be part of State significant projects. We commend the Government for taking that position. It is in line with our view that major projects must take account of the broader social and environmental impact to be truly sustainable.

I will return to my first point—and I am sure other members on this side of the House will say something similar—for good governance, good policy development and good debate in this place the Opposition needs time to scrutinise policy so that it has something sensible to say about it. If that does not happen, it becomes a very one-sided argument and does not lead to the best outcomes. We dealt with another bill this morning and because we had been given the time to look at it we were able to come to some agreement on some amendments, which strengthened the bill. That was not a political issue; not all debates must be political. We must pursue the best outcomes for the people the legislation will affect. Given that, I ask that the Government consider this issue. There should be more structure and organisation in the daily program of this House. What the Opposition is told will happen should, as far as is reasonable, happen when the Government has said it will.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [1.00 p.m.]: The Heritage Act Amendment Bill 2011 aims to cut red tape, to reduce delays in the listing of heritage assets and to increase the transparency of decision-making. Those outcomes are the reason I support the bill. I thank the member for Canterbury for indicating that the Opposition supports the general principles of the legislation. The Coalition told the people of New South Wales during the election campaign that it would focus on removing delays and increasing transparency in heritage preservation if it were elected. It also told them that excessive red tape and delayed decision-making impedes heritage conservation and frustrates the business and economic development of New South Wales. It is critical for our economy and for the preservation of heritage that decisions about heritage conservation are made expeditiously.

In its first 100 days in office this Government has already implemented two of those commitments by appointing a Minister for Heritage and relocating the Heritage Branch from the Department of Planning into the Environment portfolio. This bill will amend the Heritage Act 1977 by implementing a further five of the Government's election commitments, three of which address red tape and delay and two of which improve transparency. The first amendment reduces the Heritage Council's membership from 11 to nine members. The details of that amendment have already been dealt with by the Minister and the member for Canterbury. The second amendment abolishes ministerial review panels; that is, it removes the Minister's ability to appoint three-person panels to review State Heritage Register listings, which will mean that the Heritage Council will be retained as the prime body for recommending State Heritage Register listings to the Minister.

In order to reduce State listing time frames, the third amendment requires the Heritage Council, once it makes a decision to recommend the listing of an item on the State Heritage Register under section 33 of the Heritage Act, to make a recommendation to the Minister within 14 days of giving notice of that decision. The first amendment is designed to improve decision-making transparency and it requires the Minister to publish all decisions relating to directing the listing of items on the register and the reasons for those decisions. The second amendment requires the publication of certain written submissions made by the Heritage Council to a consent authority about some State significant development that affects State heritage issues.

The final amendment provides that the Heritage Council, rather than the Minister, has the authority to approve forms for the purposes of the Heritage Act. It is believed that that is an administrative matter that the

council rather than the Minister is best placed to determine. In conclusion, I support the bill and I commend it to the House because it implements the Coalition's election commitments to cut red tape, to reduce delays in heritage listing and to increase transparency in heritage decision-making.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.04 p.m.]: I support the Heritage Act Amendment Bill 2011 and the Government's election promise to cut red tape, to reduce delays in heritage listing and to increase transparency in decision-making. This legislation makes a number of important amendments to the Heritage Act 1977, which is good news for New South Wales. It is particularly good news for the people of Wollondilly because my electorate has a number of heritage-listed dwellings, including a number in the historic town of Appin. During the election campaign, the Coalition published a policy document entitled "Improving Heritage Conservation—Giving Heritage an Advocate in Cabinet", which focused on removing delays and increasing transparency. An excerpt from that policy document reads:

Excessive red tape in decision-making impedes heritage conservation and frustrates the business/economic development of the State ... It is critical for the economy of NSW and for the preservation of heritage that decisions on proposed heritage conservation be made expeditiously.

I am pleased to report that this Government has already implemented some of its commitments in its first 100 days in office; namely, it has appointed a Minister responsible for heritage and relocated the Heritage Branch from the Department of Planning to the Environment portfolio. I am pleased about that change in responsibility because I see the portfolio pairing as more suitable, given the sensitive nature of both issues. I will outline the implementation of a further five commitments. They include the reduction of the Heritage Council membership from 11 to nine, the abolition of ministerial review panels, a reduction in time frames for the State heritage listing process and requiring the Minister to publish reasons for State heritage listing decisions and recommendations from the Heritage Council made on planning matters affecting State heritage.

A time limit of 14 days will also be introduced to reduce the time frame for the Heritage Council to make its State Heritage Register listing recommendation to the Minister. Minor amendments of an administrative nature, such as removing the need for the Minister to approve application forms—a duty which will now be the function of the Heritage Council—have also been made. These amendments are an important step for heritage in New South Wales. They are a sign that this Government is taking the issue seriously and that it values the need for preservation of heritage assets in this State.

This bill is particularly relevant to me as a local member because many towns in my electorate have heritage appeal or are heritage listed. Recently we celebrated the 200th anniversary of the settlement of the township of Appin, which is one of only five towns in New South Wales to reach that milestone. One significant heritage asset in the town is the 1835 building on 20 Appin Road that housed the first post office. The post office closed after only six months, but it was reopened in 1841 under the management of postmaster James Moore. The single-storey weatherboard building has a gabled roof and a bull-nosed verandah along the front. The rear is masonry and it has a chimney in the kitchen area. The Bourke family own and live in the building, which has been identified as historically and aesthetically significant by the State Heritage Branch.

D'Arcy's House on Appin Road is also a significant local heritage building. Lawrence D'Arcy built a two-storey sandstone house on his land grant, which adjoined the Appin Inn site on the town's main street. The building was a local landmark and it was said to be the oldest house in the town. The Spearing family once lived in the house and part of it was used as a butcher's shop. The house burnt down in the 1960s, but the D'Arcy family—whom I know—have stored the sandstone blocks and plan to use them in the construction of a new house on their vacant land. The site is significant as the location of one of the first houses built on an original land grant and it has been assessed as historically significant by the State Heritage Branch.

Wollondilly and the surrounding areas have many historically significant sites and the Minister for Heritage is ensuring that such sites are preserved for future generations. I look forward to showing my boys some of the significant heritage-listed assets in the local area. This is the second or third piece of legislation we have debated in the past two days introduced by the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. She is keen to get on with the job and I congratulate her on introducing this bill, which I commend to the House.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [1.08 p.m.]: I am very pleased to support the Heritage Act Amendment Bill 2011 and I commend the Minister for Heritage for introducing it. My interest in the heritage of Coogee and Randwick was largely responsible for my entering politics, so this legislation is dear to my heart. Anything that strengthens heritage conservation through improved efficiency, a reduction in the delays impacting on the listing of new heritage assets and increased transparency in decision-making is to be

welcomed. This bill is a key part of implementing the Government's election commitments on heritage. It has already implemented some of those commitments by appointing a Minister responsible for heritage, and separating heritage from the Planning portfolio has given it an independent voice in Cabinet. I have always believed that giving the planning authority control of heritage is like giving Dracula control of the blood bank. I am therefore very pleased to see the establishment of a separate ministry.

Listing is the main way to protect New South Wales heritage places. Some 25,000 items are listed at a local level by councils via their local environmental plans and some 1,600 are listed on the State Heritage Register. These State-significant heritage places, buildings, works, relics, objects and precincts—our most important heritage assets—are protected through the Heritage Act. The Government believes that the State Heritage Register should continue to be expanded to be representative of the State's most important heritage assets. It is important to efficiently protect these items of demonstrated significance to the State. The New South Wales Heritage Council provides independent and objective advice to the Minister for Heritage on matters concerning the State's heritage, including new listings.

This bill reduces the number of members on the Heritage Council to nine. However, it is important that the Heritage Council continues to provide expert advice through the presence of skills-based members in areas such as history, Aboriginal heritage and cultural landscape. The six experts appointed by the Minister will be retained. It is also important that the views of the community are represented, and the National Trust will continue to be represented. The reduction in numbers will be achieved by reducing ex-officio members from three to one—the Director General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

Most importantly, this bill will increase transparency and timeliness in the decision-making process. There are already time limits for various stages of the listing process under the Act. These include the time between the Heritage Council resolving to consider listing an item and publicly advertising it, the time between the end of advertising and the Heritage Council's recommendation or decision, and the time a Minister may take to make a decision. This bill creates an additional time frame to further improve the timeliness of new listings on the State Heritage Register. Recommendations from the Heritage Council regarding listings must be provided to the Minister within 14 days of the decision being made. The previous Government misused ministerial advisory panels to obfuscate and delay ministerial decisions regarding listings.

This bill abolishes the use of those panels. The Minister must make her decision based on the Heritage Council's recommendation, or request a review from the Planning and Assessment Commission through a separate transparent process. This bill amends the Heritage Act 1977 to require the publication on the internet of the Heritage Council's recommendations to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure regarding State-significant development affecting State-significant heritage matters. This bill also requires the Minister to publish her reasons for any listing, whether or not it is with the assistance of the review of the Planning Assessment Commission. This bill will strengthen heritage conversation through improved efficiencies, reduced delays in listing new heritage items and increased transparency of decision-making. Doing so will help to conserve our State's precious heritage. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.13 p.m.]: I support the Heritage Act Amendment Bill 2011. This Government made an election commitment to cut red tape and reduce delays of heritage listings and to increase transparency of decision-making. This bill amends the Heritage Act 1977 in a number of ways. It reduces the membership of the Heritage Council, abolishes the use of review panels for heritage listings, requires the Minister to publish reasons regarding State listing decisions, and requires the Minister to publish recommendations from the Heritage Council on matters concerning State heritage. This Government has already appointed a Minister for Heritage and moved the heritage branch out of the Department of Planning and into the Environment portfolio as part of the Government's election policy "Improving Heritage Conservation—Giving Heritage an Advocate in Cabinet."

The Heritage Act Amendment Bill 2011 will implement five more of the Government's commitments. Firstly, the bill amends the Heritage Act 1977 by abolishing the use of ministerial review panels for State heritage listings. The bill will remove the Minister's ability to appoint three-person ministerial review panels to review State Heritage Register listings. This will retain the Heritage Council as the prime body for recommending State Heritage Register listings to the Minister. Secondly, the bill will require the Minister to publish recommendations from the Heritage Council made on planning matters concerning State heritage matters. This will increase the transparency of decision-making.

The third amendment requiring the Minister to publish reasons regarding State listing decisions will also increase transparency. The fourth amendment will reduce the Heritage Council from 11 to nine members by

removing the positions of Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet's Office of Environment and Heritage and the Government Architect. The expertise provided by these positions will be captured by allowing the Office of Environment and Heritage representative to attend council meetings in an ex-officio capacity, and by inviting the Government Architect, or his delegate, to join the council's approvals committee, where his expertise is of greatest value.

Finally, the bill will reduce the time frames for the State listing process. It will impose a time limit of 14 days for the Heritage Council to make its State Heritage Register listing recommendation to the Minister. Through an administrative amendment to the Heritage Act the Minister no longer will be required to approve application forms; that function will move to the Heritage Council. It is believed that the council is best placed to determine this. As chair of the Environment and Regulation Committee, I see this as a positive and productive bill. I welcome the Minister's input which will go a long way towards cutting red tape and reducing the delays for heritage listings whilst increasing transparency in the decision-making process. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [1.16 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the Heritage Act Amendment Bill 2011. This is another sensible bill to cut red tape, decrease the delays for heritage listings and increase the transparency of decision-making—all of which will strengthen heritage conservation. The bill plays a key part in implementing the Government's election commitments on heritage. The Government has already acted on some of its commitments by creating a Minister for Heritage, and separating heritage from the Planning portfolio has given an independent voice to heritage in Cabinet.

Listing is the main way to protect New South Wales heritage places. Some 25,000 items are listed at a local level by councils via their local environmental plans and some 1,600 are listed on the State Heritage Register. The Blue Mountains is home to many heritage-listed places, including numerous houses, cottages, railway stations, such as the lovely Mount Victoria railway station and museum, and the Blue Mountains District Anzac Memorial Hospital. The Norman Lindsay Gallery and the Everglades Gardens in Leura are important heritage-listed places that are looked after by the National Trust. These State-significant heritage places are protected by the Heritage Act. The Government believes the State Heritage Register should continue to be expanded to be representative of the State's most important heritage assets. It is important to efficiently protect items of demonstrated significance to the State before they go to rack and ruin and cannot be protected.

The Heritage Council provides independent and objective advice to the Minister for Heritage on matters concerning the State's heritage, including new listings. The bill reduces the number of members of the Heritage Council to nine. However, it is important that the Heritage Council continues to provide expert advice through the presence of skills-based members in areas such as history, Aboriginal heritage and cultural landscapes. The six experts appointed by the Minister will be retained. It is important that the views of the community are representative and the National Trust will continue to be represented. The reduction in numbers will be achieved by a reduction in ex-officio members from three to one. The Director General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure will no longer be a member of the Heritage Council.

The bill is intended to increase transparency and timeliness in the decision-making process. There are already time limits for various stages of the listing process under the Act. These include: the time between the Heritage Council resolving to consider listing an item and publicly advertising it; the time between the end of advertising and the Heritage Council recommendation decision; and the time a Minister may take to make a decision. Some of the heritage items I have looked at on the heritage listing have been there since February 2011 without a decision having been made. To further improve the timeliness of new listings on the State Heritage Register, the bill creates an additional time frame. Recommendations from the Heritage Council regarding listings will need to be provided to the Minister within 14 days of the decision being made.

The previous Government misused ministerial advisory panels to obfuscate and delay ministerial decisions regarding listings. This bill abolishes the use of ministerial advisory panels. The Minister must make her decision based on the Heritage Council's recommendation or request a review from the Planning and Assessment Commission through a separate, transparent process. This bill amends the Heritage Act 1977 to require the publication on the internet of the Heritage Council's recommendations to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure regarding developments affecting State-significant heritage matters, as well as the publication of the Minister's reasons for any listings, whether or not it is with the insistence of the review of the New South Wales Planning Assessment Commission. The bill will strengthen heritage conservation through improved efficiencies, reduce delays in listing new heritage items and increase transparency of decision-making and in doing so will help to conserve our State's precious heritage. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [1.23 p.m.]: Our good Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage introduced good legislation. I am pleased to speak in support of the Heritage Act Amendment Bill 2011 which will strengthen heritage conservation through improved efficiencies, reduced delays in listing new heritage items and increased transparency of decision-making. The bill is a key part in implementing the Government's election commitments on heritage. In its first 100 days the Government has already acted on some of these commitments by creating a Minister for Heritage, separating heritage from the Planning portfolio and giving it an independent voice in Cabinet. A heritage listing is the best way in which to protect heritage items in New South Wales.

Some 25,000 items are listed at a local level by councils via their local environmental plans and some 1,600 are listed on the State Heritage Register. These State-significant heritage places, buildings, works, relics, objects and precincts—our most important heritage assets—are protected through the Heritage Act. The Government believes that the State Heritage Register should continue to be expanded to be representative of the State's most important heritage assets. It is important to efficiently protect these items of demonstrated significance to the State. The New South Wales Heritage Council provides independent and objective advice to the Minister for Heritage on matters concerning the State's heritage, including new listings.

The bill reduces the number of members on the Heritage Council to nine. However, it is important that the Heritage Council continues to provide expert advice through the presence of skills-based members in areas such as history, Aboriginal heritage and cultural landscapes. The six experts appointed by the Minister will be retained. It is important also that the views of the community are represented and the National Trust will continue to be represented. This bill is intended to increase transparency and timeliness in the decision-making processes. Time limits are set for the various stages of the listing process under the Act. These include: the time between the Heritage Council resolving to consider listing an item and publicly advertising it; the time between the end of advertising and the Heritage Council recommendation decision; and the time a Minister may take to make a decision.

To further improve the timeliness of new listings on the State Heritage Register, this bill creates an additional time frame. Recommendations from the Heritage Council regarding listings will need to be provided to the Minister within 14 days of the decision being made. The previous Government misused ministerial advisory panels and delayed ministerial decisions regarding listings. This bill abolishes the use of ministerial advisory panels. The bill will strengthen heritage conservation through improved efficiencies, reduced delays in listing new heritage items and increased transparency of decision-making. In so doing, it will help to conserve our State's precious heritage. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.25 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution in debate on the Heritage Act Amendment Bill 2011. I note that it continues our reforms to end conflicts in the New South Wales heritage system and to make it the best in Australia. The focus of the bill is to streamline and simplify heritage assessment processes, to bring them closer to the community and to make them more transparent for the community. The main purpose of the bill includes changing section 80 of the Act to reshape the Heritage Council as a community-led expert body by reducing its membership from 15 to nine members, which is consistent with the Northern Territory and Western Australia. I note that only South Australia has fewer members, with eight.

This bill will end the farcical situation that existed a couple of years ago that enabled John Robertson, the then leader of Unions NSW, to stand as an ex-officio member of the NSW Heritage Council at the same time as the Heritage Council was considering the listing of Currawong, a union-owned property. Currawong was subject to a proposal for redevelopment by a joint venture, including the unions and private developers. This bill will end those farcical situations and restore community confidence in the process and in the membership of the Heritage Council. I note the changes to section 34 that will abolish the ministerial review panel—a ridiculous doubling-up of assessment that undermined the Heritage Council by enabling the Minister effectively to refer its decisions to another Heritage Council that had been selected by the Minister. It was unnecessary bureaucracy and effectively a foil designed to undermine the Heritage Council if the Minister did not agree with its recommendations. It also undermined the 2006 State of the Environment report that called for improved transparency in heritage listing.

The changes to section 34 will accelerate the assessment process and remove unnecessary duplication. Less delay in the process will reduce costs and increase public confidence in the system. I also note in relation to increasing certainty and transparency, proposed section 21B and section 34 (4). Those sections require extra levels of publication and detail by the Minister and the Heritage Council and will increase transparency and public confidence. It will end a situation that existed in which an assessment process could take years. In the

case of Currawong in my community of Pittwater—which was and is clearly an area of State heritage significance—the former Government took more than a decade to finally list it. These reforms will help to make the delay, loss and cost involved in heritage assessment a thing of the past.

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [1.28 p.m.], in reply: I thank all those who contributed to debate on the Heritage Act Amendment Bill 2011—the member for Canterbury, the member for Cronulla, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Coogee, the member for Camden, the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Granville. I appreciate the concern expressed by Opposition members about the timing of this bill but I thank them for their support for it. I understand how frustrating it is. I spent eight years in the upper House where under the former Government things like this happened frequently. I learned to respond and to be flexible, which one often does in politics. It would have been better if we had had more time.

These important changes will address the timeliness of approving State heritage listings and making things more transparent. I note the queries of the member for Canterbury relating to the interrelationship of heritage and planning. Although we have taken heritage out of the Planning portfolio and made it a standalone portfolio, there is still a strong interrelationship. We will be working hard through our planning amendments to ensure that heritage is a major consideration. These objectives are designed to streamline what we are doing and make it more transparent and timely because too often people say heritage gets in the way and slows down major developments and projects. That does not mean we want heritage to be ignored; far from it.

We want it front and centre because it is so important to our livelihoods and our communities and certainly to future generations. That applies not only to the built environment but our cultural environment as well. It is not just the European and post-European settlement but also our Aboriginal cultural heritage, which is significant and needs to be recognised. As the Opposition spokesperson said, it is about sustainability and making heritage as flexible as possible with adaptive re-use, as the Historic Houses Trust does with vulnerable properties by restoring them and making sure they are there for future generations. That is what heritage listing is all about.

We are reducing the size of the Heritage Council and, as the member for Pittwater said, that is consistent with the situation in other States. We will have more transparency and we will have decisions on the website within 14 days. We will have reduced red tape as a result of the abolition of ministerial review panels and we certainly will be making as many amendments as we can along the way to improve how we deal with heritage. However, we also will make sure that we restore, maintain and commemorate our heritage and, as far as possible, ensure it survives for the long term. I thank members for their contributions. I thank my staff and in particular those from the Heritage Council and the Heritage branch for their contribution to the legislation. I thank all members for the work they do in their electorates. I have been overwhelmed by the keenness of many members to support and work with local heritage groups to preserve their wonderful heritage properties throughout New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

[The Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.32 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DEATH OF THE HONOURABLE ELAINE BLANCHE NILE, A FORMER MEMBER OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

The SPEAKER: It is with regret that I announce to the House the death on 17 October 2011 of Elaine Blanche Nile, a former member of the Legislative Council who served from 19 March 1988 to 27 August 2002. On behalf of the House I extend to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile and family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions****Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.****QUESTION TIME**

[Question time commenced at 2.21p.m.]

ELECTRICITY ASSETS SALE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services. In May 2008 the Deputy Premier introduced a bill to ensure that any attempt to sell or lease the State's electricity assets must be approved by the Parliament. Does the Deputy Premier remain committed to that position?

Mr ANDREW STONER: Simply put, an awful lot of water has passed under the bridge since May 2008. In particular, we have seen the appalling power flog-off by the mob opposite. The Government is looking forward to the Tamberlin report following the special commission of inquiry into what went on at the hands of those vandals opposite. Part of that deal was the underwriting of the Cobbora coalmine in the Central West at massive expense to taxpayers. Part of that deal was the sacking of members of the boards of various State-owned corporations in the electricity sector. We are very much looking forward to the report on the mess and the goings-on in the dying days of the former New South Wales Labor Government.

Mr John Robertson: Just answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Deputy Premier will get to the question.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I am on the question, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not need assistance from members. The Deputy Premier has the call.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When the Tamberlin inquiry hands down its report, of course the Government will consider its content. We know already though that Labor made an appalling mess of an aborted power flog-off, for which both taxpayers—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. We did not ask for a misguided history lesson. We just want to know whether the Deputy Premier is still in favour of legislative entrenchment.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier's answer has been relevant and is in accordance with Standing Order 129.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I bet it was the member for Maroubra who suggested to the Leader of the Opposition that he ought to ask that question, because we know the member for Maroubra is a leadership aspirant and that the member for Blacktown looks pretty silly asking a question about power privatisation because the taxpayers of this State and its electricity consumers have had the worst of the dud deal perpetuated on them by the mob opposite.

YOUNG DRIVER ROAD SAFETY

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: My question is directed to the Premier. What is the Government doing to reduce road accidents and fatalities among young drivers?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Smithfield for his question and commend his ongoing interest in road safety issues, particularly those that affect young people. It is a sad fact that we lose too many young, inexperienced drivers to road crashes each year right around this country. Every six days a P-plate driver dies in New South Wales. That is a tragic statistic. Road accidents are responsible for 66 per cent of

deaths among 17- to 20-year-olds, and 33 per cent of P-plate drivers have an accident in their first year of driving. As the father of a 17-year-old P-plate driver I find these figures startling and most disturbing. That is why the Government today announced the start of a road safety trial involving more than 27,000 P-plate drivers across Victoria and New South Wales.

The goal is to reduce by at least 10 per cent crashes among those taking part in an innovative education program aimed at improving their behaviour behind the wheel, a program aimed at deterring them from speeding, driving recklessly and taking unnecessary risks. Participants will be given eight hours of behaviour-changing training and advice. So, instead of simply teaching young people how to control cars, this driver education program will focus on changing their behaviour as well—often the real cause of accidents among P-plate drivers. Participants will be given personal advice to make them more aware of the risks on the road as well as information about how to develop safe driving habits from the very first time they get their licences.

The New South Wales part of the trial will be held in four regions, including western Sydney, which is represented well by the member for Smithfield and so many members on our side, Tamworth and Armidale as one region, Dubbo and Forbes as another, and the Lismore and the Tweed area. As the Minister for Western Sydney it distresses me to learn that the Western Sydney region has by far the highest number of P-plate crashes and fatalities across the State. In the period 2008 to 2010 there were a total of 28 fatal P-plate accidents in western Sydney and another 3,452 young drivers were injured. A further 5,400 cars had to be towed away after serious accidents. So over that short period nearly 9,000 lives were directly, negatively and adversely affected by traffic accidents involving P-plate drivers.

All new provisional or P-plate drivers living in the trial areas will be invited to participate in the program. In stage one, participants will complete a survey that identifies their driving behaviour and how often they are exposed to high-risk situations on the roads. They will be given feedback about their behaviour and advised how they compare with other drivers of the same age. The young drivers will then receive further driver behaviour training, including a two-hour on-the-road training session. The trainers will then help them draw up a personal plan to make their driving safer.

This is a \$10 million joint initiative with a number of sectors, including the Federal Government, VicRoads, the Roads and Traffic Authority and NRMA Insurance. It will be the biggest research project of its type anywhere in the world. About 25 per cent of young P-plate drivers admit to speeding "some or most of the time". We have to change that behaviour if we are to make a difference among young drivers. It is programs like this that start changes; it is programs like this that can protect and keep alive our young P-plate drivers and ensure that they are able to pursue their dreams to develop their potential and benefit society in years to come.

KEMPS CREEK RADIOACTIVE WASTE SITE

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. What advice has the Minister received on the potential contamination risks of dumping radioactive waste at Kemps Creek, in western Sydney?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: The Premier spoke about this issue yesterday. It has been dealt with by Minister Pearce as it is within his portfolio. He will be leading on it and dealing with what happens with regard to the contamination, which the previous Labor Government did not deal with.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members should listen to the answer.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Certainly, Minister Pearce has responsibility for it and I look forward to working with him to deal with the contamination and to find an appropriate place at which it can be disposed of.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The question was not what the Minister is going to do. The question asked: What advice have you received. It was pretty simple.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is merely making some introductory remarks. I remind her to return to the leave of the question. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I have answered the question. It is the responsibility of Minister Pearce.

TRIPLE-A CREDIT RATING

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is addressed to the Treasurer. What update can the Treasurer provide regarding New South Wales's credit rating?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I have some good news for the people of New South Wales. Following action taken by the O'Farrell Government to get our finances back under control and on a sustainable path, Standard and Poor's has today affirmed the triple-A credit rating of New South Wales. I love the joy opposite. Opposition members are unlikely to read the report, but it has some interesting points that I should read for their benefit. It states:

In our opinion, NSW's financial management is strong with governance expected to improve under the new government.

I should repeat that because I do not think members opposite heard it. Standard and Poor's reported:

... NSW's financial management is strong with governance expected to improve under the new government.

It reported further:

... the NSW Government will maintain a sound financial position by balancing its focus on infrastructure investment with cost savings and potential asset sales.

It is good news for the people of New South Wales, but it is hardly time to let off the fireworks. On this side of the House we understand that there is a lot of hard work yet to do.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: And why is there still a lot of hard work to do? Those opposite took us to the brink of losing the triple-A rating.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will get on with the job of securing the finances of this State. On the action taken by the Government to restore the State's finances Standard and Poor's reported:

The Government's first Budget refocuses the State—

that is exactly what it does—

... the realignment of several government agencies ... are expected to improve decision making [and] the efficient and timely delivery of services and infrastructure.

In relation to infrastructure, Standard and Poor's reported:

The greatest pressure on the NSW economy is under-investment in the State's infrastructure ...

We know what those opposite left behind. They did not build the infrastructure and the economy has paid for it. They paid particular attention to underperformance in transport planning and delivery. Thank goodness we have the best Minister for Transport this State has ever seen.

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

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Drummoyne will cease inciting the Treasurer.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Because of Infrastructure NSW and the Minister for Transport we no longer are talking about the North West Rail Link; we are getting on with the job of building it. We are doing whatever hard work needs to be done for the State. Standard and Poor's reported finally:

The short-term rating [is also affirmed] and is supported by our very positive view of the state's liquidity ...

We are getting on with the job of restoring finances. Whether it be by implementing a wages policy, putting to an end the unattached list, which involved the payment of hundreds of millions of dollars to people who did not have jobs, reducing the size of head offices and putting more people on the front-line through our voluntary redundancy program, providing for the long-term lease of Port Botany and the desalination plant and thereby freeing up capital to fill the infrastructure backlog, and put it to work for the people of the State. We are doing what the credit rating agencies have been wanting a New South Wales government to do for the past 16 years.

Today we know what Standard and Poor's has affirmed: the extent of the mess that we inherited. Budget Paper No. 2 shows what would have happened in this State had those opposite won the election. It shows that the credit rating would have been lost under Labor if it had won the election. Today's news is good news for the people of New South Wales and is confirmation that this Government has made the right decisions in the best interests of this State. We have gotten on with the job of protecting our finances. The triple-A rating has been affirmed.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It was affirmed with these words:

... [the] financial management is strong with governance expected to improve under the new government.

That is what the people can expect from this Government. That is what we deliver. We are looking after the people of New South Wales.

BULLI HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Mr RYAN PARK: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Why did the Minister not tell the people of my community before the last election about her plans to close the Bulli Hospital emergency department?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for his question. I am reminded that the former Labor Government downgraded Bulli Hospital time and again over the past 16 years. I recall issuing a press release in May 2009 calling on the former Government to come clean about its intentions about Bulli Hospital because it had shut down elective surgery. It was only after we and local residents protested that elective surgery was restored at that hospital.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Later, the emergency department was shut down for all category 4 and 5 patients.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: In the main, category 4 and 5 patients are those who are considered able to be treated by a general practitioner. All other patients, particularly those that arrived in the back of ambulances, were sent to Wollongong Hospital. I actually think that that was the appropriate thing for the former Government to do, and that is exactly what I intend to do.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: That is the proposal put forward—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Minister has been talking for a minute and a half. The question was very specific about why the Minister did not take to my community—

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand the point of order. The Minister's answer has been relevant. As the member knows, I cannot rule on whether it specifically answers the question.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I find it extraordinary. The member must not have been listening. I have been doing nothing but talking about Bulli Hospital. In opposition I frequently stood outside that hospital and complained that the former Government was pretending that the emergency department existed.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The former Government was misleading people by suggesting that there was a fully functioning emergency department when there was not. A patient with an urgent condition or anyone in an accident was sent to Wollongong Hospital.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Have you visited Bulli?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I visited Bulli Hospital many times.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The truth of the matter is that it is a dilapidated building and a number of its rooms are boarded up. I am wondering whether the member for Macquarie Fields has ever been there; had he been, he would have known that. When we established the local health districts and said that they would have devolved responsibility, the Bulli district came up with a proposal that it retain the hospital, make it a centre of excellence in aged care and have the emergency department revert to a clinical care centre, which is exactly how it has been operating. It is making official what has been happening for a number of years.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will come to order. The member for Wollongong will come to order. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The former Government was not prepared to come clean. It was addicted to lies and pretended this was an emergency department. Nearly all the clinicians I have spoken to and certainly the chair of that health district, who is a doctor, as you know, have actually come up with a proposal that says this is exactly what should happen for Bulli Hospital.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am about devolution. I accept the recommendation. If they wish to proceed along those lines because they think it is a better way to care for the people in their area then so be it. I have been there many times along with the member for Heathcote. Bulli Hospital is in the Heathcote electorate and that member has been with me when we have talked about this. We have complained to the local newspapers. They and other media have been very complimentary about our proposal for Bulli Hospital and not at all complimentary about the member on three calls, and who should be put on four.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: The member is misleading the House.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: As I was saying, the local press have been very complimentary about the proposal for honesty and coming clean. This is what the hospital has been doing for many years but under the guise of something— *[Time expired]*.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr JOHN BARILARO: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. What action is the Government taking to restore economic growth in New South Wales?

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Monaro for that question.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: It is no secret that this Government has made restoring the New South Wales economy one of its major priorities in our plan to make New South Wales number one again. We have already heard from the Premier and the Treasurer about the lost opportunities for this State over the last 16 years under Labor. In fact, had we matched Victoria's rate of economic growth over that period the State economy would be \$22.1 billion larger. We would have in this great State 273,000 more jobs and the budget bottom line

would have been \$6 billion better off over just the last seven years. As part of our plan to make New South Wales number one again we moved very quickly to pursue trade and investment opportunities for this great State. We have already created a trade and investment portfolio.

We are developing key industry action plans for the major strategically important industries in this State. We have attracted world-class events to our State. I acknowledge the very good work from the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. We have leveraged the wonderful asset that is our multicultural business community in this city and State through a new body called the Multicultural Business Advisory Panel. The Premier and I have already conducted trade missions to some of our major trading partners. We have established Destination NSW to target the visitor economy and drive our economy forward through those industries, and we have begun the work of building a new world-class convention centre in Sydney. In short, it is all about the economy, stupid. I beg your pardon? I acknowledge the interjection from the member for Blacktown.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will be careful with his comments.

Mr ANDREW STONER: He said he resembles that remark.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: The Deputy Premier is now misleading the House: I made no such comment whatsoever.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. I am not in a position to judge whether the Deputy Premier is or is not misleading the House.

Mr ANDREW STONER: He doth protest too much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to announce to the House today a new body, the Export and Investment Advisory Board, which comprises high level experts in the field to advise the Government on investment opportunities for our State, on the competitiveness of industries in New South Wales, on the growth opportunities for New South Wales businesses in overseas markets and also the best uses of our business offices in China, India and the United Arab Emirates. The chairman of the board is Warwick Smith, who is the New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory chairman of the ANZ Bank.

Other members include: Ken Allen, senior adviser of Lexington Partners, founder and chairman emeritus at Advance and former Australian consul in New York; Michael Carapiet, a former Macquarie Bank executive and chairman of the SAS Trustees Cooperation board; John Hartigan, chairman and chief executive officer of News Limited—I do not know what the problem of the member for Canterbury is but I bet it is hard to pronounce—Katie Lahey, the managing director Australasia of Korn/Ferry International and former chief executive of the Business Council of Australia; John Mullen, chief executive officer and managing director of Asciano Limited; Peter O'Byrne, the former chief executive of Austrade; Steve Vamos, the founding president of the Society for Knowledge Economics and non-executive director of Telstra; and Mark Paterson, director general of NSW Trade and Investment.

It is an esteemed group indeed. We know that turning New South Wales and its economy around after 16 years of mismanagement and neglect is not going to be an easy task. That is why we have on board the nation's best business brains, with successful business track records and people who share the Government's vision to make New South Wales number one again.

GRAFFITI HOTLINE

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is to the Attorney General. Why after seven months in office and weeks of Government rhetoric on graffiti vandalism has he still failed to establish a graffiti hotline?

The SPEAKER: Order! An Opposition member asked the question; Opposition members should listen to the answer. The member for Maroubra will come to order.

Mr GREG SMITH: We are still working on the graffiti hotline. We are 16 years behind in any improvement. With 16 years of failure by the previous Government and 16 years of encouragement of crime and vandalism it is taking time.

The SPEAKER: Order! If members do not come to order they will find themselves outside the Chamber.

Mr GREG SMITH: I am assured it will be linked with the police operating systems and will provide a valuable source for intelligence—

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

Mr GREG SMITH: —for New South Wales operations.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: It will refer incidents to the asset owner or relevant local government area for their attention. The Department of Attorney General and Justice and the Police Force are working together closely to develop the hotline, which will be operational by the end of the current calendar year and be supported by a community education program to promote the reporting of graffiti. We will continue to fight for the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill to be passed as first introduced, requiring juveniles to appear before a court and increasing sentencing options in relation to graffiti offences.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: This constitutes the essential elements of the Government's approach to combating graffiti, which was overwhelming endorsed by the community on 26 March 2011.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: To their peril Opposition members are contemptuous towards the community of this State by holding up this important legislation. As with other areas such as the carbon tax, the electorates of this country will punish the Opposition severely for holding up this important legislation.

The SPEAKER: Order! Many Opposition members are on two or three calls to order and many of them are perilously close to being removed from the Chamber. I call the member for Kiama to order.

LIQUOR LAWS

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events Hospitality and Racing and Minister for the Arts. What is the Government doing to ensure the integrity of the State's liquor laws?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Today the Government announced the final shape of its Three Strikes and You're Out policy to strip licensees who continually do the wrong thing with their liquor licences. This has followed lengthy consultation with the industry and key stakeholders over draft legislation introduced to Parliament earlier this year. The Government has carefully considered submissions and representations to ensure that this policy targets rogue operators and does not adversely impact on responsible licensees. It is another pre-election commitment this Government has delivered. I note that the Police Association has welcomed this important initiative, with its president, Scott Webber, saying:

The three strikes policy is a good start when it comes to controlling antisocial behaviour in our pubs and bars and we look forward to it being introduced.

The Liberal-Nationals Government is determined to protect and enhance the integrity of the State's liquor laws. The three strikes policy is just one example in the time we have been in power. The Government's resolve was first demonstrated in April with the regulation being changed in relation to the use of a caterer's licence contrary to the spirit of the licence category. A function centre in Newcastle known as the Kensington hosted 550 revellers until 3.00 a.m., despite having twice previously been refused a liquor licence and the vociferous objections of local police and residents. The Government also is sending a strong message to unscrupulous operators who make illegal home deliveries of alcohol that they have no place in the liquor industry.

The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing has been targeting unlicensed operators using social media sites such as *Facebook* to advertise home delivery of alcohol 24 hours a day. A small number of operators are attempting to exploit the limited exemptions that exist for legitimate gift delivery businesses. A series of covert operations involving undercover inspectors and police have resulted in enforcement action against two operators, the Blind Pig and the Beer Baron, for the alleged unlicensed sale of alcohol and

associated offences. The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing and police will continue to crack down on these unlicensed operations, which increase the risk of alcohol being supplied irresponsibly and falling into the hands of minors.

The Minister for Transport and I are considering ways to regulate party bus operators who take busloads of revellers on tours and who currently operate under a voluntary code of conduct. The Government also is taking action to strengthen the integrity of mandatory training schemes for staff of licensed venues in the responsible service of alcohol and responsible conduct of gambling. The Independent Commission Against Corruption found that responsible service of alcohol certificates had been improperly issued by an unscrupulous operator to employ people who had no training at all. On 22 August 2011 New South Wales became the first State in Australia to introduce a photo competency card linked to a centralised database for mandatory training for bar, security and gaming workers in licensed venues.

Currently about 140,000 people undergo responsible service of alcohol and responsible conduct of gaming training every year. This training ensures that they understand and comply with liquor and gaming laws and reduces the harm associated with alcohol abuse and problem gambling. The photo competency card, which will include security features, will make it easier for licensed venues to verify a job applicant's training credentials and reduce opportunities for fraud. The actions we have taken send a clear message to industry about the need for compliance with the liquor laws by all licensed venues. The Government will continue to take decisive action to enhance the integrity of our liquor licensing regime and to ensure that the public is protected and no-one can operate outside the liquor laws.

POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. Given the strong concerns expressed by many, including the 13 local governments in the New England north west, regarding the flawed model used to project population changes, will the Minister commit to reviewing this process, as the figures are used to determine State service levels?

Mr Michael Daley: Brad, don't be a clown.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will come to order. The Minister has not begun to answer the question.

Mr Michael Daley: I know what he is going to say.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Maroubra is still upset that he did not get a mention in this book. To find the first one named in the book we have to work our way along the front bench and come three in because the member for Canterbury missed out as well.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: There are a lot of quotes about the one just behind the member for Maroubra, but she keeps her head down most of the time. If she keeps her head down today I will leave her alone.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his question and acknowledge his advocacy for the people of his electorate.

[Interruption]

This is a serious question from a serious member of Parliament, not a Labor member of Parliament. The member for Shellharbour should listen to what is going on. This issue is a matter of importance across New South Wales, not just in the New England area. In the first few weeks of being appointed the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure I held a meeting with departmental officers for some hours and discussed this precise issue, amongst others. The disparity between various statistical figures is a serious issue, particularly as so much of our State's planning and infrastructure is based on these figures. I know from representations by the member for Northern Tablelands and local councils in the New England area that this issue is one of major concern and one that the Government is pleased to clarify.

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure undertakes modelling to project population growth and distribution across the State and uses this information for land use planning and to understand the infrastructure and service needs of an area, particularly New England. The department's population projection model uses a methodology that is the international industry standard and parallels that used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and leading academics. Concerns have been raised by the member for Northern Tablelands and local council representatives in relation to apparent disparities between figures produced by the department and those released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

I am advised that these apparent disparities between 30-year projections released by the department and short-term trends indicated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in its Estimated Resident Populations document can occur because of the relative timing of data availability and access to information on local economic and population change factors. The department's latest projections, which were released in 2008, show a 7 per cent decline over the long term for the northern inland region. This is for the period from 2006 to 2036. However, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported positive growth in the region's resident population in the four years from 2007 to 2010.

Given the disparity in figures, it is understandable there is some concern in the community of the member for Northern Tablelands. The population projections of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, under the model used by Labor, I might add, in 2008, are not intended to be an annual prediction of population growth. Rather the department model is the most likely demographic scenario over the medium to long term based on assumptions made in relation to likely future fertility rates, mortality and the movement of people into and out of the area. Because these demographic factors can vary considerably from year to year, it is not unusual for estimates of population to differ from official results. We all know that Labor has never been big on consultation.

Ms Anna Watson: Don't you dare talk about consultation.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Shellharbour is only here because of what is sitting to her left.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: She is only here so long as Noreen lets her be here. She had better consult with her. She should remember what happened to her predecessor.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It will come as no surprise—

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: They think they were big on consultation. They went from how many members down to how many members? There was not too much consultation. On most days in the House there are about 15 of them here. Today a few more of them must have come in for lunch.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murray-Darling will come to order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It will come as no surprise that the former Labor Government's approach in developing its projections could be characterised by a complete lack of consultation with local members of the community and local members of Parliament about the issues that feed into population growth. The Liberal-Nationals Government is committed to a different approach. We already have begun implementing reforms to improve the quality of engagement with local communities and, in turn, the quality of our data and the accuracy of our growth projections. As Minister I have ensured that from February next year the Department of Planning and Infrastructure will undertake a series of population road shows across the State.

The department will talk to local councils and State agencies and seek their direct input into formulating local population projections. The department also will work with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to ensure that our work is better aligned with the bureau's approach. We also will align our forecasting models with those in Victoria and Queensland, which will provide for greater consistency between jurisdictions. Once again, we are demonstrating that we are listening to communities and getting on with the job. We are working hard. The former Labor Government did not work hard. That is why Labor has only 15, 16, 17 members—maybe 20 on a good day—in the House.

TARONGA WESTERN PLAINS ZOO

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. How is the Government making Taronga Western Plains Zoo accessible to students in western Sydney?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who has a disregard for western Sydney, we are supporting western Sydney.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: This week we passed a bill in relation to the Wianamatta Nature Reserve, we have provided free entry into Mount Annan and Mount Tomah and today the member for Mulgoa and I joined to launch yet another election commitment, another great program, this time for children in western Sydney. I know that the member for Mulgoa is a great advocate for her electorate and she is certainly making sure the O'Farrell Government delivers on all of the commitments we made to the people of western Sydney.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Today the member for Mulgoa and I launched the Endanger Ranger Program with 55 students from Glenmore Park High School who are currently on a train on their way to Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo. I am delighted to provide members with more details on this program. In March 2011 the Coalition committed to providing free CountryLink travel, zoo entry, meals and one night's accommodation for an estimated 3,300 year 8 students and their teachers from western Sydney schools to visit Taronga Western Plains Zoo over two years, in 2011-12 and 2012-13. As the member for Dubbo would agree, Western Plains Zoo is a great educational facility and a key tourism attraction.

As our election policy noted, our plan does not provide the children of western Sydney with just a great opportunity; it is also a welcome boost to the people and economy of Dubbo, with participating children receiving an allowance to spend on accommodation and food whilst on the visit. Many children who live in the inner city have never experienced country New South Wales. Many of the children I met today from western Sydney have not been to the zoo in Sydney and many of them have not been anywhere as far outside the city as Dubbo. Catching the train to Dubbo will open their eyes to the rest of New South Wales and to the history and heritage of major regional centres such as Dubbo and the unique opportunities available in regional New South Wales.

Our plan will enable children from western Sydney to pack their textbooks away for a few days and learn about conservation and the natural world among the wide open plains of Taronga Western Plains Zoo. We are providing the students with cameras so they can take photographs while they are at the zoo and share their experience with other students when they get back to Sydney. It teaches the students about conservation and wildlife in a practical way and it also supports Western Plains Zoo and the people of Dubbo. The program will incorporate a Zoosnooz overnight education program at the zoo's education centre, a bike riding tour and up-close animal encounters.

Today two animals were taken out to the students before they left on the excursion: one was a very cute little ringtail possum called Bungee and the other one was a snake, which I did not get too close to. I am not sure what his name was. It could be Robbo—he was a very slippery character indeed. So the students got to see up close a couple of animals before they left. The students were very excited and I am not sure how much sleep they will get tonight, but it will be a great experience for them. The teachers and parents accompanying them were also very excited. This program will be available for 3,300 students and 330 teachers and accompanying adults. When they come back all students will deliver a workshop or lesson to primary school students in their feeder schools about their excursion and what they learned.

It is expected that each student will mentor 10 students, so potentially 33,000 students will be reached by this program. A school selection process has been developed in partnership with the two Department of Environment and Conservation regions identified in the commitment—western Sydney and south-western Sydney. An expression of interest application and a program fact sheet have been developed and sent to schools. This is another example of this Government getting on with the job, delivering on our election commitments, supporting western Sydney and supporting students from western Sydney and regional communities such as Dubbo. It is a fantastic program and I am delighted to support it.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT PASSENGER INFORMATION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Given one-third of Sydney's bus fleet is being taken off the road this afternoon, why is there no information for passengers on the 131500 website, and what is the Minister doing to communicate this to commuters?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition and I can inform the House that I was advised during question time today that the Rail, Tram and Bus Union is taking action. It is very disappointing that commuters will be inconvenienced in this way with such little notice. An announcement of the incident was put up on the website some minutes ago and I have since been advised of the situation. This is typical of Labor Party members: thinking about headlines instead of what matters to commuters. They should think about the way that commuters will be inconvenienced because of this snap strike. I can advise the House that the reason given by the Rail, Tram and Bus Union for this strike is an incident that occurred on 29 July. The incident was serious and required investigation. The bus that caught fire at Matraville was only 2½ years old and it was one of the Mercedes-Benz compressed natural gas [CNG] buses in the State Transit fleet.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the Premier will come to order. The member for Monaro and the member for Wakehurst will come to order. The Minister has the call. I call the Premier to order. I call the Premier to order for the second time.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Does the Leader of the Opposition want to hear the answer or not? This is a serious issue and the Opposition should listen to the answer. As I said, this incident occurred on 29 July. It was immediately reported to the Office of Transport Safety Investigations [OTSI] and State Transit is continuing to work closely with the office and the vehicle manufacturer, Mercedes-Benz, to assist in the investigation of the fire. I also advise the House that as a precaution after that incident on 29 July State Transit inspected the remaining 254 vehicles—every single one was inspected—of the same model, and found no risk to passengers. I can also advise the House that it is a coincidence but I understand that today the Rail, Tram and Bus Union held negotiations regarding its new award. It is a coincidence that on the same day the Rail, Tram and Bus Union is arguing about wages and conditions it calls a snap strike inconveniencing commuters. I have also been advised that information has just been put on the 131500 website for commuters.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: This is classic Labor: the Rail, Tram and Bus Union announces minutes ago that it is holding a snap strike on the same day it is arguing about a new award.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition stands up and asks this question, but at the end of the day—

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: —it is this side of the House that cares about commuters. We have always said that commuters must come first. Treating commuters in this way will not achieve anything. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to act responsibly on this issue. Rather than dragging commuters into this issue he should be picking up the phone to his union mates and asking why they are calling this snap strike and why they are inconveniencing commuters.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The question was what efforts the Government will take to let commuters know. We do not need a sanctimonious lecture.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Again, the Labor Party has shown that it just does not get it: it does not understand public transport or how to treat commuters with respect. By condoning this action, which was—
[Time expired.]

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

TRIBUTE TO COUNCILLOR JANET HAYES**Ministerial Statement**

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [3.10 p.m.]: As Minister for Local Government, I pay tribute to Councillor Janet Hayes, Vice-President of the Local Government and Shires Associations, who passed away last Thursday, aged 63. Janet Hayes had been a councillor on Kempsey Shire Council since 1998, serving as deputy mayor in the same year and serving as mayor between 2001 and 2006. During her time as Mayor of Kempsey Shire Council she was an active member of the Pacific Highway Taskforce and qualified as an emeritus mayor. Prior to her election to Kempsey Shire Council she served as a councillor on Crookwell Shire Council. Councillor Hayes was elected as an A Division representative to the Shires Association executive in 2005. She was elected as vice-president (junior) in 2009 and re-elected to that position in 2011. Her interest in and commitment to rural and regional New South Wales communities was undeniable, and her energy and achievements were commendable.

Janet's achievements include being one of two New South Wales executive members on the National Sea Change Taskforce, a member of the Mid North Coast Regional Development Board and an administrator of the Kempsey Showground Trust. She was chair of the board of Community Housing Mid North Coast and a member of the Natural Resources Advisory Council, providing advice to government on sustainable natural resource management. She was also on the Regional Communities Consultative Committee, making recommendations to the State Government about ways in which the Government and rural and regional communities could work together. She was also a member of the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council, advising the Minister for the Environment on a range of topics. On behalf of all members, I offer our condolences to Janet's family and acknowledge her wonderful contribution to her community over such an extended period.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [3.12 p.m.]: On behalf of Opposition members I convey our condolences to the family of Janet Hayes, who passed away last Thursday. I was lucky enough to meet and work with Janet in my capacity as Minister for Local Government. She was an incredibly supportive woman. I will never forget the kindness that she showed to me or her advice. She was full of colour and was a vibrant, vital person who was passionate and proud of her area. Her passing is a great loss to us all, particularly to those who live in the Macleay Valley—an area that she loved and was so passionate about. She did everything she could do to ensure that area flourished.

Janet was a committed and natural mentor to other women and she was an extremely committed local government member. The former Director General of Local Government, Gary Payne, who was shocked by Janet's passing, said, "She's exactly the type of person you want in local government." As we know, Janet served on Kempsey Shire Council. She believed that local governments are at their best when they are serving their local communities and bringing their communities together. Janet was an instrumental force in strengthening the mid North Coast group of councils. As we have heard, she was a division representative. She was focused on economic development and on preserving the environment for the enjoyment of future generations.

Janet was passionate about public education and about disability services. Janet was also an advocate for organ donation and of course—in true Janet style—she donated her organs to help others. Janet will be remembered for her work in restoring the Kempsey Showground. It was a significant project, which included refurbishing the Jubilee Hall, and restoring and extending other housing for use by Meals on Wheels. Janet is survived by her four children, Tom, Amy, Liz and Jack. I am very sorry for their loss and am grateful their mother touched my life.

COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY**Reference**

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I inform the House that in accordance with Standing Order 299 (1) the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the inclusion of donor details on the register of births, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report**

Dr Geoff Lee, on behalf of the Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 6/55", dated 18 October 2011 together with minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Committee No. 5 of 2011.

Report ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Geoff Lee.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND REGULATION**Reference**

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I inform the House that in accordance with Standing Order 299 (1) the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Regulation had resolved to conduct an inquiry into the regulation of domestic waste water, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

PETITIONS

The Clerk announced that the following petition signed by more than 500 persons was lodged for presentation:

Pittwater Fishing

Petition requesting the Government buy out commercial fishing operators within the Pittwater to help to ensure a sustainable future for this invaluable natural asset, received from **Mr Rob Stokes**.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**Central Coast Health Services**

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [3.16 p.m.]: My motion should be accorded priority because health services on the Central Coast under those opposite were underfunded, run down or simply closed down in an abrogation of duty by those in charge—not least of which was the then Minister for Health, Minister for the Central Coast, and Central Coast resident, John Della Bosca. This Government, on the other hand, is getting on with the job of improving health services on the Central Coast. We are delivering on our election commitments and investing in health infrastructure to draw greater Commonwealth funding. My motion should be accorded priority if for no other reason than the history of those opposite.

I remind those opposite of the Woy Woy rehabilitation unit—an integral part of the Woy Woy Hospital complex—that Labor arbitrarily closed more than three years ago without consultation of any kind with the local community, which had helped partially fund it, or with staff or patients. This was in a region with a rapidly aging population. The then Minister for Health, John Della Bosca, closed it down and told those affected by its closure that they would have to catch buses to Wyong for their rehabilitation. Approximately 18.2 per cent of the population of the Central Coast is aged 65 plus.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting across the table. The member for Gosford has the call.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: That figure is 32 per cent higher than the State average. But down on the beautiful peninsula around Woy Woy, 33 per cent of the population is aged 65 or older.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The member's job is to establish priority, but he is debating the point. I ask you to bring him back to the leave of the bill.

The SPEAKER: Order! It has been practice and procedure to refer to the motion while establishing priority. I accept that. The member has the call.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: As I was saying, more than 20 per cent of the population of the Woy Woy peninsula is over 65 years of age. That is approximately 115 per cent above the State average. How does one tell grandma that she will have to travel 40 kilometres on a bus to Wyong for treatment?

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The member for Gosford is flouting your ruling. He should state why his motion should have priority.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the member knows that, but it is impossible to argue priority without referring to the motion. The member for Gosford has the call. I remind him that he should argue why his motion should have priority.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: To know where you are going you have to know where you have been. That mob does not want to know where it has been. It does not want to know about the past 16 years. It does not want to know about the Woy Woy Hospital rehabilitation unit, which dealt with its last patient in December 2008, despite an internal report published in May 2007 recommending that the bed numbers be not just increased but doubled. It is no wonder the electorate reacted so strongly in March to the sheer arrogance with which they were treated over vital services for the peninsula community on the Central Coast. I could refer to many other decisions taken by those opposite that demonstrated the same degree of arrogance and that adversely affected our Central Coast communities, but I will refrain from doing so and concentrate on why my motion should be accord priority.

As a result of that infamous decision, the Woy Woy Public Hospital Alliance was born, a core group of 25 people who had a regular attendance of more than 50 at its monthly meetings for three years. It was a diverse and determined group that would not let its vital rehab services be taken away without putting up a fight. The alliance approached me and the former shadow Minister for Health and after listening to their story the current Minister for Health committed to reopening the Woy Woy rehabilitation unit and to an incoming O'Farrell Government spending \$5 million to bring it about. This year's budget allocated \$500,000 to commence that process. Did anyone from the former Labor Government give those people a hearing three years ago? No, they did not. What were they told? They were told to "get over it". When they did not remain silent they were told by the former local member, Marie Andrews— [*Time expired.*]

Western Sydney Infrastructure

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.21 p.m.]: My motion deserves priority because it is time to judge the Premier on his record as Minister for Western Sydney. Before the election Barry O'Farrell wooed and dazzled us in western Sydney like David Copperfield. Just like a magician casting wondrous spells, he promised investment in infrastructure, roads, hospitals, commuter car parks and new express trains. It was only after the election that we discovered those promises were drenched in caveats and fine print. Like David Copperfield, this Premier turned out to be the master of illusion. We discovered, like a bolt from the blue, that the Penrith office of NSW Industrial Relations is set to close. The Granville, Cabramatta and Blaxland commuter car parks have been postponed to the never-never. The Fairfield bus station and transport interchange, the Parramatta arts precinct and the Gipps Street recreational facility in Mulgoa, all of which were promised by the Coalition in opposition, were treated like an embarrassing smell in the lift once the Coalition was in government.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order—

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

Mr Chris Hartcher: The Leader of the Opposition is now going into the Premier's election commitments and promises. His responsibility is to show why his motion should have priority over the motion of the member for Gosford. He is not addressing that issue and I ask you to call on him to do so.

The SPEAKER: Order! As I said before, it is permissible for the Leader of the Opposition to make passing reference to his motion, but he should argue for priority. So far the Leader of the Opposition has not done that.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I know the member for Terrigal is smarting after his 25-minute shellacking on Alan Jones's program this morning, but it is not going to help. A \$2 billion funding offer for the Parramatta to Epping rail link was thrown back at the Federal Government. It was a roads investment that attracted splashy headlines, but what did we find after the member for Manly handed down his budget? There is \$200 million less this year for roads funding in western Sydney. No start will be made on the M4 East and there is an insulting bit of loose change for Blacktown-Mount Druitt Hospital. Meanwhile, at Nepean—

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: It is the same point of order. You called on the Leader of the Opposition to demonstrate priority. He is again going into the substance of the motion. That will be his speech if his motion is accorded priority.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to at least mention issues in support of priority.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I am simply highlighting all those issues that I will raise if my motion is accorded priority.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition must argue for priority as well.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: There are so many issues that this Government promised and has not delivered, which is why my motion should be accorded priority. Then we can give some detail about each and every one of the promises that were made and that have been neglected by this Government. That is why this deserves motion priority. The people of western Sydney could never have predicted that when the Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney said all those things and promised transparency, honesty, integrity and accountability, so many of those promises would have just disappeared within seven months. That is why this motion deserves priority. It deserves priority because this Premier has decided western Sydney is the dumping ground, whether it is for toxic waste, the Orica spill or 50 per cent of the population growth. It is all going to western Sydney.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: This is a very spirited attack on the Premier. It goes down well in the constituency of the Leader of the Opposition in western Sydney but it does not address the issue before the House of demonstrating why his motion should have priority. He is simply talking about the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is failing to argue priority.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The motion is clear. It calls on the Government to support western Sydney. Each of those points I sought to highlight is a demonstration of where that support is sadly lacking from this Government and the so-called Minister for Western Sydney. The Premier is dumping 50 per cent of new housing growth on the greenfields sites of western Sydney but we are not seeing any moves whatsoever to deal with population growth in Ku-ring-gai. In fact, the Premier has decided to dump them in western Sydney—*[Time expired.]*

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 61

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

Noes, 22

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

Pair

Mr Provost

Ms Hornery

Question resolved in the affirmative.**CENTRAL COAST HEALTH SERVICES****Motion Accorded Priority****Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN** (Gosford) [3.34 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes that the Government is getting on with the job of improving health services on the Central Coast.

I am delighted to inform the House of the progress that this O'Farrell-led Government has made in health services on the Central Coast in just a short period of time. Not only will the rehabilitation unit at Woy Woy reopen but the Government has also secured—through the Council of Australian Governments, in cooperation with the Commonwealth Minister for Health Ageing—additional Federal Government funding that will result in an additional 20 sub-acute beds at Woy Woy Hospital. As well as the \$5 million to reopen the rehabilitation unit at Woy Woy Hospital, there is \$9 million to establish 20 rehabilitation and palliative care beds, and an additional \$12.7 million for recurrent costs until 2013-14. The Central Coast suffered 16 years of neglect under the previous Government. The O'Farrell Government is committed to rebuilding our health services and infrastructure to give the community what it deserves. But it will take time.

Despite the enormous black hole in the State's finances, the O'Farrell Government has delivered substantial increases in health spending in this year's budget—up by \$950 million over the past year, and an unprecedented \$4.7 billion in health capital works programs over the next four years. This represents a 50 per cent increase in spending on Central Coast health services over the previous four years. The Government is turning the sod to commence the building of our regional cancer care centre at Gosford. This is a \$38 million jointly funded facility. It will be equipped with two linear accelerators, to service up to 800 presentations for treatment each year. A third bunker, for future expansion, is also planned. For the first time, people on the Central Coast will have access to public oncology and radiotherapy services in Gosford and will not have to travel to Sydney or Newcastle.

This Government has allocated half a million dollars in this year's budget to upgrade Wyong Hospital's emergency department, as part of a \$2 million spend. In addition, Gosford Hospital will receive two special care nursery cots, at a cost of \$800,000, as part of the improvement of access to the statewide neonatal intensive care and special care network. This network provides care for the sickest of babies requiring intensive care or special care through nurseries that support babies that no longer require neonatal intensive care but are still too unwell to go home. Let us not forget the additional 51 nurses, at a cost of \$3.4 million, for the Central Coast Local Health District, including two senior clinical nurse-midwifery educators and specialists to support nurses caring for their patients.

This also is part of the \$56 million statewide funding to maintain 16 acute care beds at Gosford. And \$800,000 will be allocated to increase the number of planned surgical procedures and improve waiting times for the people of Gosford, on the Central Coast. In coming years we will continue to work with the Central Coast Health District Board to secure Federal funding for these projects, which to date have benefited Gosford and Woy Woy hospitals—but I am sure there is more to come. In addition, this year's budget allocated \$3.1 million for 10 additional acute care beds at Wyong Hospital. In summary, the O'Farrell Government is working to tackle

the challenges on the Central Coast, with Woy Woy rehabilitation services to be reinstated within two years—having lost this facility for senior citizens for three years. This is very important because the primary focus of Woy Woy rehabilitation services was rehabilitating the elderly.

Within my community residents who are more than 65 years of age comprise 115 per cent of the State average. It was difficult for them to be told by the previous Government to hop on a bus and travel 40 kilometres. Most distressing for them was that the member at the time, Marie Andrews, and the Labor Party candidate in waiting at the election said, "It will never happen." Guess what? Wrong; it is happening and in two years we will have our rehabilitation services back in Woy Woy. I give credit to the Commonwealth Government for providing funds. However, the Barry O'Farrell-led State Government committed the money to the rehabilitation services that brought the Council of Australian Governments funding on board. The massive investment in health infrastructure will also draw more Commonwealth funding. We have delivered our commitments in the first budget. I commend the motion to the House.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind members, particularly the member for Monaro, that eight of them are on three calls to order, and six of them are still in the Chamber.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [3.41 p.m.]: People believe what they see rather than what politicians say. In a State of six million people, six people are listening to this self-congratulatory motion. If those watching remember one thing from today, I want them to remember the phrase "one in five" because one in five from the graduating year of the University of Western Sydney next year will choose to become interns on the Central Coast. This is an extraordinary achievement for the Central Coast because when these young doctors graduate they probably will spend their careers on the Central Coast because of what already is there, not because of the promise of any politician.

The last time I was at Gosford I met with the Director of Emergency, Dr Kate Porges, one of the true leaders of medicine in this State. She had an urgent staffing crisis for the following weekend. Those days will disappear as the Central Coast becomes a magnet for young locally trained doctors who want to work in that area. The days of medical workforce shortages that have dogged medical care on the Central Coast one day will come to an end; and how good will that be. The cancer care centre with the radiotherapy bunkers is a wonderful achievement. Of the \$38 million provided for it, \$28 million came from Nicola Roxon's Federal Government and \$10 million was committed by the Labor Government, which has been confirmed by this Government.

The budget for Gosford medical services has increased each year since 2004 from \$127 million to \$216 million. Gosford has undergone extensive funding enhancements over the past 10 years: \$47 million in July 1999, \$100 million in 2005 and 2006, and \$11 million in 2009. That is an extraordinary amount of money the previous Government provided to Gosford Hospital. During that time medical staffing numbers increased from 200 to nearly 250. This is just as well because emergency department presentations are going through the roof from 45,000 to 55,000 a year. Gosford will be the leading hospital for Central Coast medical care for many years. The future workforce shortages will disappear. It truly is a wonderful hospital.

What of the promises from those opposite: the 50 beds and the 25 nurses mentioned in previous speeches on this topic? I am sure another Government member will refer to this matter shortly. Gosford has approximately 1,000 nurses and Wyong has 500. The addition of another 25 is welcome, but it will not be the enormous increase as promised by those opposite. Wyong is truly a hospital for the future. The budget increased from \$40 million in 2004 to \$80 million in 2010. Its emergency department presentations also are high, increasing from 41,000 to 54,000, making Wyong nearly one of the busiest emergency departments in the State and certainly the busiest for a hospital its size.

One of the major determinants of emergency department presentations at Wyong is the shortage of general practitioners in the area, which I hope improves over the next few years. Wyong has a world-leading paediatric ambulatory care service run by Dr Susan Piper, who is on the board of the local health district. This service receives visitors from all over the world because it is truly an amazing service that allows children to be treated rapidly and promptly at home. The medical assessment unit has 20 beds and I note the \$2 million commitment for the emergency medical unit, of which \$500,000 is being spent. For a 10-bed unit, it is not a lot. I ask the member for Gosford in his reply to guarantee that no cuts will be made to the medical assessment unit to pay for an enhancement in the emergency medical unit.

Wyong Hospital has a good intensive care unit and has had extensive amounts of money spent on it: \$22 million in 1988, \$10 million in 2004, \$66 million for a complete redevelopment in 2005 and a further

\$15 million redevelopment in 2007. It also had a significant mental health enhancement in 2004. Woy Woy Hospital provides high-quality care. Everybody should visit the facility as it has an inspirational group of nursing and medical staff who practise, clearly, high quality slow-stream care but also high-standard palliative care. The aged care assessment unit at Woy Woy is modern and impressive. I look forward to the \$5 million that members opposite have allocated to that unit, but it is not recurrent funding. I ask those opposite to guarantee that after 2013-14 the budget will have recurrent funding for the Woy Woy rehabilitation unit and also confirm from the member for Wyong that the Wyong unit will not be downgraded to pay for enhanced beds at Woy Woy.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! If the member for Wyong continues to interject, he will be ejected from the Chamber.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The member for Gosford said that in two years it will be back. That makes it the middle of 2013. I very much look forward to being in Woy Woy on 26 October 2013 for a coffee at the wonderful kiosk run by the volunteers of Woy Woy to share a coffee and croissant.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [3.48 p.m.]: Opposition members seem to have amnesia when it comes to Central Coast medical and health issues. In November 2008 the Woy Woy rehabilitation ward was closed by health Minister John Della Bosca. Despite an internal report recommending bed numbers be increased, the Minister closed it. I note the interjection of the big gun, the member for Cessnock, who will speak next in this debate. When the member for Gosford made mention of that he said, "Why not catch a bus to Gosford?" He knows that people cannot catch a bus to Gosford because there is no rehabilitation centre at Gosford. Perhaps the member should do some research before he speaks in this Chamber about Central Coast issues. I do not understand why the shadow Minister for the Central Coast does not address this issue.

Who is the Central Coast shadow Minister? Apparently the Opposition has one but he is never in the House. When one talks about Labor's failures in health, one has to scratch one's head as there were eight Ministers in 16 years. The first was Minister Refshauge who lasted four years. Minister Knowles served for nearly four years, from 1999 to 2003. Minister Iemma served for two years and Minister Hatzistergos served for two years. Reba Meagher lasted one year, Mr Della Bosca lasted one year and then in 2009 the old hat, Mr Hatzistergos, lasted for less than one year. We finished with Minister Tebbutt who served for two years.

The Labor Party does not like to be reminded of its failures. I refer to an advertisement that appeared in the papers this week in which Opposition members could not even spell. I was taught "i" before "e" except after "c", but apparently the Labor Party makes up its own rules when it comes to spelling. The Labor Party does not like to review the past 16 years. This decision was made in North Sydney; it was never made for Central Coast patients. Budget targets rather than patient care were the priority under the former Labor Government, but before scrapping the Central Coast Health Board in 2004 one-third of the board members were Labor friends, affiliates and members. One thing to which I refer is the shadow Minister's Facebook page. Let us have a look at it. He says he does a lot for the coast but I note the Wyong whinger, David Harris, as stating:

They are advertising for a NSW manager? They want someone with PR contacts which I have and contacts in Hospitals and the medical profession which I don't have!

Mr Darren Webber: It doesn't matter.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: It does not matter at all. The shadow Minister, Dr Andrew McDonald, then said:

I can give you a list of contacts if you get the gig.

David Harris replied:

Would you be a referee?

The shadow Minister, Dr Andrew McDonald, said:

It will be a long four years—you aren't missing much. How are you?

David Harris replied:

Bored and can't get my mind out of local member mode!

Dr Andrew McDonald said:

Write me some questions about Central Coast issues.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 76. This is enthralling stuff. I would love to have a beer with the member.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order is that it has nothing to do with the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. The motion states "improving health services on the Central Coast".

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: I am glad that the member said it was entertaining stuff because I could keep going.

Mr Michael Daley: No, I said it was enthralling.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: I am glad I am entertaining the member for Maroubra. Interjections from members opposite are an attempt to slow me down but I will keep going. The Central Coast needs to improve its health services. It has a rapidly ageing population which is predicted to increase by nearly 100,000 people over the next 25 years. The Central Coast also faces issues relating to cancer. It is good to see that the new cancer centre will be built. I note that a 17,000 person petition was presented by the Minister for the Central Coast. I look forward to ongoing improvements to Central Coast health issues. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [3.53 p.m.]: I should be the Minister for the Central Coast as I care a little more about the Central Coast than members opposite.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Government members have had an opportunity to participate in the debate. The member for Cessnock has the call.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: In all fairness to the member for The Entrance, I had not realised that his time had expired; I was dozing while he was talking. I appreciate the fact that the member had an opportunity to finish whatever he was saying. I thank the member for The Entrance for giving me a history lesson on former Labor Ministers. As I am not as familiar with the history of Labor Ministers as the member for The Entrance, I will keep a copy of *Hansard* for today. I struggled to connect that history lesson with the priority motion that was moved by the member for Gosford in the following terms:

That this House notes that the Government is getting on with the job of improving health services on the Central Coast.

The words "getting on with the job" suggest to me going forward. We listened to verbiage that has taken us back 16 years.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for The Entrance has had his opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: As we debated this matter on three other occasions I had to duck upstairs to get out my old speech.

Mr Chris Spence: That is because you do not have any new material.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: The same could be said about this priority motion. Those opposite keep leading with their chins so we will take them on the journey one more time. I will start with Gosford because I vividly recall the first time Opposition members mentioned to the member for Gosford that the former Government spent \$200 million on Gosford hospital. The member for Gosford said, "Where?" I responded and said, "In 1999 the former Government allocated \$46.7 million for the redevelopment of that hospital. In 2005 it

spent \$90 million on redeveloping levels five and six, and in June 2009 it spent \$11.5 million on refurbishing paediatrics. The former Government also allocated \$38.6 for the construction of the regional cancer centre." That is where the money was spent.

Mr Chris Spence: That is not Woy Woy rehabilitation centre.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for The Entrance because I am heading there.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): The member is waiting for the bus.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: With reference to the remarks that were made about the bus, there is no doubt that my knowledge of geography on the Central Coast is exceeded by none. I was quickly made aware of the fact that Woy Woy was closer to Gosford than Wyong, but an expanded explanation of that issue helped to clarify the matter. Members opposite are saying, "Go to Wyong" before we come back to Woy Woy. The challenge is out there. The former Government spent \$114 million on Wyong Hospital and this Government is talking about spending \$3 million. Even if the member for Wyong were a member of Parliament for 33 years he would not achieve what the Labor Government achieved.

When the member for Wyong goes back to the polls he must explain to the voting public all the things for which they have voted over the past 16 years. The community made its decision when it voted in March this year. From this point forward the Government will be judged on its performance. Earlier the member for Gosford referred to this Government's allocation of \$5 million in this area. However, he would have to be in government in the vicinity of 40 years to achieve the equivalent of the \$200 million that was spent by the former Labor Government on hospitals. Let me come back to Woy Woy which is the crux of this conversation. I say to the member for Gosford—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wyong will remain silent.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: The fact that the member for Gosford moved this priority motion and referred to the Government's investment in health services in this area is terrific and is a compliment to the former Government. However, he cannot do that without acknowledging the \$200 million that was spent by the former Labor Government. He cannot say that nothing has been done when this Government allocated only \$500,000—*[Time expired.]*

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [3.58 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions of the member for Cessnock and the member for The Entrance. For the benefit of members who may be unaware, the member for Macquarie Fields was the Parliamentary Secretary for Health in the previous Government. The member, in his contribution, referred back only six or seven years. For the past 16 years the Labor Government needed to concentrate on the Central Coast. Rather than selectively look at concerns, the Opposition needs to look at the whole picture because that is what the people on the Central Coast did last March when they voted for a change of government so that their needs would be met.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Gosford is doing well without any help.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: On 26 October 2013 the member for Macquarie Fields will visit the hospital and have a cup of coffee. The hospital auxiliary ladies do a lovely coffee; they are a great bunch of people. They are part of the community that raised funds towards the construction of the rehabilitation unit many years ago. They too were concerned that they lost the rehabilitation unit. I suggest the member take a taster with him because following the actions of the previous Government he may not want to accept a cup of coffee from them. The member for Cessnock cares so much about the Central Coast that he openly admitted to having a bit of a snooze during debate on this motion. He cares so much about the Central Coast that he had a snooze before he spoke in debate on the motion.

I raise some issues relating to the Government's commitments to the Central Coast. The member for The Entrance touched lightly on the issue of our rapidly ageing population. In the next 20 years the 65 years and over age group will grow by approximately 63 per cent and the 75 years and over age group will grow by 32 per cent. That means an extra 36,000 people on the Central Coast in an age bracket that will need greater health care. The issue of cancer was raised during the debate. I congratulated the Federal Government on taking

the lead in the Council of Australian Governments funding for Woy Woy Hospital after an O'Farrell-led Coalition Government lit the spark with the Woy Woy rehabilitation unit. The incidence of cancer is significantly higher on the Central Coast than it is for the whole of New South Wales.

The Central Coast has over 2,000 new cases of cancer each year and about 800 deaths. Similar to the pattern for New South Wales as a whole, the rate of new cancers is increasing on the Central Coast. The death rate is decreasing, which has resulted in an increasing number of people living with cancer. The prevalence of cancer cases on the Central Coast results in 2,000 cases diagnosed every year. Commonly diagnosed cancers on the Central Coast include prostate, melanoma, breast and lung. The Central Coast also has escalating rates of chronic disease with significantly high rates of lung disease for people aged 65-plus, resulting in approximately 1,000 hospitalisations each year over and above the New South Wales rate.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: The O'Farrell Government is working to tackle the challenges by reopening the Woy Woy rehabilitation unit and making a massive investment in our health infrastructure to draw more Commonwealth funding than New South Wales Labor ever could. We have delivered on our commitments in our first budget to introduce legislation to enable the establishment of local health district boards, which will provide locally focused management and return decision-making closer to patients. The provision of Central Coast health services is heading in the right direction. Why is the shadow Minister for the Central Coast not in the House during debate on Central Coast issues? One has to question whether those opposite have any commitment to the Central Coast. They have given us away. No, they gave us away for the past 16 years. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Withdrawal of Business

Government Business item No. 5 in the Order of Precedence withdrawn by Mr George Souris.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT (3 STRIKES) BILL 2011 (NO 2)

Bill introduced on motion by Mr George Souris.

Agreement in Principle

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [4.06 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The introduction of a three strikes and you're out scheme is a key election commitment of the New South Wales Liberal and Nationals Government. On 22 June 2011 the Liquor Amendment (3 Strikes) Bill 2011 was introduced into Parliament. The draft bill was introduced with the express commitment that the liquor industry would be consulted and would have an opportunity to make submissions about this important legislation. A range of submissions were received and the Government has carefully considered them to ensure this policy targets rogue operators and does not present an adverse impact on responsible licensees. Three strikes can result in severe penalties. So it is paramount that the scheme operates fairly and effectively to deliver maximum benefits to communities where licensed venues are causing unacceptable impacts.

The bill now before the House introduces a revised three strikes scheme. The scheme addresses industry concerns while maintaining a robust system which targets repeat offenders. The first key feature of the scheme is that strikes may be incurred only where there is a conviction for a prescribed serious offence. A conviction will include circumstances where a penalty infringement notice relating to such an offence is paid. However, strikes will not be incurred where a prescribed offence is proven but no conviction is recorded by the

courts. This change addresses the most serious concern expressed about the original draft bill that strikes could result from unproven allegations. Under the revised scheme a strike can be incurred following a conviction for a single serious offence rather than requiring multiple offences, as was previously proposed.

Only the most serious offences under the Liquor Act are captured under the revised scheme. These offences are prescribed in the bill and include: permitting intoxication on licensed premises; permitting indecent, violent or quarrelsome conduct on licensed premises; selling or supplying alcohol to an intoxicated person or a minor; allowing alcohol to be sold or supplied to a minor on licensed premises; permitting the use or sale of substances which a licensee or manager suspects are illicit drugs; not complying with a direction issued by the director general to a licensee or staff; selling or supplying alcohol outside authorised trading hours; non-compliance with a closure order issued under the Liquor Act to prevent or reduce a significant risk to the public interest where there are serious breaches of the Act; and a breach of key liquor licence conditions applying to violent venues listed in schedule 4 of the Liquor Act or conditions imposed on a venue following the imposition of a strike.

The defendant for these offences must be the licensee or the approved manager. It is important to note that under section 149 of the Liquor Act a licensee and approved manager can be liable for liquor-related offences committed by their employees or agents. It is the licensee or approved manager who carries the responsibility for the management practices of the venue. To ensure that this scheme is effective and targeted towards those responsible, the prescribed offences are directed towards the manager or licensee. Offences committed within a 24-hour period will be counted as one single offence under the scheme. For example, if three underage drinkers are caught on the licensed premises at the same time that will potentially count as one strike.

The list of offences in the scheme differs from that included in the original bill in that it limits breach of condition offences under schedule 4 of the Liquor Act that are to be used as triggers for strikes. Only significant conditions are captured—including drink restrictions, lockouts, prohibition on the use of glass containers, the cessation of liquor sales prior to closure, and security measures—rather than less significant conditions involving the maintenance of incident registers and the distribution of free water.

A new offence under the Liquor Act requiring licensees to comply with a notice restricting or prohibiting an activity that encourages the misuse or abuse of alcohol is also included in the scheme. This new offence is based on an existing ground for disciplinary action under the Act but will allow action to be taken quickly where irresponsible conduct encourages the misuse of alcohol. It will further reinforce the responsible service of alcohol principles of the liquor laws. Non-compliance with a notice issued by the director general will be an offence unless the licensee has a reasonable excuse. This involves a similar principle to that applying to the existing arrangements regarding directions issued under section 75 of the Act.

In developing the list of offences to be captured under the revised scheme care has been taken to ensure that where unauthorised actions of staff result in an offence a defence is available for the licensee or approved manager where appropriate. It is not considered necessary that defences apply for non-alcohol related offences as under the existing law the licensee is not responsible for the actions of staff in circumstances where the offence is not liquor-related. For other offences captured under the scheme common law defences are considered sufficient.

Under the revised three strikes scheme a first strike will be an automatic outcome of a conviction for a serious offence. This is similar in principle to the provision in the original bill and it ensures that a single conviction for a serious offence is captured and the venue is subject to the strictures of the scheme. However, the decision that a second strike should be incurred will always be discretionary, in contrast with the provisions of the original bill where a second strike was automatic in some circumstances and discretionary in others. The revised scheme is less complex and will help to ensure that licensees are aware of the potential for a strike to be incurred through the due process requirements that apply to discretionary decisions, including notification to the licensee and consideration of submissions by the decision-maker.

The decision that a third strike should be incurred will remain discretionary, as was the case under the original bill. The decision-maker will also continue to have the option of considering whether other action should be taken rather than the licensee incurring a third strike. When considering whether a strike should be incurred the decision-maker must have regard to the seriousness of any harm that may have resulted from or been associated with the commission of the offence that triggered the strike process. The types of harm that may be relevant in these circumstances include any harm associated with antisocial or violent behaviour; health

outcomes such as injuries and sickness; disturbance to the quiet and good order of a neighbourhood; minors obtaining or consuming alcohol; costs associated with regulatory health and community infrastructure responses; and the undermining of public confidence in the liquor regulatory system through disregard for the law.

While the bill provides that a strike decision must await a conviction for the relevant offence, the strike itself will take effect on the date that the incident underpinning the strike occurred, as was proposed in the original bill. This will ensure that a licensee is put on notice that they must improve their performance and take remedial management action immediately a penalty infringement notice or a court attendance notice is issued as there will be the potential for a strike to be incurred from the offence date if a conviction results. That is a very important feature of the scheme as it will require licensees and managers to take immediate action to minimise the risk of alcohol-related harm once a penalty infringement notice is issued for a prescribed offence, irrespective of the legal outcome. It will ensure an immediate benefit to the community through improved alcohol management practices.

Where a conviction is recorded and a strike is incurred the licensee will be on a path which could lead to the ultimate sanction of licence cancellation and disqualification. It is clearly in the licensee's best interests to ensure that action they take is ongoing and effective. Under the revised scheme there will be a three-year window from the date of the incident relating to the first strike during which additional incidents could lead to a second and third strike. It does not matter when the conviction itself occurs as long as the incident relied upon for the second or third strike occurs within this three-year period. While a strike can be incurred immediately following a conviction, the sanctions accompanying a strike will be suspended while any appeal processes relating to the conviction are completed.

This ensures that the three strikes scheme strikes a fair balance between respecting a proper legal process and ensuring that licensees and managers remain accountable for their practices while that legal process occurs. If there are circumstances where a conviction is overturned on appeal and a strike has already been incurred the strike will cease to have effect. If it is necessary to take action to address behaviour under the licence during the appeal period existing powers under the Liquor Act to impose conditions can be utilised. Where a licensee or manager attempts to move from one premises to another after incurring two strikes in an attempt to avoid a third, their fitness to be an approved licensee or manager can be reconsidered under existing provisions of the law.

Industry has raised concerns that business and premises owners in addition to licensees need to be aware of a strike being incurred. That is important as a strike and its associated conditions may impact on business contracts and leasing arrangements. A number of measures in the revised scheme will address this issue. The discretionary nature of most decisions will mean that due process is followed. The bill provides that notice of a proposal to incur second and third strikes is to be provided by the decision-maker to interested persons recorded on official licence records and to premises owners, thereby allowing them to make submissions. Under the bill a condition can be also imposed on a liquor licence requiring a licensee to notify business and premises owners of strikes. It is proposed that the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing will maintain a public register of strikes.

The revised three strikes scheme continues to include escalating penalties and restrictions that can be imposed on a liquor licence following the imposition of a strike. To address industry concerns that conditions may not be relative to the offence which led to a strike, the bill requires that the director general be satisfied that a condition is a reasonable response to the behaviour that led to a strike being incurred. Conditions imposed on a licence as a consequence of a strike will continue indefinitely or until varied or revoked. This can occur separately or as a consequence of the imposition of a further strike. Additionally, the revised scheme provides further incentives for improved management practices with the automatic extinguishment of a strike at the expiration of a three-year period, thereby allowing for a reduction in the number of strikes in circumstances where further offences are not committed.

The impact of trading hour restrictions proposed in the original bill was of concern to industry, which noted that the restrictions were not consistent with existing powers to reduce trading hours available under the neighbourhood disturbance provisions of the Liquor Act. While the revised scheme continues to include powers to limit liquor trading hours where two strikes are in force, those powers have been amended so they are consistent with the neighbourhood disturbance complaint powers. The option of prohibiting liquor sales prior to venue closure will also continue to be available as an outcome of a second strike under the bill.

The three strikes scheme reflects the principle of escalating penalties to target repeat offenders. The revised three strikes scheme provides for the imposition of conditions and restrictions where one strike has been incurred, such as a requirement for a plan of management or an incident register; a prohibition on the use of glass and breakable plastic containers; the engagement of dedicated staff to promote responsible service of alcohol; and a requirement that members of the governing body of a registered club undertake training. The bill also provides for more significant conditions and restrictions to be imposed on a liquor licence where two strikes have been incurred, including additional security measures; drink restrictions targeting high-strength and rapid consumption drinks; lockouts, in which patrons cannot be admitted after a certain hour; a requirement to cease serving alcohol prior to venue closure; a prohibition on the conduct of types of entertainment; restrictions on who may be appointed as manager of the premises; and reductions to liquor trading hours before 10.00 a.m. and after 11.00 p.m.

The condition-imposing powers in this bill do not limit the power of regulators to impose conditions under any other provision of the Liquor Act. Third strike outcomes are discretionary under the revised three strikes scheme in this bill. For licences other than registered clubs the ultimate sanction available under this bill where a third strike is incurred is the cancellation of a liquor licence. Where a licence is cancelled any person who was the business owner under the cancelled licence at the time the third strike was incurred and any close associate of any such business owner is disqualified from being granted a licence in respect of the same premises for up to 12 months. A third strike may also result in disqualification of the licensee or manager.

The responsibility of decision-makers under the Liquor Act to have due regard to the need to minimise the harm associated with misuse and abuse of liquor demands that licence cancellation should be seriously considered when three strikes are incurred. However, there may be circumstances where licence cancellation is not the most appropriate outcome—particularly where the licensee, manager or same business operators have not been responsible for all of the offences underpinning strikes. Therefore, to provide a fair system and flexibility to regulators to ensure a measured response to poor behaviour a third strike may instead result in licence suspension for up to 12 months. Further, the bill also provides for an additional option at the third strike stage to impose, vary or revoke any condition on a liquor licence. This power is similar to existing powers in the Liquor Act and will provide added flexibility to enable a licensed premises to continue operating under new management because the original licensee has been disqualified.

This power would not be exercised lightly; the individual circumstances would be considered by the decision-makers. For registered clubs the bill provides that a third strike can result in disqualification of a club secretary, as was proposed in the original bill. The revised scheme also allows for the dismissal of any or all of the club's directors and/or the appointment of an external administrator to the club. These are serious outcomes for a registered club. They result in more equitable action being taken when clubs incur three strikes compared with other types of licensed venues. They will also facilitate effective action to deal with systemic problems at a registered club that have resulted in strikes being incurred and are consistent with existing powers under the disciplinary provisions of the Registered Clubs Act.

The decision that a third strike should be incurred is a very serious matter given the potential consequences. To reflect this the bill provides that this decision will be made by the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority. This is consistent with existing disciplinary powers in the Liquor Act to suspend or cancel a licence and disqualify a licensee which rests with the authority. To reflect the existing hierarchy of decision-making under the Liquor Act the bill provides that decisions to impose conditions following a first or second strike and decisions that a second strike should be incurred will rest with the director general. This is consistent with the original bill.

The bill provides that reviews of a second strike and conditions imposed by the director general following a first or second strike will be dealt with by the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority, rather than the Administrative Decisions Tribunal as was proposed in the original bill. The authority is a specialist high-order decision-making body and it is appropriate that it be tasked with the responsibility of reviewing regulatory decisions made by the director general as it does under the Liquor Act. Reviews of decisions made by the Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority are to be dealt with by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal as is the case for disciplinary decisions made by the authority.

The bill also provides that a "stay" of a decision is an automatic outcome where an application for review of any discretionary decision that a strike be incurred is lodged unless the body conducting the review otherwise directs. This will help to ensure that business viability is not undermined prior to a review of a decision. The bill provides that decisions-makers be required to take into account the range of matters which the

original bill required before a strike is incurred. These include venue size and capacity, any change of manager or licensee, the compliance and schedule 4 history of the licensed venue, and any changes to business practices. The bill provides for guidance to be prescribed in the regulation to assist the director general and the authority in considering how these matters will be taken into account when making a decision. Submissions from the licensee premises and business owners and the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research and the Police Force will also need to be taken into account.

Finally, the bill provides that the three strikes legislation is to be reviewed after four years to determine whether the policy objectives remain valid and whether the terms of the legislation remain appropriate for securing those objectives. The Government's message to the liquor industry from this legislation is that well-run licensed venues that implement effective measures to prevent violence, intoxication, underage drinking and use of illicit drugs will minimise their risk of strikes being incurred. This bill delivers the ultimate sanction to rogue licensees who repeatedly put the safety of patrons and the broader community at risk—loss of licence and disqualification from the industry.

The community should not have to tolerate licensees repeatedly committing serious liquor offences that lead to violence, antisocial behaviour and neighbourhood disturbance. This legislation forces irresponsible licensees to lift their game. As I stated when introducing the original bill, this legislation clearly demonstrates that the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government will implement tough measures to tackle alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour, irresponsible service and consumption of alcohol, and poor management of licensed premises. These issues rightly concern many in the community and this Government is taking real action to address these issues. The three strikes system introduced in this bill will act as a strong deterrent to the small minority of liquor licensees and licensed venues that do the wrong thing. It is an extra and necessary layer of protection for the public. 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 later hour.

REDFERN-WATERLOO AUTHORITY REPEAL BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Brad Hazzard.

Agreement in Principle

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [4.27 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

Recently I introduced legislation into this House to commence the reform of the New South Wales planning system. This included the commitment of the Government to repeal part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. Recently the Government announced a range of further reforms of the planning system that handed responsibility for key planning decisions back to local governments—back to the community—and outlined how truly State-significant development will be assessed into the future. Today I continue this reform process with the introduction of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Repeal Bill. The bill will result in the cessation of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority [RWA], with planning consent for developments on the Redfern-Waterloo sites up to \$10 million being transferred to the City of Sydney, and the strengthening of the capacity of the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority to ensure that the renewal of this important area for Sydney and New South Wales continues into the future.

The Redfern-Waterloo Authority was established in 2004 to implement development and urban renewal strategies to address the long-term problems associated with social disadvantage in the Redfern-Waterloo communities. The Redfern-Waterloo Authority was established with bipartisan support of the major political parties and this Government will continue its commitment to this important area through the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. The Redfern-Waterloo Authority has made some significant achievements over the past six years, with the establishment of positive developments in the area, and the introduction of important employment and human service programs. This has been evidenced with the opening of the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence, the community health facility on Redfern Street and the key commercial developments at Australian Technology Park.

The Aboriginal Employment Program, which was established by the Redfern-Waterloo Authority, has created over 800 employment opportunities for members of the Aboriginal community, and this Government

included in its recent budget financial support for this important program into the future. The Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority was established in December 2010 to lead timely and orderly social and economic development of high-quality urban precincts. This new authority will target nominated strategic locations in the Sydney metropolitan area with the aim of delivering on housing and employment targets, aligning land use with transport infrastructure and ensuring that opportunities from the Government's investment in infrastructure are maximised.

The authority has been developed to capture the positive experience of cooperative urban renewal at Redfern-Waterloo over the past decade for the benefit of other strategic precincts in Sydney. The new authority is a development corporation under the Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act and has broad powers to plan and coordinate urban renewal effort on behalf of government, in consultation with local government and the private sector, and also to deal in land, leverage assets, undertake compulsory acquisition, and to enter into partnerships with the private sector and local and national governments.

The Redfern-Waterloo Authority Repeal Bill 2011 will repeal the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act 2004 and dissolve the Redfern-Waterloo Authority. The bill will transfer all the assets, rights and liabilities of the old Redfern-Waterloo Authority, along with certain functions of that authority, to the new Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. The bill inserts a new part 4 into schedule 6, savings, transitional and other provisions, of the Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act 1974 to ensure that the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority is able to take over, as necessary, the role and functions of the abolished Redfern-Waterloo Authority.

For example, one of the assets being transferred to the new authority is the subsidiary company Australian Technology Park Sydney Limited [ATPSL], and clause 17 will ensure that the new authority has such functions as are necessary or convenient for the purposes of managing that subsidiary. However, those functions do not include selling or disposing of an interest in the company, or approving of another person becoming a member of Australian Technology Park Sydney Limited. The clause will also enable Australian Technology Park Sydney Limited to continue to exercise any function that it could exercise immediately before the repeal of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act 2004.

The ongoing development of the Australian Technology Park will be an important part of the future renewal in the Redfern-Waterloo area and therefore it is important that the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority, which has responsibility for the Redfern-Waterloo precinct, is able to utilise this important asset for this purpose. I am pleased to announce that the repealing of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act also brings to an end the "switching off" of the Heritage Act provisions within the Redfern-Waterloo area. The unique heritage of Redfern and Waterloo needs to be respected and preserved, especially where it is of State significance. The bill does not seek to transition or preserve this "switching off" mechanism, a move which should be welcomed by all.

Since its inception the Redfern-Waterloo Authority has played an important role in planning for the Redfern-Waterloo area. This includes preparing the Redfern-Waterloo Plan, which sets out the strategic vision for the improvement of the area over a 10-year period and makes provision for urban design, human services, employment, development, infrastructure, land use zoning, public land renewal and related functions. The Redfern-Waterloo Authority has worked in close cooperation with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure to ensure the strategic vision for the Redfern-Waterloo area is complemented by appropriate planning controls in environmental planning instruments applying to the land. The Redfern-Waterloo Authority also determines development applications for certain developments in the area, under delegation from the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure.

The authority also manages contributions for affordable housing and other social infrastructure where developers are required to make financial contributions as a condition of their planning approvals. Despite the repeal of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act, these important planning functions will continue to be undertaken. For example, clause 19 of the bill provides for the continuing operation of the Redfern-Waterloo Plan with the authority being specifically charged with implementing the plan. Consistent with the recent reforms to the planning system, including the repeal of part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, steps have been taken to return certain planning decisions to the City of Sydney. For example, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has delegated to the City of Sydney his functions of determining development applications for development under \$10 million in the Redfern-Waterloo area.

Importantly, clause 18 of the bill continues the operation of sections 30 to 32 of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act, which are provisions that require developers to make financial contributions towards affordable

housing and other social infrastructure. Under the new arrangement the City of Sydney will be able to impose conditions on development consents and the contributions will be payable direct to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. The authority will then be responsible for ensuring those contributions are used for the purposes set out in the adopted contributions plans. Together these measures will ensure proper urban renewal planning and development continues to be undertaken for the Redfern-Waterloo area.

Finally, clause 20 will ensure that section 33 of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act 2004 continues to have effect. This provision requires the Aboriginal Housing Company and other relevant representatives of the Aboriginal community to be consulted in relation to the area of land bounded by Eveleigh, Caroline, Louis and Vine Streets in Redfern. This Government is committed to the future development of The Block. Redfern is a spiritual home to the Aboriginal community and The Block is symbolic of both the struggle and optimism for the future of Australia's first people.

The Redfern-Waterloo Authority Repeal Bill is an important step in the ongoing renewal of the Redfern-Waterloo area. Whilst the Redfern-Waterloo Authority is being dissolved, the Government, through this bill, is ensuring the ongoing commitment to the renewal of this important area of Sydney and New South Wales. The bill gives the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority the necessary powers and capability to continue the work initiated by the Redfern-Waterloo Authority, and it will also enable local government to have a greater role, with the transfer of development consent for developments up to \$10 million to the City of Sydney on the Redfern-Waterloo sites. This change reflects the ongoing reforms that this Government has introduced to the New South Wales planning system. I commend the bill to the House.

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

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

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

PAYROLL TAX REBATE SCHEME (DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT) BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [4.36 p.m.]: The Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011 is part of the Stronger Together package of reforms begun in 2006, which heralded a new direction for disability services in New South Wales. Around 4.5 million Australians, or about one-fifth of the population, have a disability. Of these, 760,000 people under 65 years have a severe disability. Given that it is Carers Week, it is important to note that half a million Australians are the primary carers of a person with a disability. Stronger Together is a 10-year plan that was born out of intensive stakeholder consultation. It is an overarching plan for the sector that seeks to tackle a number of areas, including increasing social inclusion for people with a disability, increasing capacity for the sector, moving towards an individualised funding model, and delivering new supported accommodation and respite places, amongst others. The Stronger Together 10-year plan is the largest funding increase for disability services in New South Wales history and the package comprises the most significant investment made.

By the final year of Stronger Together \$5.5 billion will have been invested in disability services. This bill is part of the second phase of Stronger Together announced by the former Government and former Premier Kristina Keneally on the International Day of Persons with Disability on 3 December 2010. It is an important part of the package and it recognises that we have a long way to go in employment for people with a disability. In some areas we have been going backwards. For example, in 1999 the proportion of people with a disability in the Australian Public Service was 4.9 per cent. This figure dropped to 3 per cent in 2009. I ask members to compare this with the figure of 6.8 per cent in 1986. All these figures are too low. The 2009 Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show that people with disabilities had a 53.4 per cent participation rate in the labour force. The figure for those without a disability was 81.5 per cent.

The sobering reality is that, while our country has been going through a period of sustained growth, people with a disability have not shared in the benefits of this growth. Australia has not faced a serious recession

in 20 years but those with a disability have effectively been locked out from sharing in the benefits of this growth, especially in employment participation. This bill seeks to go towards righting those wrongs and increasing employment opportunities for those with a disability. It seeks to close the gap in unemployment between people with a disability and the rest of the community.

This payroll exemption scheme, effective from June 2011, will enable employers to claim a rebate for workers with moderate to high needs. It will provide a \$4,000 payroll tax rebate to those who employ new employees with a disability from 1 January 2012, with the rebate to be made in two instalments: \$2,000 after three months employment and \$2,000 after six months employment. It provides payroll tax exemptions for employers who employ a person with a disability who has been part of the Transition to Work program from 1 January 2011. The bill seeks to uphold Stronger Together's aim of enabling 60 per cent of Transition to Work participants to move into employment or further education by 1 July 2014 and 65 per cent of Transition to Work participants to move into employment or further education by 1 July 2019. Those are the stated aims of Stronger Together.

This bill will move us somewhat towards achieving those aims. I am very pleased that the Stronger Together II package has received bipartisan support from its inception. I thank the Minister for Disability Services, who is in large part responsible for that. It is most important that we work together on this important package and ensure that its aims are met. I know that many people with a disability and those who work in the disability sector welcome this bill and the implementation of the Stronger Together II package. As such, the Opposition is pleased and proud to support the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Treasurer) [4.41 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011. I will make a few comments about this incredibly important scheme. If I were asked which one feature of the budget I am incredibly proud of, this is certainly it. It undoubtedly fulfils a budget commitment to give people with a disability a better chance of securing a job in New South Wales, and the Government is determined to do that. The first budget this Government delivered contained three major pillars. I do not shy away from those; indeed I take pleasure in driving them forward. They are improving services, building infrastructure and protecting the vulnerable. One has to value every public dollar because all those pillars are important, but the third pillar features.

This legislation addresses the third pillar. I would argue that it proves that no political party has a monopoly on compassion. I welcome the Opposition's support for the bill. I acknowledge that the Minister for Disability Services is a strong advocate for this sector. I have not had the opportunity to discuss this bill with every single disability group, but all groups that I have discussed it with are glowing in their praise of someone who understands their concerns and will undergo the trials in achieving these aims. Many individuals in the sector cannot speak highly enough of their belief that someone in government is fighting for them and working tirelessly to improve the opportunities for those with disabilities. This is just part of the work that the Minister is doing not only on this matter but also across his portfolio to make an incredible difference.

I acknowledge the visionary role of the former Government in this scheme and note that the former Premier is in the Chamber. I do not dispute that Government's role. I place on record that Stronger Together was an incredibly important program. Stronger Together II extends that program, but the challenges in funding it were immense. I cannot begin to describe the difficulties that we had in the months after the election to find the money to complete this measure, but we did so. That is one of the strong achievements of the budget. We announced today that the State's triple-A rating was confirmed. That is good news, and the State and the Parliament need to understand the challenges that confronted Government in delivering that outcome. But it is not just about the triple-A rating, about improving services, or about building the infrastructure; it is also about protecting the vulnerable. This is but one of many measures that we should pursue as part of that mantra. I acknowledge that this bill was supported by the shadow Minister. It is not a political issue; importantly, it is a measure supported by both sides of the Parliament.

This bill is part of the Government's five-year \$2 billion funding commitment to complete the Stronger Together program. It is the largest funding commitment to disability services in the history of New South Wales, and I understand it is the largest funding commitment by any government in Australia. I do not want to dwell on record amounts in any shape or form. We are looking for outcomes. The hope of this program is that each year up to 500 people in the disability sector will have a job who otherwise may not have had a job. Realising those sorts of numbers would be an unbelievable achievement. That is the goal that the Minister for Disability Services and the Government hope to achieve. I note the Opposition's support for this initiative.

I put on record that the Government is very proud to bring this initiative forward. I acknowledge the role of the current Minister, and his passion and vision regarding it. I acknowledge also the role of the former Government and former Premier in developing this scheme. This bill will allocate \$8 million over four years to the expanded scheme. We are determined to deliver this outcome for people who are in very difficult circumstances but will have the opportunity to work. This will help enhance their self-esteem and give them the opportunity to participate, as they should, in a better New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY (Heffron) [4.46 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011. I acknowledge the comments already made in this debate. I congratulate the Government on taking forward this commitment made by the previous Government because, as has been pointed out in this debate, this is an issue that should be above politics. It is an issue that goes to the very heart of what it means to be a caring society. Over the past five years in particular New South Wales has set an example for the country on what it means to invest in disability services and what it means to invest in care for the most vulnerable. Indeed, New South Wales has been at the forefront of the States in leading the call for a national disability insurance scheme, which I am confident all members of this House would support. I join the Minister and the shadow Minister in supporting this legislation.

As has been said, the challenges for people with a disability to achieve employment are significant. Some stark statistics put those challenges into perspective. The Transition to Work program aims to help young people with a disability on leaving school to transition into employment. Prior to the introduction of Transition to Work only 6 per cent of school leavers who entered a day program or post-school service eventually made their way into employment. Following the introduction of the Transition to Work program, an evaluation has found that more than 50 per cent of participants are now moving into employment or further education. That is a significant outcome for those young people.

As a former Minister for Disability Services, I had the great honour of meeting many young people who had made that transition through the Transition to Work program. One of the great challenges in getting people with a disability into employment is how to encourage employers to think outside the box, to think more broadly about whom they can employ. If an incentive such as a payroll tax incentive does that, that is a really wonderful thing for the person and our society, it is a good thing for the business and it is certainly worthwhile that this State make that investment in the form of a payroll tax rebate.

I acknowledge the comments of the Treasurer in this debate today. The Government has met its commitment to deliver the \$5 billion payroll tax incentive package that Labor announced: Stronger Together II. I am pleased that on other matters, such as the social impact bonds, the Government is continuing the work we started. All these things, along with a national disability insurance scheme, have the potential to fundamentally change how disability services are funded and delivered, ultimately making our State and country a fairer place—a place of true opportunity for all. The Treasurer makes the point that it is difficult to fund these programs, especially for the Government to meet that \$2 billion commitment. That is a fundamental reality of government. These are expensive programs.

The projection with the demographic of New South Wales as an ageing population and one also in which the proportion of people with a disability is increasing, is a challenge that will only grow. During the global financial crisis the former Labor Government strove to meet all of its commitments under the \$1.3 billion Stronger Together I program. Indeed, throughout the global financial crisis not one dollar of Stronger Together I was touched. We met our commitments. I am incredibly delighted that the O'Farrell Government has been able to meet the commitments of the \$2 billion Stronger Together II package. I am confident that this House will support the bill. I am pleased to lend my name to its support.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [4.51 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011. The bill implements the Government's commitment under Stronger Together II to provide a payroll tax rebate to employers of new employees with a disability. The bill will assist in the employment of people with a disability by establishing a payroll tax rebate scheme that gives employers an incentive to hire employees with a disability. The bill will provide a payroll tax rebate to employers of \$4,000 per employee to be paid in two equal parts: \$2,000 after three months of employment and \$2,000 after six months of employment. An employer who satisfies the eligibility criteria will be able to claim the payroll tax rebate.

Eligibility criteria for the rebate includes that the employee must be a genuinely new employee; the employee must be in the target group under the Disability Services Act 1993 because the person has a disability;

the employee must have completed the Transition to Work Program; the employee must have commenced employment on or after 1 January 2012 and before 1 July 2016, and the employee should work an average of at least 12 hours a week; the wages of the new employee must be liable for payroll tax in New South Wales, either during the period of employment or during a financial year in which the employee is employed; and the work must be performed wholly or mainly in New South Wales.

Employment agents will be able to qualify for rebates in respect of their employees provided they satisfy the criteria. Employers will not be eligible for the rebate if they are exempt from payroll tax—for example, charitable bodies that have no commercial undertakings—or if they receive other rebates such as the rebate for apprentices and trainees under the payroll Tax Act 2007, or rebates paid under the Regional Development Act 2004 or the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Act 2011. State Government departments and non-business statutory authorities are excluded from the rebate scheme because they are largely funded from appropriations from the Consolidated Fund.

Local government authorities are exempt from payroll tax on non-business activities and also are excluded from the scheme. The bill accords with the Government's budgetary commitment to protect the most vulnerable members of the community and to enable jobs growth. People with a disability should be given every assistance possible to be part of the workforce and be given the opportunity to contribute their skills and experience to the benefit of our State's economy. My electorate of Coogee has disability service providers and many constituents with a disability. They will be greatly encouraged by this initiative. In fact, I employ in my electoral office a young person with a disability. He has proven himself to be an incredibly valuable and important part of my team.

I thank the Minister for the incredible amount of work he has put into this legislation and his genuine commitment to the cause of providing disability services. The bill recognises the enormous benefits that both the individual and the community gain from employment, particularly ordinary open employment. The flow-on effects of even three or six months of employment for a person with a significant disability can be far-reaching both socially and economically. This fits with the Government's social policy agenda, which encourages early intervention to promote individual choice and responsibility. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [4.55 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011 and commend the Minister and the Government for its introduction. The bill seeks to underpin the concept of equal employment opportunity by encouraging employers to consider employing people with a disability. Often these workers are not less able than their colleagues without disabilities but, unfortunately, inherent and embedded discrimination still exists in the workplace. The barriers to entry into the workplace by people with a disability are higher as the trend has been historically for unemployment in that sector. This bill is a sensible approach to overcoming the discrimination experienced by workers with a disability and job seekers.

The Transition to Work program has been fundamental in preparing school leavers with disabilities for life in the workplace, and has also acted as a feeder program that sources quality employees to fill job vacancies in various organisations. This bill offers the final step in implementing policy that overcomes discrimination and the overrepresentation of people with a disability in unemployment statistics. By offering a financial incentive and making that incentive accessible, realistic and properly regulated, people with disabilities will finally be treated equally in the recruitment and selection process. It is hoped that many more employers will take up the opportunity to employ workers with disabilities in a step that will, over time, reduce the stigma associated with employees with disabilities.

This Government is showing that it is committed not only to rectifying the inequity and discriminatory practice, but also to utilising human capital and enhancing jobs growth in an economy that increasingly is being subjected to the negativity of the global economic environment. The benefits of this bill will be multiple by enhancing the choice and individual gain of disabled job seekers and workers, encouraging a lower rate of unemployment amongst disabled individuals, and heightening the capacity of businesses by increasing the employment of people with disabilities. This is an excellent stimulus for clients, as stated by the Chief Executive Officer of the Ascent Group, whom the Minister knows well. The Minister's recent visit to the opening of a wonderful facility in Armidale by the Ascent Group is highly regarded and still being discussed. I sent Kevin Mead, the Chief Executive Officer of the Ascent Group, a copy of the bill. He said:

The scheme definitely will stimulate the take-up of employees with a disability.

He said further:

Potential will be expanded to other schemes. [He hopes] that the benefits will be magnified over time. Gaining a job is such a great self-esteem boost for people with disabilities. Ultimately employers will benefit from that positively as a sense of job ownership as much as the employee themselves.

That is a great quote that I have happily repeated to the House. I certainly hope that the disability employment scheme established by the bill will minimise discrimination against people with disabilities, encourage higher rates of employment, and deliver social and economic benefits to individuals, their employers, the community and the State. I congratulate the Minister and commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [5.00 p.m.]: I am proud to speak to the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011. Yet again this is the O'Farrell Government getting on with the job of governing for all of New South Wales. This bill will encourage employment of people with disabilities by establishing a payroll tax rebate scheme for all employers. I digress for a moment to talk about the Macarthur Disability Services in my electorate, a dynamic and innovative not-for-profit community organisation. Macarthur Disability Services has developed many services for people with a disability, families and carers over the past 29 years. It has sites across the Wollondilly-Macarthur region.

The service provides programs for people with a wide range of disabilities, including intellectual, physical, sensory, neurological, and psychiatric disabilities. It has specific programs to support carers and supports 1,000 children and adults with disabilities on a weekly basis. I am proud to say the Minister for Disability Services has supported Macarthur Disability Services with a sizeable donation. This bill will provide further assistance to Macarthur Disability Services for the great work it provides. This scheme will provide a payroll tax rebate to employers of up to \$4,000 per employee. This rebate will be paid in two equal parts. After three months of employment, a rebate of \$2,000 will be paid and after six months the final \$2,000 will be paid for the hiring of a new employee.

To be eligible for the rebate the following criteria must be satisfied: the employee must be a genuine new employee; the employee should work for a minimum of 12 hours a week on average; the employee must be liable for payroll tax; and the work should be done wholly in New South Wales. Under the disability employment scheme any rebate for the first three months does not have to be repaid if the employee does not remain with the employer for the second three-month period. However, employees will not be able to apply and will not be eligible if they receive other rebates such as those contained in the Regional Development Act 2004.

This Government will continue to meet the budgetary commitments that we promised the people of New South Wales and will continue to protect the most vulnerable members in our community—people with disabilities—thus enabling jobs growth. This was a commitment during the election campaign and today we honour another of our election commitments to the people of New South Wales. The Macarthur Disability Services is currently providing three programs that enable people with disabilities to enter the workforce, which have great retention rates. The first program is known as the Open Employment scheme; the second is the Australian Disability Enterprises, which is at full capacity; and the third is the Transition to Work program, which caters for students with disabilities leaving year 12 and wishing to enter the workforce. The current retention rate for that program is approximately 95 per cent.

The Wollondilly-Macarthur region is currently noted as a high priority for the New South Wales Government. Macarthur Disability Services works in partnership with other agencies to deliver indigenous employment to the region. The organisation has been running for 30 years providing employment within my electorate for people with a disability. I am proud to say this bill will go a long way to help those service providers in assisting people to get a job. This bill recognises the enormous benefits that both the individuals and the community can gain from employment, and the massive flow-on effects that this bill will have on society.

The O'Farrell Government is serious about the social policy agenda it took to the last election that encourages early intervention to promote individual choice and responsibility. This bill will provide exactly that to the disabled of New South Wales. I know firsthand the type of work that Macarthur Disability Services and many other organisations such as Community Links Wollondilly Inc. provide to the disabled community of Wollondilly. This bill shows continued Government support for such organisations. I welcome the initiatives of the Government and commend the Minister for Disability Services and the Treasurer for their commitment to ensuring the positive reform of this legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.03 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to debate on the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011 and lend my support to the bill. The bill is part

of the ongoing Stronger Together program initiated by the former Government. Stronger Together is a 10-year plan to increase disability services, and support and acknowledge the Government's ongoing support for this program. The community welcomes bipartisan support for the implementation of the package. It is appropriate that this House is considering this bill today as this week is Carers Week.

This week is an opportunity to acknowledge the great work undertaken by carers in New South Wales, many of whom give up not only their personal time but also an opportunity to have a career of their own. As legislators it is important that we do everything in our power to support the vulnerable in our community and those that support them. This bill is an attempt to encourage employment of people with disabilities and the Opposition certainly supports it. I am supportive of any reasonable proposal to encourage businesses to take on disabled employees. As with all proposals for disability employment programs, our primary concern is to ensure adequate protections are in place to prevent disabled people from being exploited or taken advantage of.

We would like the Government to do everything in its power to prevent employers from taking advantage of the system without providing the employment opportunities that are expected in return. The electorate of Bankstown is fortunate to have a number of employment providers that assist people with a disability in finding long-term employment. The bill proposes two eligible employment periods of three and six months and at the conclusion of each period the employer is eligible to receive a rebate of \$2,000, totalling \$4,000 over a six-month period. I ask the Minister to monitor those employers who have received the rebate or receive the rebate in the future to make sure there are no unintended consequences of the scheme, such as individuals being released and replaced unnecessarily.

I commend the oversight elements in the bill, which I understand provide significant powers to the Chief Commissioner of State Revenue to oversee the payment of rebates and require the repayment of rebates for non-compliance. The bill gives the chief commissioner considerable investigative powers to facilitate any necessary investigations into compliance with the scheme. I also note an opportunity for recourse for determination by the chief commissioner through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. I take this opportunity to congratulate the former Labor Government on announcing this scheme in 2010. I also take this opportunity to commend the Government and the Minister for implementing this scheme. For those in this Chamber who do not know, I have a brother who is disabled—I am his legal guardian. I have a lifetime of experience dealing with disability services and I certainly know firsthand how important it is that Government provide all the support that we can give to people living with a disability. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [5.07 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak on this bill and to warmly congratulate the Minister for Disability Services and acknowledge the bipartisan support for this legislation. As many speakers have said, the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011 implements a Government budget commitment to give people with disability a better chance of securing a job in New South Wales. As the Treasurer said in June this year, and reiterated today, the introduction of a payroll tax rebate scheme is delivering the Liberal-Nationals commitment to rebuild the economy of New South Wales. This bill also provides an opportunity to implement a very key part of the Jobs Action Plan for the more vulnerable in our society. More specifically, the bill will provide a payroll tax rebate to employers of up to \$4,000 per employee. The rebate will be paid in two equal parts: after three months and six months respectively from the time of hire of a new employee.

Unlike the Jobs Action Plan rebate scheme, under the disability employment scheme any rebate for the first three months does not have to be repaid if the employee does not remain with the employer for the second three-month period. To ensure proper eligibility is met, employees must be genuinely new employees, employees must have completed a Transition to Work program administered by the New South Wales Department of Family and Community Services, the work must be performed wholly and primarily in New South Wales, and the employee must be liable for payroll tax. Employers will not be eligible for the rebate if they receive other rebates such as the rebate for the apprentices and trainees under the Payroll Tax Act 2007. Furthermore, this bill recognises the enormous benefit that the individual and community gain from employment.

The flow-on effects of even three or six months employment for a person with a significant disability can be far-reaching, both socially and economically. The Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill fits with our Government's social policy agenda, which encourages early intervention to promote individual choice and responsibility. We want New South Wales to be the first choice for business and jobs as a result of a strong economy. This is the message our Government is sending across the State. It is wholly appropriate that we provide this opportunity to the more vulnerable in our society. It gives me great pleasure to commend this bill to the House.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [5.10 p.m.]: I am pleased that the two sides of the House have come together today to support this magnificent bill, which acknowledges the need to engage disabled people in the community and the workforce. It is a historical day when the two sides of the House come together in support of a bill. It is a step forward and I hope it becomes a habit in the future. I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011, which implements the Government's commitment under Stronger Together to provide a payroll tax rebate to employers of new employees with a disability. The bill will assist in the employment of people with a disability by establishing a payroll tax rebate scheme that gives employers an incentive to hire employees with a disability. The bill will provide a payroll tax rebate to employers of \$4,000 per employee.

Employers will be paid the rebate in two equal parts—\$2,000 after three months of employment and \$2,000 after six months of employment. An employer who satisfies the eligibility criteria will be able to claim the payroll tax rebate. The eligibility criteria for the rebate includes: the employee must be a genuinely new employee; the employee must be in the target group under the Disability Services Act 1993, that is, the person has a disability; the employee must have completed the Transition to Work Program; the employee must have commenced employment on or after 1 January 2012 and before 1 July 2016; and the employee should work an average of at least 12 hours a week. The wages of the new employee must be liable for payroll tax in New South Wales either during the period of employment or during a financial year in which the employee is employed and the work must be performed wholly or mainly in New South Wales.

Certain employment arrangements will not be eligible for the rebate, for example, employing people under a labour hire arrangement where liability for payroll tax arises under payroll tax provisions applying to employment agents and engaging independent contractors who are not engaged as employees. Employment agents will be able to qualify for rebates in respect of their own employees provided they satisfy the criteria. Employers will not be eligible for the rebate if they are exempt from payroll tax—for example, charitable bodies that have no commercial undertakings—or if they receive other rebates such as the rebate for apprentices and trainees under the Payroll Tax Act 2007 and rebates paid under the Regional Development Act 2004 or the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Act 2011. It gives me pleasure to commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.13 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011 and commend the Treasurer and the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services for bringing this bill before the House. This bill encourages the employment of people with a disability by establishing a payroll tax rebate scheme that gives employers an incentive to employ disabled workers. The disability employment rebate scheme will provide a payroll tax rebate to employers of up to \$4,000 per employee. Employers will be paid the rebate in two equal parts, that is, it will be made available after three months and six months of the hire of a new employee. When organisations employ people with a disability they benefit from having employees who have the skills and aptitude to do their job effectively and efficiently.

Statistics on employing people with disabilities show low absenteeism, low staff turnover, low incidence of workplace injury, and employee loyalty. Employed people with disabilities create a productive and cost-effective business. In New South Wales and Australia our ageing population will have an impact on all major industries and occupations in years to come. Research has shown a prospective shortfall in employees between 2006 and 2011 of up to 195,000 people. This rebate scheme will give businesses the opportunity to employ people with a disability. I commend the bill to the House. Although the Government has had certain constraints within its budget, I am pleased that the Minister and the Treasurer have been able to deliver this bill to the people of New South Wales.

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [5.15 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011, which implements the Government's commitment to provide a payroll tax rebate to employers of new employees with a disability. It is a pleasure to be able to speak to this bill, which creates a positive outcome for people with disabilities. It is a pleasure to be part of a Government that is prepared to create an incentive to generate employment opportunities for the disabled within our society. This Government is willing to create incentives that stimulate job growth, reduce the dependence of people on welfare and decrease unemployment. This Government is taking positive steps to make New South Wales number one again. The Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill creates a sound balance between the desire of disabled people to enter the workforce and the legitimate needs of employers who are able to provide appropriate positions.

The bill recognises that not all disabled people are able to work a full-time week and provides for a 12-hour working week or less, where reasonable. To further create an employment incentive the bill specifies

that the employer will receive the payroll tax rebate in two equal portions, each portion to be received after the completion of the first three months and then six months of employment. All employers who meet the criteria will be able to claim the payroll tax rebate. Employers that have been excluded, such as charitable organisations, already receive tax and other incentives for the work that they do. The bill accords with the Government's budgetary commitment to protect the most vulnerable members within our community while at the same time enabling jobs growth. This bill has far-reaching consequences. It not only helps people with disabilities but also benefits employers by enabling them to give back to the community. This bill goes further than providing only economic benefits. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [5.19 p.m.], in reply: I thank those members who contributed to debate on the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011—the member for Manly, the member for Auburn, the member for Heffron, the member for Northern Tablelands, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Bankstown, the member for Newcastle, the member for Granville, the member for Bathurst and the member for East Hills. Taking on board what the member for East Hills said—and he is dead right—this legislation is not just about people with a disability; it breaks down enormous barriers that exist across our community and it ensures that those in the workplace without a disability can gain considerably by working alongside people with a disability.

I thank in particular the member for Heffron and the member for Auburn for their comments this evening. The member for Heffron and I both know well that the disability sector in this State expects bipartisanship on disabilities. That has been displayed in the way in which this debate has been conducted this afternoon, but it goes further than that. I recognise the contribution of the member for Heffron, a former disability Minister. We both recognise that the Stronger Together plan is pivotal to providing good outcomes for people with a disability across the State. This payroll tax rebate for employers will provide enormous opportunities for some 500 people with a disability to take on employment having completed the Transition to Work program.

All members who participated in the debate were in full agreement. I acknowledge in particular the member for Northern Tablelands who spoke of Kevin Meade and the Ascent Group, who do a wonderful job in the Northern Tablelands. The member for Wollondilly referred to the Macarthur Disability Service which, likewise, does an enormous job in the Macarthur region. The member for Bankstown raised the issue of the ongoing monitoring of the program, which is what we will do. I point out that an eligible employment period exists as part of this bill in order to attract the rebate, and the chief commissioner will oversight the scheme. The legislation also provides for exemptions, particularly in relation to the minimum average hours of work required. We recognise that in some circumstances people with a disability need to have flexibility in the workplace.

I also take on board what was said during the debate, particularly by the member for Bathurst, that people with a disability value the opportunity to enjoy what the rest of us take for granted—the prospect of employment. Business owners cannot make a mistake in taking on a person with a disability. This legislation, which is well targeted, will deliver that incentive to business owners. We will continue to monitor the scheme, as we should with all government programs, and I know that those outcomes will be achieved. The bill accords with the Government's budgetary commitment to protect the most vulnerable members in the community and to enable jobs growth. It provides assistance to people who will benefit even from the opportunity to hold a real job, and it meets the Government's desires to target assistance as part of a program designed to enhance life and work skills, to promote individual choice and to assist people to enjoy the quality of life that the rest of the community enjoys. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

REDFERN-WATERLOO AUTHORITY REPEAL BILL 2011**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [5.23 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Opposition on the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Repeal Bill 2011. The proposed amendments to the Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act 1974 are welcomed by the Opposition because they continue the strategy and good work of the previous Labor Government in encouraging urban renewal, including by way of transport reform. I know the member for Heffron will address that point so I will not dwell on it. I do not make a political point but this was commenced by the previous Government and this bill continues that work.

The amendments deal with repealing the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act 2004 and amending the Growth Centres Act to allow the transfer of assets, rights, liabilities and certain functions of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. On 21 February 2010 the Labor Government announced the setting up of the new Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority as part of the wider Metropolitan Transport Plan: Connecting the City of Cities reforms, which built on the success of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority model.

I watched with great interest the creation and development of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority, partly because it was such a new thing to do and partly because it focused on particular urban areas in Sydney. Redfern, which is an extraordinary part of Sydney, has a history of industrialisation. Aboriginal communities settled there in the 1930s and migrant people moved there when they arrived in Australia, particularly post-World War I and World War II. Redfern has a colourful history for many reasons. The Eveleigh Street railway yards are also located at Redfern, and the redevelopment of that site under the Redfern-Waterloo Authority has been wonderful to behold. It has added markets and cultural developments in that part of the world and it has added cultural developments for the whole city.

The authority has created a new precinct in a part of the city that was not being used. When one goes down to the Eveleigh Street railway yards and sees the magnificent way in which the railway yards are being used to create urban spaces it makes one very proud. It was always our intention in government to incorporate the Redfern-Waterloo Authority within the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority to expand on its capacity to deliver meaningful urban developments, particularly in the area of transport. The Redfern-Waterloo Authority brings with it to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority a number of key assets that are of Sydney, regional and state-wide significance.

Those assets include the now iconic Australian Technology Park, which continues to be a source of innovation excellence for the community and business. The New South Wales Labor Opposition is watching Australian Technology Park carefully to see how it progresses under the new Government. The Australian Technology Park acts as a catalyst for the development and funding of new intellectual property. This activity lies at the very heart of long-term job creation momentum in New South Wales by raising the growth potential of the economy. Indeed, as the global financial crisis continues to linger into its fourth year the Australian Technology Park remains crucial in supporting and creating new jobs and business opportunities.

The Redfern-Waterloo Authority also maintains its jurisdiction over key development sites at Redfern, Waterloo and the former Carlton United Brewery site at Broadway. Driving down Broadway one can see the changing of the brewery site and the development that is going on in that part of Sydney. Those sites provide the potential to demonstrate the benefits of medium- and high-density housing in solving Sydney's well-documented housing supply problems. The Labor Opposition, which has taken into account the early October Reserve Bank of Australia research paper on urban structure, believes it is imperative for policy development to take account of the strong linkages between the planning process, zoning regulations and housing supply. Of course, that is one of the great challenges in relation to planning and infrastructure development in New South Wales, particularly in Sydney.

Without labouring the point, housing supply is a challenge that cannot be solved by just popping more houses onto the outskirts of Sydney. A discussion must be had about the culture of housing in our community. The incorporation of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority into the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority importantly maintains key provisions in relation to the Aboriginal Housing Company. This has been an ongoing issue in the area known as The Block, but the Aboriginal Housing Company in Redfern has a lot more stock than just that area; it provides housing across the inner city. It is important that the key provisions of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority are contained in the new arrangement proposed by this bill. It

is important for these amendments to ensure that this body and other relevant representatives of the Aboriginal community are consulted in all developments in the area bounded by Eveleigh, Caroline, Lewis and Vine streets in Redfern.

The transfer of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority into the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority allows the positive innovation in residential and cultural developments in the Redfern-Waterloo area to promote similar advances in the Sydney area. This will allow the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority to further enhance its ability to promote urban renewal through developments such as the remaining lots of land at the iconic Australian Technology Park site. That will give this innovative precinct greater critical mass. Against this background we see the proposed amendments as endorsing and continuing the good work and planning already put in place by the previous Labor Government.

We support the amendments of the Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act 1974 and the repeal of the existing Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act 2004 to transfer its assets and the majority of its functions to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. As I lead in debate for the Opposition I reiterate that the Opposition supports this bill. It is continuing the work that Labor began in government. It was always our intention to move the Redfern-Waterloo Authority into the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [5.32 p.m.]: I support this bill which will repeal the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act 2004 and amend the Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act 1974 to transfer the responsibilities and assets of the authority to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. As a former mayor, I have firsthand experience of the Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act and endorse the provisions in that Act. During my time as the Mayor of Hawkesbury City Council I sat on the local government advisory panel for the Northwest Growth Centres Commission that was formed under the Act. While that commission had a mandate different from the mandate for Redfern-Waterloo—it dealt mainly with land planning issues and greenfields sites—the fundamentals and planning mechanisms were the same as the Redfern-Waterloo Authority that was established to guide urban renewal of the precinct.

The Growth Centres Commission was a mixed bag that could be best described as good in parts but an overall failure because it was only a bandaid solution to a bigger and deeper problem—the planning framework in New South Wales. The standalone statutory bodies were not properly resourced and did not get the support and leadership from government and the administrative instrumentalities through the different Acts and regulations that were required to fulfil its mandate. It was a good idea with some outcomes but, like most things, it ended up an overall failure and was consigned to the planning reform graveyard.

The former Government set up the administrative architecture to implement the metropolitan strategy. The North West Growth Centres Commission and the South West Growth Centres Commission were established as part of this structure, as well as the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority, which was established in 2010 and which started to assume responsibility for the Redfern-Waterloo Authority. This was meant to cut through the labyrinth of red tape and bring about a coordinated approach between multiple stakeholders, government agencies, local government, the development industry and landowners to ensure that effective management, proper consultation and communications of the strategy were done in a comprehensive yet timely and efficient manner so new release areas could be rolled out in a realistic time frame. At the time these reforms were seen as a step in the right direction. To be fair, there were some improvements in coordination and communication between the Department of Planning and stakeholders and progress was made.

However, like anything without leadership—from the elected government through to the responsible Ministers and a planning framework that backed up reforms with the tools and resources needed to do the job properly—the reforms ended up, like a lot of others that preceded it, as nothing other than add-ons that got in the way and that defeated the original charter and objectives by causing added delays. It was a case of a good idea with poor implementation. The Redfern-Waterloo Authority was established in 2004 by the former Minister Frank Sartor and reported directly to the Minister. To be fair, in my opinion the idea was well intentioned. It was intended to provide the leadership necessary to cut through red tape and achieve a realistic outcome that allowed for increased densities as part of the renewal of a historic precinct while respecting and protecting the environment and heritage components in the precinct.

Like the North West Growth Centres Commission and the South West Growth Centres Commission, the Redfern-Waterloo Authority sounded like a good idea that would achieve a balanced outcome in a realistic time frame. I know from my experience with the north-west growth centres and from dealing with applications that there is too much red tape, buck passing and indecision that results in unnecessary delay and poor planning

outcomes that do not take key issues into consideration, such as transport, infrastructure, open space and access. For new South Wales to become the economic driver of Australia we must ensure there is a proper rollout of new residential, industrial, commercial and employment developments, and supporting infrastructure.

In creating bodies such as the Redfern-Waterloo Authority and the North West Growth Centres Commission and South West Growth Centres Commission the Government tried to bypass the malaise created by the existing planning framework, but it did not work. The former Government had already abolished those commissions. I endorse the action to abolish the Redfern-Waterloo Authority and to transfer its responsibility to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. This action is necessary as the new Government has embarked on a full and comprehensive review of the planning framework, and all aspects should be considered as part of this review. For the reasons that I have outlined, I congratulate the Minister on his work and commend the bill to the House.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY (Heffron) [5.36 p.m.]: I support the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Repeal Bill 2011. Unlike the member for Londonderry, I have been to Redfern and Waterloo. In fact, I represent that area in this Chamber. I will speak about this bill not only as the local member but also as someone who has held the portfolio of Redfern and Waterloo in Cabinet. It might seem a bit odd for a local member to support a bill repealing an authority that was designed specifically to provide services and urban renewal to an area within her electorate. Indeed, in 2004 I spoke strongly in support of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Bill and I note that the bill received bipartisan support. But we are now repealing this authority, as was always our intention. The Redfern-Waterloo Authority was never intended to be a permanent government bureaucracy. It was not set up to live forever; it was set up to drive urban renewal, employment, education and environmental planning for Redfern and Waterloo.

The Labor Government announced in February last year that it would create the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority and it created that body. It announced then that the Redfern-Waterloo Authority, which had been a successful example of driving urban renewal in those two suburbs, would be expanded to become the broader focused Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. The new authority was created and the new board was established under the previous Labor Government. It was always intended that the Redfern-Waterloo Authority would evolve and enlarge into the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. As was intended by the previous Labor Government, and as will happen under this legislation, the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority will continue to play the key role of driving renewal within Redfern and Waterloo. A number of projects that are extremely important for the area are still on the boil.

I want to look back to 2004 and highlight some matters. At that time I was the member for Heffron but the electorate only covered the suburb of Waterloo; it expanded to cover the suburb of Redfern after the 2007 redistribution. In 2004 when I spoke in this Parliament 95 per cent of public housing residents in Waterloo received income support from the Government. That means 95 per cent of people did not get up and go to work every day. Fifty-one per cent of households in Waterloo earned less than \$399 per week compared with 20 per cent for the rest of Sydney. The unemployment rate in 2004 was 16.6 per cent, almost triple the figure for the rest of Sydney at the time. Indeed, there were 2,000 units of public housing in Waterloo then, which represented 67 per cent of dwellings in the suburb. Waterloo had been ranked in 2003 in the top 5 per cent of the most disadvantaged postcodes in New South Wales in a report entitled "Communities of Advantage and Disadvantage" prepared by Professor Tony Vinson.

In recounting those statistics I do not mean to portray Waterloo as a difficult or indeed a dangerous place. There was a resilience and a strong community spirit in that suburb. As someone who regularly visits the high-rise public housing towers, stands on street corners holding mobile offices and doorknocks the area I can say I have never felt threatened; I have always felt welcomed. The people of Waterloo face enormous daily challenges. In 2004 they wanted a healthier and safer community and a better social mix. That indeed was what the Redfern-Waterloo Authority was designed to deliver.

The authority was designed to promote the economic and social development of its operational area. It was required to prepare and implement a Redfern-Waterloo plan and it was specifically required to promote and coordinate the orderly economic development and use of the operational area, including the development and management of land, provision of infrastructure and the establishment of public areas. It was to provide and promote housing choices in Redfern and Waterloo as well as provide and promote employment opportunities for local residents. Importantly, it was to promote and coordinate cultural, educational, commercial, recreational, entertainment and transport activities and facilities in Redfern-Waterloo. It was also to have development and management control over sites deemed to be of State significance by the Minister for Infrastructure and Planning.

Having recounted those original aims of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Bill, I turn to some of the things that have occurred in Redfern and Waterloo since 2004. Many members may have visited the Redfern and Waterloo premier markets, the Eveleigh Farmers Market, which won the *Sydney Morning Herald* 2010 Foodies Guide Award for best markets in Sydney, having been operating for only seven months at the time. Of course, at The Block the Pemulwuy project received approval for its development in July 2009, something I was proud to do as Minister for Planning. In March 2010 my Government provided the Aboriginal Housing Company with a \$2 million grant to kick off the development of that project.

The National Centre of Indigenous Excellence was established at the former Redfern Public School site. It is worth noting that one of the first things that occurred under the previous Labor Government was the closure of several schools in South Sydney and the establishment of the Alexandria Park Community School, a K-12 school, which has seen enrolment and attendance in education in South Sydney rise significantly. There have been some remarkable outcomes from Alexandria Park Community School. The Redfern Public School site was sold to the Indigenous Land Corporation and the Natural Centre of Indigenous Excellence opened there.

A specialist health centre for Redfern opened at the former courthouse site. That was funded through the sale of the Rachel Forster Hospital. That centre, which is run by Sydney South West Area Health Service, provides a range of services including mental health, drug and alcohol, HIV services and others to the local community. Channel 7 has relocated to Eveleigh along with Pacific Publishing, bringing some 2,000 jobs to the area. We have also seen movies being made at CarriageWorks as a result of the work that has been done by the Redfern-Waterloo Authority, again bringing job opportunities and economic activity.

I particularly mention two services—Yaama Dhiyaan, which is a hospitality training course specialising in Indigenous food and culture, which has had remarkable success. More than 129 graduates have gone through that program, 79 graduates have been employed and another nine have gone on to further education. That program, which is run by Auntie Beryl Van-Oploo, does a remarkable job. Another service that has been set up as a result of the work of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority and its focus on employment is the Les Tobler apprentice centre, which is run by Rowan Tobler, who has won a number of awards. Again, they have had a remarkable success rate placing many Aboriginal apprentices in jobs.

By consent, General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) postponed to permit the conclusion of the current debate.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: The Les Tobler centre has had remarkable success in placing Aboriginal construction apprentices in jobs, particularly with the Channel 7 development and the redevelopment of housing on Elizabeth Street, Redfern, which is providing 100 new units of public housing. It is a beautiful housing development. I was there recently to rename the community centre after Betty Makin, an elder who is well known for her support of young people in the area. The redevelopment of the Elizabeth Street site is another commitment by the Government to the revitalisation of Redfern and Waterloo.

We also have seen a commitment to the Waterloo Green Neighbourhood Project, which is a \$12 million three-year program providing concierge-style front desk staff, on-the-ground maintenance teams and extra security measures for six Waterloo high-rise public housing buildings. My constituents are quite pleased with the success of that project. They are also very pleased that, through collaborative work between the Redfern-Waterloo Authority and the Department of Housing, we have been able to implement alcohol-free zones in public housing land in Waterloo and tackle what has been a difficult problem for residents for many years.

The Roll Up Redfern group, which brings together the City of Sydney—I acknowledge the Lord Mayor is in the Chamber today—and the Redfern-Waterloo Chamber of Commerce, Redwatch and Souths Cares, an organisation on whose board I sit, are doing terrific work to change the perception of Redfern, launching Brand Redfern and working in particular to ensure that Redfern sheds its reputation as a suburb where the shutters come down at night. Anyone who has been on Redfern Street or Regent Street at night knows what I mean. Indeed, if you go down those streets now you see a much more vibrant Redfern.

The Heritage Taskforce that has been set up by the Redfern-Waterloo Authority is looking in particular at protecting heritage in the Eveleigh rail yards areas. I could go on and on talking about youth services such as the wonderful South Sydney Youth Services, which does excellent work and has run a number of successful programs, and the midnight basketball program, which has worked well. The police have done remarkable work

particularly with Mundine's boxing gym. Last year we saw a significant drop in crime in Redfern and Waterloo and a significant rise in housing prices. Indeed, housing prices in the area rose by 38 per cent between 2005 and 2009, having climbed by 12 per cent in 2009 alone despite the global financial crisis.

I mentioned that the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority needs to continue its work in Redfern and Waterloo, particularly around Redfern town centre and the redevelopment of Redfern station, as well as its long-term plans for the revitalisation and rezoning of public housing estates in Redfern and Waterloo. I encourage the Government to maintain the commitment made by the Labor Government to sustain the levels of public, social, community and affordable housing in those two suburbs. Significant work still needs to be done, and I look forward to that work being done by the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority.

I commenced this speech by remarking that the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority is an initiative of the former Labor Government. It was announced in February as part of the Metropolitan Transport Plan. Subsequently it was incorporated into the Sydney Metropolitan Plan. The Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority will assume the Redfern-Waterloo Authority's functions and use that authority as a model for all of Sydney. On this point I acknowledge that the Minister for Planning, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, has taken up an initiative of the Keneally Government, particularly when it comes to the development of Sydney and urban planning. He has taken up that initiative in retaining the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority, and maintaining the successful model of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority and taking that forward.

It should be acknowledged that the Minister has picked up and run with the Labor Government's vision on how Sydney should be developed, particularly in respect of urban renewal and transport-orientated development. I look forward to seeing how the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority in particular incorporates the Premier's commitment to a 50:50 split between infill and urban development, a move away from the previous Labor Government's policy of 70 per cent infill and 30 per cent greenfields. That will be a challenge for the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority, and I look forward to seeing how it meets that challenge. I look forward also to the Minister visiting Redfern and Waterloo. I know he did so in June 2011, because it was breathlessly announced by the Factory Community Centre that the Minister was given a tour of Redfern and Waterloo. It is both remarkable and wonderful that the Minister has chosen to visit those suburbs. We look forward to his coming back.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [5.51 p.m.]: I support the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Repeal Bill 2011. The bill will repeal the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act 2004 and amend the Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act 1974. The Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority was established last year to drive the development of high-quality urban precincts, the initial precincts being Redfern-Waterloo, which includes the Australian Technology Park, and Granville. But, in the meantime, the Redfern-Waterloo Authority has continued to carry out its functions. This continued operation has disadvantages, including a requirement to perform duplicate administrative functions, with overheads and reporting obligations.

This bill will dissolve the Redfern-Waterloo Authority. Its assets, rights, liabilities and some of its functions will be transferred to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. Sole membership of Australian Technology Park Sydney Limited will transfer from the Redfern-Waterloo Authority to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority, so the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority can undertake immediate urban renewal on remaining development lots of the Australian Technology Park. The Redfern-Waterloo Authority Fund will be transferred to the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority. Provisions of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act which relate to the levying of development contributions for development at sites in Redfern and Waterloo and at the former Carlton United Breweries site at Broadway will continue.

The Aboriginal Housing Company and representatives of the Aboriginal community will continue to be consulted in relation to the area known as The Block. The bill will end the switching off of the Heritage Act provisions within the Redfern-Waterloo area. The bill provides for transitional arrangements for the Redfern-Waterloo Plan as an approved scheme under the Growth Centres Act, and this will allow the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority to undertake the key renewal strategies outlined in the plan. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [5.54 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution on the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Repeal Bill 2011: a more comprehensive contribution is not possible given the bill was introduced only this afternoon. When the Redfern-Waterloo Authority legislation was introduced in this House I represented Redfern, which was in the electorate of Bligh. Both Redfern and Waterloo are in the City of

Sydney local government area. At the time I opposed the legislation because it gave the Minister unfettered power to approve development with the accountability and normal checks and balances that apply with local government assessments removed. The local community was alarmed that the legislation was only about ensuring land development and not about urban renewal or addressing social issues in the Redfern-Waterloo area or The Block.

There was widespread concern that the community would have little say in how their neighbourhood was changed. The City of Sydney has long been committed to working with the State Government to address the urban renewal and social issues in Redfern-Waterloo. I welcome changes this month that handed to the city approvals for developments valued at less than \$10 million. This will ensure that the majority of development proposals will be subject to the city's rigorous assessment processes and community consultation. Indeed, all development should be able to be assessed by the city because the Central Sydney Planning Committee deals with development worth over \$50 million and has a greater number of State government appointees than it does city appointees. I maintain that developments above \$10 million should go to the city instead of the Minister for Planning.

The city's submission to the recent draft Built Environment Plan No. 2 broadly supported the latest proposed rezoning with the recommendation that development only occur if a train station is built in Waterloo, which of course would provide public transport for the proposed increase in population that is possible given the route of the city to the airport railway runs directly underneath. I understand that the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority will be required to report to the Minister for Planning, who will determine what instrument is the most appropriate for rezoning the area. Plan-making should be done through the comprehensive City Plan process, which will assess the area holistically as part of the entire inner city and with the city consulting closely with the local community.

The Central Sydney Planning Committee has the capacity and expertise to establish the most appropriate zoning for the inner city, and creating new bodies to take on this role is wasteful duplication. I have long opposed areas of the city being excised from the city, the creation of qangos, and the divvying up of the City of Sydney to various bodies, such as the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. There should be an integrated and coordinated approach to the city, and I will make that case to the Minister when the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority provides a report for Redfern-Waterloo plan making. The city will continue to work with the Minister and the Government on this very important urban renewal area.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.56 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for Canterbury, Londonderry, Cronulla and Sydney for their contributions. I particularly thank the member for Heffron, who made her third contribution in this Parliament and her second today. That is good because it enables the new backbenchers to see the former Premier in action. As indicated, the Redfern-Waterloo Authority Repeal Bill is an important step in the ongoing renewal of the Redfern-Waterloo area. Through this bill the Government is ensuring the ongoing commitment to the renewal of this important area of Sydney and New South Wales. The bill reflects the ongoing reforms that this Government has introduced to the New South Wales planning system. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

CARERS WEEK

Matter of Public Importance

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [6.06 p.m.]: The week of 16 to 22 October marks Carers Week in New South Wales. It is important that this House and we as members of Parliament recognise the vital contribution carers make in our State, communities and families. Around 750,000 people in New South Wales provide care for family members and friends or others in our community. That means that more than one in ten members of the New South Wales community is a carer. Carers are an integral part of Australia's health system and also are a foundational part of our aged, disability, palliative and community care systems. Carers provide support for people with a disability, those with mental illness, those suffering chronic conditions, the frail aged and children in out-of-home care. I pay tribute to those carers and for the difference they make in so many people's lives, for their commitment to others and for often putting others' needs ahead of their own. Without them we would be so much worse off.

Many carers feel the intensity of the needs of the people for whom they care, and that sometimes also can be overwhelming. Time spent caring can place strain on other relationships, impact career plans and mean that people feel socially isolated. On average carers spend an incredible 40 hours per week, and those who care for someone with a mental illness spend on average 104 hours per week, providing care. Only recently I read a publication by Anglicare that contained research citations by Robert Cummins and Joan Hughes in 2007, which found that carers have low levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing. In fact, they found that the wellbeing of carers was the lowest value they had ever recorded for a large group of people. That is a staggering result and piece of information that really does not dawn on us. Carers can be friends, parents—anyone in the community. It is clear not just from this information but from everything we know and all the research that we must support those who support so many others and contribute so much to our community.

So many carers will never win accolades or any of the attention they deserve for what they do and that is why Carers Week is so important. There has been increased legislative recognition of carers. The Carer Recognition Act 2010, which had bipartisan support and passed through this House last year, provided clear legislative recognition for carers in New South Wales. It established a Carers Advisory Council to advise the Government on issues pertinent to carers. At a Federal level the Carer Recognition Bill was passed on 28 October 2010 establishing a legislative framework to increase recognition and awareness of Australia's 2.9 million carers. I recognise that the informal care provided by family members eases the burden on Australia's health and care system enormously.

The 2010 Access Economics "Economic Value of Informal Care" report found that the annual replacement value of care provided in Australia in 2010 was estimated to be more than \$40.9 billion. That is just amazing. It is almost incomprehensible. It found that carers provided 1.32 billion hours of unpaid care in 2010. I also note in the 2010 State of Sydney report entitled "The Depth and Diversity of Social Exclusion", Anglicare focused attention on the specific issues facing ageing parent carers. It is important that we do all we can to improve services for ageing carers, which will be a fundamental challenge for the first half of this century. I note further that on top of many of the daily issues carers face is the constant fear in the back of their minds about what will happen next. What will happen to the person that they have looked after for so many years when they go? Dr Andrew Pesce, the former President of the Australian Medical Association, said it beautifully in a speech to the National Press Club in July 2009 when he stated:

It brings me to tears when I see elderly parents accompanying their disabled child with the love and patience that only a parent can give but with uncertainty in their eyes that asks the question: Who will look after my child when I am gone?

That is why it is so important to do all we can to support carers but also to work towards a national disability insurance scheme that will go part of the way towards alleviating some of the concerns of ageing parents, but more broadly the concerns not only of the sector but also of individuals who have disabilities. Clive Hamilton argues that, sadly, our society has increasingly begun to value people according to how much they contribute to the gross domestic product. This means that many who contribute in immeasurable and valuable ways are not recognised in the way they should be. Carers Week goes towards rectifying this and I am pleased that it goes towards recognising so much of what often remains hidden.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [6.13 p.m.]: I am really pleased to have the opportunity to support the member for Auburn in acknowledging the vital role that carers play both for the people they care for and also for the broader community. There are approximately 850,000 carers in New South Wales; that is 11 per cent of our population care for people with disabilities, individuals with mental illness, chronic health

conditions, substance abuse and frailty. It is estimated that there are more than 2 million carers across Australia as well as more than 300,000 young carers. This week, 16 to 22 October, marks National Carers Week, which provides an opportunity to recognise and raise awareness of the valuable contribution of carers in New South Wales. I note the theme of Carers Week this year is "Anyone Any Time". It is reminding us that at any point in our lives we may take on a caring role.

For me "any time" came when I was a young girl and my brother, Philip, was born with cerebral palsy. We did not understand immediately the severity of his disabilities, but in the months and years following his birth we learnt that he had some profound intellectual and physical disabilities—disabilities that meant he would never walk, never talk, never go to school, never work and never do all the things that many of us take for granted each and every day. Let us be quite clear: it is not I who deserves this recognition, it is my parents. These are ageing parents, and members may remember I referred to their incredible commitment in my inaugural speech. Not only did they provide 24-hour care for my brother, they also provided for me and my two sisters, and the many other young people they cared for, a life of stability, a life of love, a life of hope and a life of opportunity.

Carers provide literally countless unpaid hours of support to people in their home, and extremely importantly, enable people to participate in their local community, which often goes unrecognised. Many carers provide support all day every day, seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year, and do so out of profound love and commitment. People who have never been carers will never understand and could never imagine this level of commitment because it is simply unimaginable. If I take my own parents I calculate that their unpaid hours of support to my brother would be more than 400,000 hours and that does not include their contribution of unpaid volunteer hours to our local community. As many parents do, they volunteered for canteen duty, fund-raising activities, sports coaching and the list goes on. Carers are unquestionably the unsung heroes of our society and they rightly deserve support from all of us.

As was mentioned, the Access Economics report says replacing the millions of hours of informal care with government services would cost approximately \$13 billion annually. It should therefore be of no surprise that one of this Government's key priorities is to support carers to have a full and rich life. The enactment of the Carer Recognition Act 2010 in New South Wales recognised the contributions made to society by carers every day. I congratulate the Minister for Disability Services who, in opposition, was the initial sponsor of the carer recognition legislation. The Minister drafted the bill with the assistance of the President of Carers New South Wales. The Act had two key functions: to introduce a carer's charter and to establish a Carers Advisory Council.

The charter provides that the contribution of carers should be recognised, that carers should be recognised as having unique individual needs within and beyond the caring role, that carers' health and wellbeing are to be given due consideration, that carers should be referred to appropriate services, that their needs should be considered as well as the needs of the persons they are caring for, and the views and knowledge that carers have in relation to the individual needs of the person they care for must be recognised and included in the assessment, planning delivery and review of services that impact on them in their role as carers. Community service providers and the Government should respect the relationship between carers and the persons they care for.

The diversity of carers' individual needs should be identified and acknowledged, taking into consideration cultural differences, age, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identification and place of residence. The legislation requires public sector agencies to take reasonable steps to ensure that officers, employees and agents of the agencies have an awareness and understanding of the carer's charter and to reflect the principles of the charter when providing services that affect carers. Public sector agencies must also consult carers and bodies representing carers when developing policies that may impact significantly on carers and recognise the needs of the employees who are carers.

I am very proud to be part of a Government in which all Cabinet Ministers are working with their agencies to identify and promote carer friendly policies and practices. The carers' charter also includes two principles: to recognise and to support children and young people who are carers. In New South Wales 100,000 children and young people under the age of 25 are providing care and support for family members and their friends. Without appropriate support this can often be a difficult time for a young person as they are trying to establish themselves for their future through maintaining their social networks, participating in education or the community, or entering the workforce and starting a career. This year's Carers Day Out was held this morning in Martin Place where the Premier and the Minister for Disability Services spoke about the Government's commitment to recognising and raising awareness of carers.

Carers Week in New South Wales began yesterday with Minister Constance and Minister Goward's presentation of the Carers Ambassadors Awards at a formal luncheon at Parliament House. These awards recognise the outstanding contribution of individual carers and carer groups and help to educate the community about the role of carers. The 2011 Carer of the Year was awarded to Ms Antonia Kapsalis. In my electorate of Port Macquarie a number of carers were recognised this week. Isaac Plunkett was recognised as a young carer, Diana Charsley and Russell Pilcher as caring partners and ACES Inc as a carer support group, as well as Hastings Autism and Asperger's Resource Group. All the 2011 recipients and nominees are inspirational people. Carers Week is a wonderful opportunity to recognise and honour them. But we must honour all carers across New South Wales and the nation. They may not have been a recipient of an award or even a nominee for an award but each and every one of them deserves to be decorated and acknowledged for their incredible and selfless work.

This week the Department of Education and Communities is launching a resource for schools to enable teachers and other school staff to understand and support young carers. I commend this initiative. For carers of people with a disability, significant reforms are underway to give carers more choice and control over the services their families use. Under the second phase of the Government's Stronger Together plan, people with a disability and their carers will have access to enhanced services, and greater choice and control as person-centred approaches and individualised funding arrangements are introduced. Carers are also supported indirectly through the provision of increased assistance and options for the people they care for. I can assure the House that the Government will ensure that carers are appropriately recognised in this State.

Once again I remind all members that this week is an opportunity for them to recognise and celebrate these unsung heroes in our community. I therefore encourage all members of the House to use this opportunity to contact a carer they know in their electorate. Simply give them a call and thank them for the wonderful work they do. It will take just a few minutes, but it will be very much appreciated because for the majority of the time the extraordinary work of these carers goes unrecognised. Once again I thank the member for Auburn for acknowledging Carers Week in this House and for allowing me the opportunity to join her in recognising these wonderful people who make an immeasurable contribution to our communities.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [6.20 p.m.]: I support the matter of public importance raised by the member for Auburn. This year Carers Week takes place from 16 to 22 October. It is my strong view that carers in our community are the unsung heroes of our society, as the member for Port Macquarie indicated. Carers come in all shapes and sizes and they all have their own stories to tell. Carers are usually family members. My father, John Harwood, cares for my mother, Maria. Carers look after, support, feed, dress, toilet and assist in the day-to-day activities of the disabled, elderly, sick, mentally ill, those dependent on drugs and/or alcohol and those suffering from a chronic illness. Carers can be parents, partners, children, brothers, sisters and friends, and they can be of any age.

Carers take on unique situations. Some carers are needed only during daylight hours and others are needed more permanently. Carers provide great emotional support which, as the member for Port Macquarie said, is something no money can buy. Carers NSW is an association for relatives and friends caring for people with disabilities and other chronic conditions. It is the peak organisation for carers in New South Wales and the only state-wide organisation that has carers as its primary focus. It is a non-government, non-profit, non-political organisation incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act of New South Wales. It is governed by another group of people whom I greatly admire, that is, volunteers.

The vision of Carers NSW is to accept caring as a shared community responsibility and for all carers in New South Wales to be recognised, valued and supported by community and governments. The core goals and outcomes of Carers NSW are: increased independence and choice related to caring circumstances; improved health and wellbeing; expanded opportunities to participate in the community, including access to appropriate housing, employment and education opportunities; financial security; the ability to influence change in carers' lives; and access to high-quality and timely support and services.

Carers have access to support groups, which allow them to meet on a regular basis. Currently, 400 such groups are operating in New South Wales. It is incredible to think that 400 groups of people meet on a regular basis to support one another. It is fantastic. Carers need this support because caring for another person can be tough and can have negative effects. The stress of caring can result in social isolation, loneliness, changes in relationships and a sense of loss. They are common causes for changes in the emotional and mental wellbeing of carers. The most helpful support is talking to people who are empathetic and non-judgemental, and who recognise and understand the role of carers. Special support is available for carers, particularly for carers under the age of 26, Aboriginal carers and family carers.

I have seen firsthand the support, understanding and selflessness that my father gives every day. The care given by a family member cannot be underestimated. I believe that carers in New South Wales do a sterling job that would otherwise cost governments and agencies an obscene amount of money in funding and coordination. I applaud all carers in New South Wales and, in particular, carers in my electorate of Shellharbour. I attended mass on Sunday where Father David, together with the congregation, prayed for carers in New South Wales. Mass was followed by morning tea where the need to talk to carers and engage with them in our communities was highlighted. It was lovely to speak with these people. I genuinely applaud all carers across New South Wales and I congratulate them on the fantastic job they do. I am sure Government members join with me in congratulating carers in New South Wales.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [6.25 p.m.], in reply: I have been moved by the speeches on this matter of public importance. I was aware of the circumstances of the brother of the member for Port Macquarie. Both the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Shellharbour made a beautiful tribute to their families. I know that, as the mother and father of the member for Port Macquarie age, Phillip will become an increasing challenge for them. Both members were right when they said that carers display incredible humanity. Their love and commitment know no bounds. They push themselves to the point where it affects their mental health and wellbeing. Yet still they go on. I have seen it in my family.

We have been able to speak so passionately tonight because of our own experiences. I am sure there is not a member in this House who does not know someone in his or her family, extended family or neighbourhood who is not involved in caring for someone who needs a high level of support. I have rarely seen such emotion in the House as I have seen tonight. I do not need to say any more than has been said by previous speakers. Carers deserve recognition and all the support we can give in government and in opposition. I thank members for their contributions.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I thank the member for Auburn for bringing this matter of public importance to the attention of the House.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANTERBURY ELECTORATE PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATIONS

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [6.29 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about a meeting I had some time ago, but which I have not had a chance to relate to the House. On Friday 10 June I held a morning tea in my electorate office at Campsie with presidents and representatives of local schools' parents and citizens associations, with the aim of hearing their concerns and acknowledging their voluntary roles in their school communities. All members would be familiar with their local parents and citizens associations, and I suspect a number of members will have served on one. The associations provide a valuable service to schools not only in fundraising but also in providing parental and organisational input to the schools.

The morning tea was very well attended and productive—important issues were raised. I publicly thank the following representatives of parents and citizens associations: Poppy Sotiriou, president of Canterbury South Public School; Lisa Fotakopoulos, vice-president of Canterbury South Public School; Andrew Ward, president of Yeo Park Infants School; Elizabeth Campbell, president of Summer Hill Public School; Cath Sefton, secretary of Summer Hill Public School; Kirsten McCombie, president of Ashbury Public School; Melanie Bruniges, president of Canterbury Public School; Mario Pierides, president of Earlwood Public School; and Kerry Govas, president of St Michael's Public School. I thank them for taking the time to attend this event in my Campsie office and, most importantly, for the unpaid service they provide to their schools and the wider community. It was a great forum for those who attended the morning tea to meet and exchange ideas and bring their concerns to my attention.

Since being elected the member for Canterbury some years ago I have always valued the wonderful work carried out in the local school community and I have visited all the schools on many occasions. The topics raised during the morning tea were broad ranging but, most importantly, they included the provision of counselling services for students. A number of representatives of the parents and citizens associations raised the need for additional counselling services. They said that some schools had a counselling service for one day a week or half a day a week—a couple of days a week at best—and that more counselling services were needed in schools in the Canterbury area.

They also raised student safety on roads near the schools. Canterbury Road runs through the electorate and a number of schools are situated along that road. An overhead bridge is in place, but I am having a worthwhile discussion with the Government about putting 40-kilometre-per-hour safety zone speed restrictions in places that do not have an overhead bridge, particularly on Canterbury Road. Canterbury South Public School has a particular issue with road safety. Services for students with special needs in the Canterbury area were also raised, and I know that is close to the hearts of most people in this House. It is interesting that I speak about the parents and citizens associations raising that issue when we have just had a discussion in the House about carers.

I made a commitment to the parents and citizens associations that we would meet again if not later this year then early next year. I invited the Minister for Education to meet with representatives of the parents and citizens associations of schools in the Canterbury electorate, but he did not accept the invitation, which is a shame. I have told the various associations that the Minister declined that invitation. The Minister said he would not meet with parents and citizens associations and that their concerns could be dealt with through other channels. I conclude my statement this evening by once again thanking those who attended the morning tea and thanking all the parents and citizens associations in my electorate—they do a wonderful and valuable job.

FUCHS AUSTRALIAN NATIONALS DRAG RACING CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [6.34 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a recent sporting competition I had the pleasure of experiencing in my electorate of Smithfield. On Saturday 10 September I was invited by the board of Sydney Dragway to attend the 2011 Fuchs Australian National Championships at the Sydney Dragway at Eastern Creek. The championship races were held over three days, from 9 to 11 September 2011. The qualifying and early elimination rounds were held on Friday and Saturday, while the finals were contested on Sunday 11 September. The championship races included a variety of vehicles such as motor bikes, cars, doorslammers and specialised dragsters, which were the highlight of the competition.

I will never forget being escorted to the centre of the start line and how I felt standing in between two fully loaded and souped-up dragsters as they launched from their positions with 7,000 horsepower and speeds of up to 500 kilometres per hour. I cannot describe the feeling in words, but it was a most extraordinary experience. In fact, no other sport has such an effect on all the senses. Drag racing is a sport that will blast one's ears and cause one's heart to palpitate. It is a sport that will burn one's nose and make one's eyes water. It is a sport that will send shockwaves through one's entire body. No other motor sport pushes boundaries and stretches the limitations of both man and machine to the extent that drag racing does. It is exciting, spectacular, explosive and unpredictable, to say the least.

Sydney Dragway was officially opened in 2004 and is administered by a not-for-profit organisation. The facility is located next to the existing Eastern Creek Raceway in the heart of western Sydney in my electorate of Smithfield. It showcases the full range of Australian National Drag Racing Association [ANDRA] championship events and driving classes. Sydney Dragway is considered to be the most modern track in the world and is the only purpose-built drag racing facility in New South Wales. The dragway was designed and constructed to the highest Australian National Drag Racing Association and international standards. While the principal activity for Sydney Dragway is drag racing, the venue has facilities in which to hold other activities including street machine shows, vehicle testing and driver training, concerts, conferences, exhibitions and trade shows.

I will advise the House of some of the facts and figures pertinent to these extraordinary machines. A Pro Series Top Fuel dragster uses between 15 and 18 litres of fuel—a mixture of nitromethane and methanol—to travel the quarter-mile distance, and generates approximately 7,000 horsepower, which is equivalent to 37 times that of the average street car. A Top Fuel dragster is the fastest vehicle on the planet, capable of exceeding speeds of 500 kilometres per hour over a quarter of a mile—a distance equivalent to the length of four football fields—in fewer than five seconds. Dragsters can accelerate faster than a jumbo jet, a fighter jet and a Formula One racing car. They can accelerate from zero to 100 miles an hour in less than eight seconds—almost 11 seconds quicker than a Porsche 911 Turbo. At that speed the dragster can generate a force nearly five times that of gravity, which is equivalent to the same force generated by a space shuttle when leaving the launching pad. At the finish line the dragster is slowed down by a reverse force more than seven times that of gravity when the parachutes are deployed.

The races bring joy and satisfaction not only to competing drivers but also to spectators who come from across western Sydney, interstate and overseas. The prize money often does not cover the expenses of investing and participating in these races and dragster owners are often helped with sponsorships. The Fuchs Australian

National Championships attracts more than 10,000 spectators—people who love the sport and are passionate about it. Many of them travel long distances to attend the event, including interstate. The event is responsible for the creation of local jobs, which supports the local economy. About 200 people are associated with the event, mainly in the hospitality and motoring industries. These jobs do not exist only in the racing period; many of them continue throughout the year.

I thank Sami Sofi, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Sydney Dragway, and all the board members of Sydney Dragway. I also thank Mr Tony Beuk, Ms Mary Fabietti and Mr Peter Versluis for the courtesy they showed me during my visit and especially for the opportunity to stand at the start line. I wish them all the best for the future of their sport and their organisation.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I would not have picked the member for Smithfield as a dragster fan.

WOMEN OUT WEST

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [6.39 p.m.]: This is a great opportunity to inform the House of Women Out West, a terrific initiative that has been running in my electorate and across the west for the past 16 years. The Women Out West organisation provides women from the Central West, Orana and Barwon regions with an opportunity to increase their personal and business networks through regular events and a variety of social occasions. Women Out West provides a forum for regional women to learn, share and network with other women from the western region and beyond. Membership is open to all women who are looking for the opportunity to meet with likeminded women in a social environment while providing them with an opportunity to increase their business and personal networks. The group's members are women from a wide range of social and professional backgrounds and hail from towns throughout the west.

Women Out West was established in March 1995 by a group of women who came together in Dubbo to celebrate International Women's Day. Since its establishment, Women Out West has extended its activities from the annual International Women's Day get-together to monthly functions featuring guest speakers from the western region and beyond. In 2005 the Women Out West organisation was incorporated, which better placed it to meet the increasing needs of regional women. There are many reasons why women from regional New South Wales join Women Out West. For some it is a way to meet new people and get involved in the community. For others Women Out West provides access to personal and professional development activities. Some members join with a view to building their businesses. Others have joined because they enjoy the social activity with other regional women.

While the focus is not specifically on business and professional women, Women Out West offers members an opportunity to develop skills and contacts through monthly meetings, seminars and development workshops in a non-denominational and non-political environment. The goals of Women Out West include: to develop professional and leadership skills; to develop knowledge and understanding of the needs, problems and opportunities in local communities and worldwide; and to provide individual and group activities to serve the community and promote international understanding and goodwill towards all people. Women Out West recently held its annual awards. A number of inspirational women from my electorate were among the winners. I acknowledge and congratulate Barbara Bignell from Gilgandra who won the award for outstanding personal achievement which is awarded to a woman who has achieved positive changes while overcoming adversity in her life.

Sharon Harland from Cobar won the award for outstanding community leadership which is awarded to a woman who, in addition to working full-time either in her own business or in a managerial position, has worked tirelessly to improve the lives of others and institute positive changes in her community. Sharon also instigated the Cobar community paper which does an outstanding job of bringing people together. Christine Crisp from Warren won the sunshine award for the most outstanding optimistic woman, an award for a woman whose passion and optimistic outlook on life creates a happy environment. In addition I congratulate all members of Women Out West for their passionate advocacy on behalf of regional women. In particular I congratulate the group's president, Beth Hattenfels, and the rest of the committee for the time and effort they put into making Women Out West a success.

WAR VETERANS

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [6.43 p.m.]: I have a great deal of respect for and a deep sense of reverence toward Australians who have served in our armed forces. I had the honour of serving the

Australian Army as an officer and as a peacekeeper. Since that time I have grown even more indebted to our service personnel and acknowledge that we owe them a great deal of thanks. Their service cannot be underestimated and the Australian community readily acknowledges the contributions that our veterans make. Showing this respect is an important act of community thanks to let veterans know that their service and sacrifice is not only appreciated but also admired. It would be a moral travesty to think that some veterans were ignored and did not receive the recognition they deserve from the Australian people. Considering the personal cost of military service, it is not sufficient for public gratitude to be softly spoken. Rather, it must be loud and clear so that veterans are left in no doubt as to the public mood on their return.

While this appreciative sentiment has always existed, sometimes it takes rather too long for it to be felt by our veterans. One need only look at the embarrassing episode of treatment of returning Vietnam veterans for this issue to become apparent. It is disappointing and upsetting to note that it took 15 years after the end of the conflict in Vietnam before those veterans were given a homecoming parade. As members of this House are no doubt aware, many veterans still feel that their service is not adequately recognised when compared to service personnel in other conflicts. I commend Mr Rick Barney Bigwood, a constituent of mine. Today I had the pleasure of launching his book *We Were Reos* which relates to his experiences in Vietnam. It is an excellent warts and all, politically incorrect account of the Vietnam War from a serviceman's point of view. Further, it was a great honour for me to meet so many Vietnam veterans this morning—each of whom deserves our respect and admiration. It is essential for people like Rick Bigwood to step forward and record their experiences for the next generation lest we repeat the mistakes of the past.

I shudder to think that something similar to what faced our Vietnam veterans when they returned home could happen again with our twenty-first century peacekeepers. Even if one does not agree with the politics of military engagement, it is the duty of all Australians to respect our serving men and women and to ensure that they are aware of our appreciation. That is why I have written to the Prime Minister to request that our peacekeepers are given a homecoming parade befitting of the heroes that they are. The realities of modern conflicts that have no definitive end dates can mean that veterans do not get the same sense of closure as they did in previous engagements. A parade is a priority to ensure we show our service men and women the respect that they truly deserve.

WOLLONDILLY MACARTHUR REGISTERED CLUBS

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.47 p.m.]: The Registered Clubs Amendment Bill 2011 will directly impact on my electorate of Wollondilly. Clubs play an important role in communities across the State and Wollondilly is no different. We have a number of registered clubs that generously support our local region. These amendments will go a long way towards enabling this support to continue. Those opposite want to stifle the clubs industry with unnecessary regulations and red tape. One could be forgiven for thinking that both Federal and State Labor were outright against the industry. I need mention only briefly the legislation that will go before the House in Canberra that will dramatically affect the industry and in turn potentially hinder the support that these clubs offer the community. On the contrary, as Liberals and Nationals we have a different approach, demonstrated by our presence in this Chamber today.

The amendments that were introduced by our Minister will be the second part of reforms for the industry in a short period. This is because this side of the House recognises and appreciates the value of local clubs. These amendments are part of a memorandum of understanding that the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals signed with ClubsNSW in October 2010. The reforms will facilitate club amalgamations and de-amalgamations, allowing greater flexibility for asset and entitlement transfer between certain clubs; improve club corporate governance, viability and sustainability, offering a number of changes to the structure of boards and board elections; and other miscellaneous reforms, including asset management between clubs and private interests. Furthermore, the amendments will enable RSL and kindred clubs to permit current serving and ex-servicemen entry to their clubs as honorary members and remove the need to sign into the club.

These amendments and earlier amendments that were introduced this year will allow clubs like Wests Leagues Club and the Campbelltown RSL Club to continue to provide services in the greater Wollondilly-Macarthur region. The beauty of these clubs is that their support stays in the local community. Current support by Wests Leagues Club which services the Wollondilly-Macarthur region includes but is not limited to the Wests Tigers and Wests Juniors, the Macarthur Rams District Soccer Association, the Campbelltown Netball Club, the Ambarvale Little Athletics Club, the Ghosts Cricket Club and St Gregory's College.

Down the road is the Campbelltown Catholic Club, whose chief executive officer, Michael Lavorato, has ensured that the club, first and foremost, has a community focus. In 2009-10, the Campbelltown Catholic Club's donations totalled \$582,095. This represented over 40 per cent of the club's operating profit for the year being donated to our local community which exceeded the club's community development support expenditure obligations by 50 per cent for the year. Some of the beneficiaries during the year included Catholic Care School and Family Welfare Program, \$170,000; various schools in the area, \$100,000; internal sports clubs and school sporting associations, \$48,250; Mater Dei, \$40,000; Youth Solutions, \$40,000; Lifeline Macarthur, \$20,000; Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation, \$10,000; Youth Off The Streets, \$10,000; other local charities, \$24,000; and other special causes, \$44,047.

The Campbelltown Catholic Club also has the Teacher Education Scholarship Program through which it offers five scholarships to the value of \$2,000 to high school students wishing to study at the University of Notre Dame or the Australian Catholic University. Schools associated with this program include John Therry Catholic High School, Magdalene Catholic High School, Mount Carmel Catholic High School, St Gregory's College and St Patrick's College. With the addition of The Cube entertainment centre, the club regularly opens its doors in support of local community functions. The club allows educational seminars and courses to be held on the premises such as responsible service of alcohol and responsible conduct of gambling courses, boat licence tests and school debating contests. These fantastic organisations and the services they provide, like many others, would be under threat without support from the clubs, so I am disappointed but not surprised by Labor's standpoint on this.

Other amendments in this package include, but are not limited to, changing the name of the Casino Liquor and Gaming Control Authority to the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority to better reflect the independent role of the authority; enabling this same entity to impose conditions on liquor licences and reduce trading hours; and inserting regulation-making powers to clarify service charges for certain gaming-related applications and services. These amendments illustrate that we as a Government do not wish to stifle an industry that continues to provide entertainment, opportunity and employment for communities across New South Wales. I certainly support local clubs in the community and it is a shame that Labor does not. I congratulate the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, the Hon. George Souris, for his commitment to local clubs in the Wollondilly-Macarthur region and I support the bill.

BROTHERHOOD CHRISTIAN MOTORCYCLE CLUB

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [6.52 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the Brotherhood Christian Motorcycle Club. For over 30 years the Brotherhood Christian Motorcycle Club has travelled the roads of Australia and found ways to authentically share the good news of faith in Jesus Christ, help practically and personally those struggling to survive, and trodden the corridors of power to advocate for those marginalised throughout New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia. Greg Hirst and Grant Howard are active members of the Brotherhood Christian Motorcycle Club. I first met them in August this year when I was privileged to attend a motorcycle rally that went from Penrith to Parramatta. Over 200 bikers rode from Penrith into the heart of Parramatta where they were welcomed by the mayor. They did that in genuine partnership with Bikers Australia. They wanted to raise awareness of the homeless and those who sleep rough every night.

In the Parramatta area an estimated 350 to 500 people are sleeping rough. Each of the motorcyclists bought a blanket, which was packed into a big van and then distributed to the people sleeping rough in Parramatta. The Brotherhood offers a Christian ministry that works on the streets and in the motorcycle community doing outreach, advocacy and welfare. Its main mission is to lend a hand to those in need. It is based in Pitt Street, Parramatta, in my electorate and it has been doing good work in the community for over 30 years. Although there is some stigma attached to motorcyclists I will read from a letter from a former duty officer in Bathurst area command that refers to Mount Panorama. This comes from Greg Hirst's book, *My Motorcycle Life*. It states, "The expertise of Mr Hirst and members utilised by him from the Motorcycle Council has been instrumental in substantially reducing conflict between spectators and police."

It shows that as long ago as 1999 they were helping the community at such a big event to build bridges between the forces of law and order and those enjoying the fantastic spectacle at Bathurst. I am sure the member for Bathurst would agree with my comments about the good work that they do. They have other projects; for example, they are members of Parramatta Interagency, a group of social service organisations working together to address disadvantage in the area with a focus on homelessness. They also are doing great work with St John's Anglican Church in Parramatta and a number of other projects in religious education and welfare in schools. They provide wonderful support for not only the homeless but also schoolchildren.

Today I had the opportunity to talk to Greg Hirst and Grant Howard from the Brotherhood Christian Motorcycle Club and Tony O'Donnell from the Australian Confederation of Motorcycle Clubs when they came to Parliament to meet the Government and the Roads and Traffic Authority to discuss grassroots issues in the motorcycling community. They have positive relations with the Roads and Traffic Authority—now Transport for NSW—and they had input into the draft regulations on modifications of vehicles and bikes. They support the view that modified vehicles and bikes have a future in New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia.

I commend the Brotherhood for working against the stereotyping of motorcycle clubs. Not all motorcycle clubs are involved in antisocial or criminal behaviour. The Brotherhood is certainly a positive influence in the Parramatta electorate and more widely in New South Wales. I look forward to the upcoming Silverwater Motor Festival on 3 March next year where we will see a street and custom bike show and a custom and classic car show. I understand an invitation to attend will be extended to the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay. Finally, the club welcomes new members. It meets monthly and the next meeting is in November.

CAMDEN HAVEN VOLUNTEER MARINE RESCUE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [6.57 p.m.]: I speak about one of the true champion volunteers in my electorate, George Tedds. George has been a volunteer with the Camden Haven Volunteer Marine Rescue organisation for more than 22 years and last week was named Marine Rescue NSW 2011 Mid North Coast Senior Volunteer of the Year. This is fantastic recognition for someone who volunteers more than 40 hours a week for this organisation. George is renowned and highly regarded in the Camden Haven community for his untiring efforts. George's first involvement with Camden Haven Marine Rescue was as a radio watch operator over two decades ago. Since then he has excelled in the many other roles he has undertaken, including as president and in his current capacity as unit commander.

Having been a Royal Australian Air Force pilot during World War II, George has brought invaluable skills to the Marine Rescue volunteer unit, including radio expertise, leadership and team building. Despite being 89 years old and having associated health issues, his commitment, enthusiasm and dedication to his duties as a volunteer have never dwindled. I continue to marvel at the hours he gives to the Marine Rescue service as a guest speaker at community groups and certificate presentations as well as by making himself available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to direct emergency situations in Camden Haven.

It is no surprise that George is the oldest unit commander of a Marine Rescue unit. I have no doubt his commitment as a volunteer will not diminish anytime soon. George sets an example of which the Camden Haven Marine Rescue can be, and is, very proud. Recently I had the great pleasure of joining George and the other volunteer members of Camden Haven Marine Rescue as they celebrated their members' long service awards. It was a wonderful occasion not only to thank these fantastic men and women but also to present them with their awards and join them afterwards for a social barbecue. The 20-year award recipients were George Tedds, and Thomas Johnson, Colin Watson and Gary Chapman.

The 10-year award recipients were Ron Bolger, Carol Dyson, Graham Best, Robert Cain, Gordon Gray, Michael Morrison and Charles Troup. Just a few days after the awards ceremony I received a wonderful surprise via my email—a beautiful photograph of our award-winning George and me. I will certainly treasure it, and I look forward to catching up with him again soon. The awards ceremony coincided with this year's Mid North Coast SAREX, which was hosted by Camden Haven Marine Rescue. This is a search and rescue exercise, coordinated by Water Police and Marine Rescue. There were some eight vessels on the weekend. Saturday was the study day for the search and rescue exercise, and Sunday was the practical event. This was an outstanding success and shows just how well prepared the Camden Haven Marine Unit members are as they assure the safety of the people using our waterways. In closing, I once again extend my sincere congratulations to George Tedds on his well-deserved award.

CARBON TAX

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [7.02 p.m.]: I fear for the future of my family, my neighbours and my State. The threat is not from climate change. I am not a sceptic of climate change; it has occurred previously, it is happening now and it will continue to happen. That is fact and in my humble opinion it is undeniable. I am however a sceptic of big, dumb and wasteful government. I am a more passionate sceptic of government when, by accident or design, it seeks to destroy small business and families. It is unfortunate indeed that in my time the greatest threat to the people of Australia comes not from a foreign enemy but from its own Federal Government.

Good sense has deserted the Federal Labor Government and in its place we find deception and a lust for power of biblical proportions. The stakes are high and our nation, its wealth and its people are at risk. The once unimaginable is about to happen. It was even unimaginable just a short time ago to the very same Prime Minister who pretends affection to the well-being of our great country. Australia's economic strength, built upon the sacrifice and hard work not only of its people but of previous governments, will be much diminished by the imposition of a carbon tax.

When the Federal Government gets its way it will establish yet another huge bureaucracy to impose yet another tax on the Australian people. Chris Bowen, Federal Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, said on television on 13 September 2011 that the price of carbon would be set by the "markets". What he did not say was that the markets are manipulated by powerful interests that do not think twice about destroying communities on a global scale. How quickly we forget the global financial crisis, during which markets were predominantly left alone to determine what was good or bad. What was the result? I reflect that the common good was never an agenda item in the boardrooms of those greedy, self-interested organisations driven by a single objective—to get their hands on more and more money.

Does the Government, with its sad and sorry history of miserably inept governance of major programs, want us to believe that creating a huge pool of money and giving access to that pool through various mechanisms, many of which can easily be manipulated, is in the common good of the Australian people? As a principle direct action is the simplest, most transparent and most effective action. But the carbon tax is anything but direct, and because of this it is virtually impossible to link it to real and demonstrable outcomes. That is why overseas experience clearly shows that the carbon tax cannot be demonstrated to work. In fact in countries that have a carbon tax there is emerging evidence that costs are absorbed, there is no change to behaviour and it is now becoming less of a political priority against increasing challenges to its validity.

But today I wish to focus on the plight of Australian small businesses, especially the heavy energy users such as cake shops, takeaways, restaurants, bread shops, drycleaners, convenience stores, small manufacturing and light industrial businesses—the ones in which families have invested their savings, their hard work and aspirations for the future of their families. What of them as the costs of energy climb, as the increasing costs of services and products cut profits and compromise the financial viability of those businesses? What compensation will there be for lost business and distress to those families who suffer through the loss of all that they have worked for? I hear nothing from the Federal Government: no acknowledgement of their hardships, no acknowledgement that they exist. I am the member for Strathfield, and I am proud to represent one of the most diverse communities in Australia.

It does not escape me that many small businesses in my electorate are owned and operated by Koreans, Chinese, Indians, Sri Lankans, Lebanese, Italians, Greeks, Russians, Tamils and Vietnamese, amongst many others. The ethnic communities of those people will suffer more as a result of the effects of the carbon tax on their small businesses. I am angry at the contrast between our small businesses and our Federal Government. While our small business owners struggle to survive, counting every cent, being careful in how they spend their money, spending valuable family time investing in their businesses, paying their taxes and contributing to their local communities, the Federal Government, through increased taxes, is creating a pool of money that will most certainly do three things. It will create another Federal bureaucracy that will cost hundreds of millions of dollars each and every year, but will produce nothing of value. It will spawn another generation of lawyers and accountants whose job will be to lessen the obligation of those subjected to it. And it will encourage, indeed it will promote, vested interests to get the money, especially those interests located overseas.

Every Prime Minister in the history of this country has found causes and values, regardless of whether or not we agreed with them, that at least were motivated by the promotion of the common good. This Prime Minister has found the most derelict of causes, and in its prosecution she has discarded the most fundamental of the values we find most attractive in our communities—integrity. Just as she has discarded her integrity, so will her Government be discarded into history's garbage bin having left nothing other than a legacy of policy failure, missed opportunities and comic relief. I can only hope that the comic relief continues since the Government has provided much material for a new series of *Yes, Prime Minister*. The first episode can be titled *A Government that Lost Its Way—Twice*.

Ms Cherie Burton: Point of order: Firstly, the member proceeded beyond his allotted time of five minutes, and that is an abuse of the standing orders. Secondly, private members' statements are constantly abused in this House. It is a convention of this House that private members' statements must relate to their electorates and should not be inflammatory.

Mr Charles Casuscelli: Point of order—

Ms Cherie Burton: Let me finish my point of order. Time after time members have abused the private members' process.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member or Kogarah will resume her seat.

Ms Cherie Burton: I had not finished my point of order.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The House will continue with private members' statements.

Ms Cherie Burton: I had not finished my point of order. I am saying that we will start taking points of order.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I have heard the point of order. The member for Kogarah will resume her seat.

Ms Cherie Burton: Members are allowed five minutes to make their statements. If you want to start that, we will finish it.

Mr Charles Casuscelli: Don't be rude.

Ms Cherie Burton: Well, you learn the standing orders and conventions of this House. You are abusing private members' statements.

Mr Charles Casuscelli: You were not listening; I referred to my electorate and the businesses in it that will suffer from the carbon tax imposed by a Federal Government on your side of politics.

Ms Cherie Burton: You were abusing private members' statements. You mentioned no-one in particular. Who did you mention in your private member's statement? Nobody.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Strathfield and the member for Kogarah will resume their seats. I call on the member for Coogee to give his private member's statement.

WAVERLEY COUNCIL BEST AND BRIGHTEST BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [7.07 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure again today to commend the efforts of small businesses in my electorate. On Monday night I attended the Gala Awards night for Waverley Council's Best and Brightest business awards. I had the honour to present the Best Civic Heart award, one of 10 awards handed out on the night. I am proud to live and work in and to represent such a diverse and successful community as Waverley. The winners came from a distinguished list of 102 nominees, ranging from audio clinics to veterinarians, and everything in between. The great thing about these awards is that not only do they recognise stalwarts of Waverley's business community but they also recognise up-and-coming businesses making waves and serving their customers well.

The New Business With Bounce award recognises businesses that have been trading for fewer than 12 months. This year it was won by the appropriately named Bondi's Best Seafood, in Bondi, a seafood provedore and cafe with a sushi bar overlooking the iconic Bondi Beach, which is shared by my electorate and that of my colleague the member for Vacluse. In addition to selling their produce, Bondi's Best Seafood also provides cookery schools to help its customers prepare their purchases. The Brontosaurus award is an award for businesses that have been trading for more than 15 years. This year it was won by Let's Go Surfing, at Bondi Beach. Let's Go Surfing is the only officially licensed surf school on Bondi Beach, and it has been going from strength to strength ever since it started from the back of a van in 1995. I believe that members have to declare interests to this Parliament, and I therefore declare that the owner of Let's Go Surfing and I were class captains when we were 10 years old, so I put that on the public record. I suspect also that Let's Go Surfing has the best office in the world: working in the water at Bondi.

The awards do not simply recognise business excellence either; they reward good business practices, such as quality customer service, community-mindedness, environmental awareness and access for the disabled.

The Brightest and Best Front and Broadest Smile Award had four categories, one each for retail, health and beauty, cafe and restaurant and business support and professional services. The retail award was won by Lesley Lee Accessories in Charing Cross, the health and beauty award was won by Head Office Hair Specialist in Bondi Junction, the cafe and restaurant award was won by Sparrow Cafe and Bar at Bondi Beach, and the business support and professional services award was won by OPSM in Bondi Junction. The Brightest and Best Golden Bin Award is presented to the business best displaying the correct use of recycling procedures, as well as timely garbage presentation and take-in practices. This year the award was won by 119 Tattoo at Bondi Beach.

The Brightest and Best Green Footprint Award is presented to the business that takes on environmental initiatives, including conserving energy and water, good waste management practices and transport habits. This year the award went to Drygreen in Bondi Junction, an eco-friendly dry-cleaning business. The Brightest and Best Access All Areas Award recognises the efforts of businesses to develop business premises, policies or services to suit the needs of people with limited mobility and/or disabilities. Comfort and Fit in Charing Cross, specialists in orthopaedic footwear, was this year's winner. Finally, there was the Civic Heart Award, which I was asked to present. The Civic Heart award is presented to the business that best displays good corporate citizenship, including involvement, care and pride in the Waverley community. This year it was won by Gideon Shoes.

Gideon Shoes was started by Matt and Rupert Noffs as a way of providing sustainable funding to the Ted Noffs Foundation Street University in Liverpool—an organisation some members might recall I have spoken about on a previous occasion in this Chamber. The production of Gideon Shoes takes place entirely in Australia under ethical, safe and monitored conditions. Gideon Shoes wants to change the way we look at fashion products to ensure that they are not made in third-world sweatshops. I commend Matt and Rupert for their vision. The winners of these awards are not the only businesses to be commended for their efforts. In addition to 250 nominations, 102 finalists and 10 winners, many more businesses in Waverley serve their customers very well every day.

DHARAWAL NATIONAL PARK

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [7.12 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure and pride that I have the opportunity to talk about an issue of great concern to my community. It was an important election commitment and is being delivered. Of course, I refer to the commitment by the O'Farrell Government to turn the Dharawal State Conservation Area into a national park. This decision was announced on 8 January 2011 by the then Opposition leader, now Premier, and the then shadow Minister for the Environment and Climate Change in the other place, the Hon. Catherine Cusack, MLC. An important milestone toward the creation of Dharawal National Park was announced last Sunday, on 16 October 2011: BHP Billiton has decided to modify its Bulli coal project to exclude the area that will make up Dharawal National Park.

The national park is expected to be established at the end of this calendar year, which is a fantastic outcome for members of my community who are passionate about our local environment, especially along the Georges River. I acknowledge, of course, the member for Kogarah and you, Mr Acting-Speaker, as member for Heathcote. The health of the Georges River is vital for our local community, and the establishment of a national park will help protect our community from pollution downstream. This is an important first step of a long-term commitment to protecting and rehabilitating the Georges River.

The Dharawal National Park will cover 98.7 per cent of the current conservation area and be established without depth restriction to protect the declared area from mining activity. This is great news as the Dharawal area is a unique and beautiful part of our natural environment and is home to a rich biodiversity, including a number of endangered plants and 20 endangered animals such as Sydney's largest surviving koala population, possums, the yellow-bellied glider and the powerful owl. Dharawal also includes natural swimming holes, waterfalls, gorges and over 2,000 upland swamps that feed into O'Hare's Creek, the headwaters of the Georges River. These swamps are full of unique plant and animal life, which will be adequately protected by the declaration of a national park.

It is worth noting the importance of the Dharawal area to the Indigenous community of New South Wales as it contains important cultural sites, not to mention the invaluable and beautiful rock art. The establishment of the Dharawal National Park has been an issue dear to my heart for some time. I took this issue before Kogarah City Council last year in my capacity as a local councillor. I was successful in championing a motion to urge the New South Wales Government and Opposition to turn the State conservation area into a

national park. I was thrilled when the then Opposition, now Government, took up the cause as we now are seeing the fruits of those labours. One of the highlights of the March election campaign was bushwalking through the Dharawal with the Premier and my friends the member for Wollondilly, the member for Heathcote and the member Campbelltown. It has been a pleasure working with my colleagues to achieve this important milestone, including, of course, the former shadow Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Catherine Cusack, MLC.

The next step along the way came with the 2011-12 New South Wales budget, which indicated that \$107,000 would be committed to erecting signs and establishing walkways. In the last year I had the opportunity to bushwalk the area about five times and see firsthand the pristine environment and stunning landscape, as well as the Aboriginal cultural sites and sacred rock art. However, it is worth placing on the record the shocking lack of interest in the establishment of the Dharawal National Park shown by those opposite. The Opposition spokesperson for the environment in the other place, the Hon. Luke Foley, MLC, stated on 8 September in response to the first O'Farrell budget that there was "no funding to suggest the O'Farrell Government is serious about creating the Dharawal National Park."

Yesterday Opposition members voted against a motion to debate the importance of establishing Dharawal National Park. Opposition members should be ashamed of their actions towards the environment. I expect the Opposition spokesperson in the other place to show some contrition for his cynical spin. However, the actions of those opposite do not detract from the benefits of this announcement, which has been championed by many groups in my community, including the Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society, the Oatley Heritage Group, the conservation society and, of course, Rivers SOS Georges River. I am proud to be a member of a Government that delivers on its election commitments and puts the environment front and centre of its policy making. The Dharawal National Park is an excellent initiative and one that will allow future generations to enjoy a pristine environment on the edge of the Georges River, Sydney. I look forward with anticipation to the formal establishment of the park.

THE ENTRANCE PUBLIC SCHOOL CAREER EXPO DAY

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [7.17 p.m.]: Last month I was delighted to visit The Entrance Public School's Career Expo Day. The Career Expo Day was a school-wide event providing community leaders, business owners and other agencies with the opportunity to give students a broad introduction into a diverse range of career options. This expo marked the completion of a program called The Real Game, which introduced stage three students to real-life scenarios and equipped them with information to start thinking about what they might like to do in their life, and how they can plan, prepare and set goals. This was an outstanding initiative by The Entrance Public School. Many of the students in this area are from low socioeconomic backgrounds and experience difficulties particularly with employment opportunities. Therefore, the aim of the program was to inspire the students to dream big and harness their potential, to engage the students early in life, encourage them to start thinking about what they can be when they grow up and show them that with hard work and dedication they really can reach their goal.

In conjunction with its "you can do it" school student welfare plan the school piloted a careers booklet during the expo. Students were encouraged to fill out their booklet during the expo with what they liked and disliked about each profession they learnt about and rate their interest in pursuing each profession as a career. As the member for The Entrance I was invited to address rotations of groups of students to tell them about my experiences as a parliamentarian, what my role as a local member involves and how I came to be a member of Parliament. It was good fun to talk to students. They asked a lot of interesting questions such as: Why does everyone in the Chamber yell a lot during question time? Why does Julia Gillard always look so angry in Parliament? It is a true story.

To illustrate how a bill goes through Parliament I used the example of a homework bill—a bill that would mean that teachers would no longer be able to issue homework to students. It comes as no surprise that all the students voted overwhelmingly to pass the homework bill, much to the disbelief of the teachers. It was certainly a bit of fun. It was a great experience and I found the students interested in what it means to be a parliamentarian and to represent an electorate. Both teachers and students genuinely engaged in interactive conversation. I also had the opportunity to tour the school and see what other groups of students were doing. I was impressed to see that a broad range of careers was represented: from firefighters—truck included—to hospitality workers.

It was an invaluable opportunity for students to learn and gain an interest in different career opportunities. I give a special thankyou to Fiona Foley, who worked as part of the careers project team to

organise the day for the students and was of tremendous assistance from the moment I arrived at the expo. I to commend the principal of The Entrance Public School, Deborah Hannan, for fostering and encouraging an attitude of learning, and inspiring students to aim high. My best wishes to all of the students of The Entrance Public School for their future learning, especially to those students in year six who will be starting high school next year, and I look forward to the opportunity of visiting the school once again.

PINK SUNDAY

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.21 p.m.]: I had the pleasure of attending last Sunday 16 October the annual Pink Sunday event held by the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia on Queen Street, Woollahra, which is close to the electorate of Vaucluse, which I represent. As I make this statement today I am wearing my favourite pink dress because this event was to raise awareness of breast cancer within our community. It was a pleasure to join the new Mayor of Woollahra, Councillor Susan Wynne, the President of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia New South Wales Division Vicky Nadel, and also the convener, Dalia Sinclair Ayalon, who have championed this event for quite a number of years. Queen Street had already turned pink when I arrived on Sunday morning with dozens of shops and businesses on the street dressing their windows in pink. The atmosphere was terrific. There was an award for the best pink window and also an award for the best pink pooch, which did create some controversy.

The event was fun and there was a lot of community involvement. There were arts and crafts activity stalls and performances, including a phone machine, which was popular amongst young children that attended the event. It is an annual event and it is held to address the serious issue in our broader community of breast cancer and breast cancer awareness. The National Council of Jewish Women of Australia holds the event each year to support the Breast Cancer Network of Australia, which seeks to ensure that women diagnosed with breast cancer, and their families, receive not only the best information and treatment but all the care and support that is possible. Breast cancer is amongst the most common forms of cancer for Australian women but we often forget that men also suffer from breast cancer. In 2011 around 14,300 men and women were suffering from breast cancer in Australia.

Events such as Pink Sunday, which are fun, also spread the message that women need to be checked for breast cancer regularly, and the risk of developing breast cancer increases with age. A fact that I found particularly interesting and disconcerting is that women in the highest income quintile have similar incident rates of breast cancer to those in the lowest income quintile. It is a disease that can affect every woman regardless of geography, income or circumstance. The fact that any woman can develop breast cancer only increases the difficulties that medical researchers have in identifying the causes and working to find a cure. Promoting awareness and fund raising, as was done on Sunday, continues to be an important message to spread. Women need to get checked regularly for the disease and we need to support researchers in looking for a cure.

Each one of us will know someone in our lives, whether a work colleague, mother, sister, niece, or neighbour, that has been affected by breast cancer. I feel that when we know someone suffering breast cancer it is our responsibility to provide support and care and to help that person get through one of the most difficult experiences they will ever have to go through in their lives. Women and men suffering from breast cancer need to know that their family and loved ones are there to provide care, support and encouragement. All our lives are impacted when someone that we know develops breast cancer and we must look around for ways to best provide support through our community institutions, through our schools, our hospitals and the broader community.

Breast cancer really is an issue felt by the entire community and this is why it is so important that community groups such as the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia are involved in spreading awareness and raising much-needed funds to fight the disease in a way that displays good humour and good community spirit. The day that the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia organised was not only fun but it was also effective in spreading that broader message of awareness and hope. This was demonstrated by the wonderful activities for kids and teens. A creative art exhibition displayed artworks, stories and poetry produced by teens and children expressing their experiences with breast cancer in the community and how it impacted on their lives.

I had the pleasure of catching up at the event with my year-8 English teacher and writer Susanne Gervay and my dear friend drama and speech coach Sheila Kirche. Sheila has assisted a number of women into

politics. I congratulate the President of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia Nicky Nadel and event convener Dalia Sinclair Ayalon, not only for organising the event but for their commitment to raising awareness of breast cancer and spreading the message throughout the broader electorates. I look forward to another great and important event in Woollahra in the same vein next year.

Private members' statements noted.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.26 p.m. until
Wednesday 19 October 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
