

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 20 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.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the Speaker's Gallery Mrs Frances Grove and Ms Sarah-Jane Grove, who are guests of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. I also welcome the President of the Legislative Council and Clerk of the Parliaments, who are seated behind the bar of the House.

RETIREMENT OF RUSSELL DAVID GROVE, PSM, CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The SPEAKER: I advise the House that, sadly, I have received a letter from the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly dated 20 October 2011 in the following terms:

Dear Madam Speaker

As you are aware it is my intention to take my "leave" from my post as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly in November having completed over forty years of service, thirty of which have been at the Table-of-the-House.

It has been both an honour and privilege to serve Australia's oldest Parliament. Over this long period there have been great challenges and many changes. Throughout these times I have come to the view that only by having confidence in itself, and an ability to adapt to the new challenges while respecting the value of past practices, can the House survive as the sovereign body of our State. Unwarranted and unfounded criticism from whatever quarter should not deflect Members from their important duties and responsibility as representatives of the people of New South Wales.

Can I also express my great debt of gratitude to members of the staff of the House, at all levels, who have given me loyalty as a very diligent and efficient team. Especially can I mention Manuela Sudic in my office without whose invaluable help and support in recent years I would have not been able to fulfil my role as Clerk of the House. I would also like to thank my colleagues in the Legislative Council and Department of Parliamentary Services for their collegiate support. Most importantly can I say that my career with the Legislative Assembly would have not been possible without the love, support and encouragement of my wife Frances and daughter Sarah-Jane.

Friendships with Members and colleagues in the scattered Commonwealth parliaments, which together form an important parliamentary community, has given me both much pleasure and many valuable experiences. Here in New South Wales I have enjoyed working, across party divides, with Members of the House, past and present and with Members and colleagues in "the other place."

Madam Speaker, may I thank you and former Speakers, with whom I have worked closely over many years, for the trust and candid exchanges we have enjoyed which have at times assisted in dealing with serious and sometimes difficult situations.

Finally, may I offer my very best wishes to all Members and Officers of the Legislative Assembly for every success in their future endeavours.

Yours faithfully

Russell D. Grove
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

On 4 November 2011 Russell David Grove is to retire as the seventeenth Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. Mr Grove joined the staff of the Legislative Assembly on 15 February 1971 via Kyogle High School and the University of Sydney. He held a variety of positions in the Legislative Assembly office, when on 1 February 1974 he was promoted to Parliamentary Officer—Table, the most senior non-Chamber position on staff. His experience in that position provided him with a solid grounding in the practice of the Legislative Assembly and invaluable experience in preparation for service at the Table, which commenced on 19 February 1981 when he was appointed Second Clerk-Assistant. On 15 October 1984 he was appointed Clerk-Assistant, a position that in March 1989 was redesignated Deputy Clerk. Consequent on the resignation of his predecessor, Grahame Cooksley, Mr Grove was appointed Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on 8 September 1990. He will have been Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for 21 years, one month and 26 days, and as such is the longest-serving Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, having already achieved that milestone on 18 November 2008.

Since 1971 Mr Grove has witnessed much redevelopment of the parliamentary precinct, including the completion in the early 1980s of the office block that now accommodates members, the Parliamentary Library and dining rooms and the administrative offices that link the office block with the historic façade of Parliament House as well as the renovation of this Chamber. Mr Grove has also been an enthusiastic and supportive participant in the exponential growth and evolution of the role and functions of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly into significant management and administrative responsibilities, as well as the expansion of services provided to members; for instance, the provision to members of electorate offices and staff and the rise of the multitude of technologies now adapted for use in all aspects of parliamentary work. Perhaps none so profound as information and communications technology for the instantaneous dissemination of massive volumes of information and for the desktop publishing of the various House papers following the closure of the Government Printing Office.

Sir Kevin Ellis, the Speaker in 1971, would not recognise the precinct nor much parliamentary practice of today. The physical transformation from some of the rambling physical surrounds mirror the procedural changes that have taken place in the Legislative Assembly in the past 40 years. This period saw many procedural innovations. The standing orders have been revised on a regular basis with the notable feature the tradition-breaking change that now provides for the contemporary stages in regard to the passage of legislation as "introduction", "agreement in principle", "consideration in detail", and "passing". They have replaced the original terms of "first, second and third readings" and "Committee of the Whole". In 1994 the standing orders were rewritten in plain English—a massive undertaking. The commanding reference book *New South Wales Legislative Assembly Practice, Procedure and Privilege* was also produced under Mr Grove's editorship and published in 2007.

In the traditional areas of the work of the Clerk, Mr Grove's procedural knowledge is authoritative, unsurpassed and is respected by all members and officers. He has always reacted to unfolding events in the House instantaneously under pressure and acted decisively in supporting the Speaker and members. This was especially highlighted as the Clerk during the tumult and procedural pragmatism of the hung Parliament from 1991 to 1995. From 1984 Mr Grove has also held the position of Honorary Secretary, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, New South Wales. In that capacity many members and staff past and present of other jurisdictions would have made acquaintances with him. From 1986 Mr Grove has also been a regular attendee at annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Commonwealth Parliamentary conferences and the annual general meetings of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table. Mr Grove was last week made an honorary life member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, New South Wales Branch.

In 2001 Mr Grove was elected to the inaugural executive of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table [ANZACATT], holding the office of Secretary-Treasurer until 2004, and more lately has been the returning officer for the association. He is also a member of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group and has been the chair of the New South Wales chapter. Mr Grove has also been a prolific contributor to a wide range of local, national and international conferences and seminars, presenting papers, being a panellist, chairing sessions, and offering considered comments and views from the floor. Mr Grove has also had extensive involvement in training and development activities to enhance the capacity of a number of legislatures, including in 1996 when invited as an expert adviser on the establishment of the Palestinian Legislative Council. Mr Grove has built up an extensive network of relationships in all areas of his work and around the world.

As Clerk he made it policy to provide prompt responses to queries and requests from other parliaments and in doing so he has enhanced the profile and reputation of the Legislative Assembly around Australia and the world. In acknowledgement of Mr Grove's career he will be nominated for honorary life membership of the Australia and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table at its annual meeting in January 2012. He has already been awarded life membership of the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments as well as both the Association of Clerks at the Table in Canada and the American Society of Legislative Clerks and Secretaries. Also in recognition of his service he received the New South Wales Public Service Medal in 2000 and was made a Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia in 2011. He will shortly be awarded the Long Service Medal for 40 years service in the New South Wales public sector.

Despite Mr Grove's solid work schedule, he has found time to be an active member of Rotary International. For his services to Rotary he was made a Paul Harris Fellow in 1997. I believe also he has just been elected president of his local Rotary branch—the members of which can look forward to the reformation of that branch, no doubt. The Legislative Assembly has been very ably served by Mr Grove. It is all the more a

better place with senior officers of the calibre of Russell David Grove. His more than 40 years service—more than 30 years of which have been as a Table Officer and with the past 21 years being the longest serving Clerk of the House—places Mr Grove as *primus inter pares*, first among equals, of all those senior officers who have served the Legislative Assembly and entitles him to tribute by this House.

Behind Russell, his wife, Frances, has been a constant and staunch supporter of his career. Mrs Grove has frequently and freely given of her time to accompany official visitors, being involved in their programs and making them feel welcome. Mrs Grove has also been an attendee at many official functions. I congratulate and thank Frances. Through these she has become known and liked by many members, including the current Speaker. While it is a sad occasion that Mr Grove's long official association with the Legislative Assembly must come to a close, on behalf of the House I wish him and Mrs Grove many happy and healthy years in retirement.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [10.17 a.m.]:
I move:

That:

- (1) the Speaker's remarks with reference to Mr Russell David Grove on his retirement from the position of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly be entered in the *Votes and Proceedings*;
- (2) Mr Grove's 40 years of distinguished service to the Legislative Assembly, including a record 21 years as Clerk of the House, be noted; and
- (3) this House in recognition of his meritorious service, and on the occasion of the retirement of Mr Russell David Grove, extends him the honorary title Clerk Emeritus.

To some extent we are honouring today the man who was not there. The fact is that the officials who sit at the table of Parliaments like ours in the place are invisible. If we read *Hansard* we might see the odd reference to the Clerk at the start of each Parliament when the Speaker is elected or when a particular petition or paper is being presented to this place, but in many ways they are invisible. In recent weeks I have been looking through some of the books about this Parliament, including the history of the Parliament produced for the sesquicentenary, *Decision and Deliberation*, and I noted that in that publication Mr Grove did not even make the index. When in the books I looked at that were written by a number of Presiding Officers, including the Hon. Kevin Rozzoli, Mr Grove did not make the index. In a most recent publication written by a former member of this House *The Fog on the Hill*, its author, Frank Sartor, did not mention Russell Grove.

Every one of us who has served in this place is indebted to those who sit at the table of this Chamber. Each of us is indebted to Russell David Grove as Clerk of the House. He has loyally and skilfully provided advice without partisanship to people who have come here since he took a position with the Parliament in 1971. As you said, Madam Speaker, he has been Clerk of the Legislative Assembly since 1990 and a member of the staff of this establishment since 1971. Forty years is a very long time to serve in a single place of employment these days. Russell Grove has done so and done so to the best of his ability. For the benefit of the children from Copmanhurst and Tucabia Public schools who are in the gallery today, Mr Grove's achievement is an example of the great benefits of public education: a boy from the bush who went to Kyogle High School and came to the University of Sydney—although perhaps in his own words his time at the University of Sydney is not one to be held out to students as an example—ended up in this Parliament as the longest serving Clerk of this place.

Seventeen Clerks in the history of this building—the oldest of Australia's Parliaments—and 43 Premiers tells us something about the longevity of those who sit at the Table. When Russell Grove started with this establishment, Speaker Ellis was in the chair—that redoubtable fighter from Coogee; the man who lost his seat more often than he won his seat but who is regarded, even by Neville Wran, as one of the finest Speakers to have sat in the chair of this Chamber—a place now occupied by you, Madam Speaker, the first female to hold the position of Speaker in the Parliament's history. He served under too many Premiers to mention—from Bob Askin when he first arrived in this place, through to me. He served through four changes of government: in 1976 when the baton changed from Eric Willis to Neville Wran; in 1988 when it changed from Barrie Unsworth to Nick Greiner; in 1995 when it changed back from John Fahey to Bob Carr; and of course when the Coalition won office again at the recent election.

Like Neville Wran, Nick Greiner and Bob Carr, I am indebted to Russell Grove for the advice he provided to an incoming government, to a new government, to a new Premier, to a new Leader of the House on the way in which place operates. It has been a remarkable period of service, advising eight Speakers, 12 Premiers and eight Leaders of the House—and Mr Hazzard tells me that he is the best of the lot. Russell

Grove has sat through 2,168 sitting days—more than 20,000 hours spent in this place—and 6,300 divisions. What is the importance of that? Mr Grove sat at the Table through if not all at least most of those divisions and during debate on more than 6,000 bills.

When he first arrived this was a Chamber of 96. It grew in 1987 to a Chamber of 109 and for the past 13 years it has been a Chamber of 93 individuals. Each of those individuals who have come and served in this place through that time owes something to Russell Grove. In our Westminster system members of Parliament are also sometimes called parliamentarians. The *Australian Oxford Dictionary* defines a "parliamentarian" as a member of Parliament, especially one who is particularly skilled with the procedures of the House. That certainly applies to some members of Parliament, but not all. But the most skilful people in this place in relation to the procedures of the House are those who sit at the Table—those who are invisible. Yet in other parliaments, for example, in the United States Congress, the term "parliamentarian" applies in both the Senate and the House of Representatives to the very position that Mr Grove holds—the position that provides procedural advice to those who preside over both of those Chambers.

In his period as Clerk, Russell Grove saw some of the highlights. He certainly saw Premiers Askin, Wran, Greiner and Carr at their peaks. He saw some of the great orators. I think the last member of this place whose speeches drew members to the Chamber was probably Jim Cameron, who was also a former Speaker of this place. He has seen the colourful characters—like George Peterson, who perhaps up until Michael Photios held the record for the member most thrown out of this Chamber. He has seen members like Paul Whelan and Eric Willis, who were great tacticians and great procedural experts for their parties in this place.

The point I make is that throughout all of his service, which has been supported by Frances and his daughter, Sarah-Jane, Russell Grove has given himself to this place. He and I used to share side-by-side parking spots downstairs in the car park. I do not think at any time I touched his car—certainly not with my car—although I noticed the odd scratch on his car from time to time. I knew the hours that he spent here because his car was in its space before I arrived and it was there after I left—and they were in the days when I was coming in early to visit level 2 and in the days when this place used to sit very late. He has put this place before himself and before his family and he has done so because of his service to the State. I am pleased to move this motion. I am pleased to be acknowledging the sort of service that Russell Grove has given to this Parliament for four decades. I am pleased to be acknowledging the longest-serving Clerk in the history of the New South Wales Parliament who is joining part of the history of the longest-serving Parliament in the nation.

I want to break with tradition and will do so in the spirit of bipartisanship. During the election campaign I ran into Barrie Unsworth as I was out campaigning and we made a bet that became quite famous, having made its way onto television. If I may be permitted present a gift in the House—and I thought about doing this later at the morning tea in your courtyard, Madam Speaker, but I thought, what the heck, let's do it in front of everybody—I want to present Russell with the bottle of wine that Barrie Unsworth paid in honour of losing his bet about who would win the seat of Rockdale at the last election. The bottle is inscribed "To Premier Barry" and it is signed "Barrie Unsworth", and it says it is "from Rockdale". It is a bottle of the Parliament's 2009 vintage and I present it to Russell as a memento. It is probably worth drinking, Russell—you should drink it quickly and fill the bottle with coloured water.

I say again that those who sit at the Table of this Chamber ensure that this place works. Those who have sat at the table of this place for the past 150 to 160 years have been central to everything that has happened here. Remarkably, for the first six months of this place there were no standing orders, so one can imagine that the first Clerk certainly earned his money—but no less so has Russell Grove. This place is important; it brings all communities across New South Wales together to make laws for the betterment of our society and to ensure the opportunities that people in this State and nation have always had. Russell Grove is as much a part and parcel of that as any member who has served here, no matter in what office. I conclude by saying that one of the things about Russell that I have always enjoyed is visiting his office—it is stuffed full of many wonderful things.

Mr Daryl Maguire: Eclectic.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is eclectic—that is a nice way of putting it. My wife would describe it differently if it was my study. As you walk that corridor in the older part of the building, as you look at yourself in that mirror that distorts the vision, as you hear the creaking floorboards—which I am sure in the old days, Russell, was a reminder for you to put out your cigarette—you walk into a wonderful part of this building, a building about which a decision was made in 1973, whilst Russell was here, to renovate, and which, again whilst Russell was here, was opened in 1984. There is a wonderful staircase outside the Clerk's offices. In that

regard—and as I said earlier, to a large extent Russell has been invisible to the record because of the way in which *Hansard* operates—I was reminded of the following wonderful piece of poetry by William Hughes Mearns:

Yesterday upon the stair
I met a man who wasn't there
He wasn't there again today
Oh, how I wish he'd go away

Russell, I do not wish you would go away but regrettably you will not be in this place for much longer. I want to say on behalf of the Parliament and on behalf of the people of New South Wales that we have enjoyed your service and acknowledge your service; it has been lengthy, meritorious and loyal service to the people of New South Wales and we thank you for it.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [10.27 a.m.]: It is a great privilege to support this motion and be able to honour Russell David Grove today for his decades of tireless service to the people of New South Wales and, of course, to the several generations of parliamentarians who have passed through this place during his tenure. I would like to say that I hope that the years have not been too difficult, but I am afraid the answer might not be something we would like to hear. It is fitting that we farewell Russell Grove in this place—a building and institution that he has shaped and influenced more than anyone over his career. And what a career it has been. Russell Grove has been the longest serving Clerk of the Legislative Assembly in the Parliament's 155-year history. Indeed, when I first worked in this building as an apprentice electrician, Russell had already been a stalwart of this House for more than a decade. When I returned later in life as an elected representative he had held the office of the Clerk for almost 18 years.

While I have served in this place for all too brief a time when compared with the time spent here by our esteemed Clerk, I believe I can speak for all of us here today and for those who came before us when I say that Russell Grove's exemplary service and assistance has been invaluable. He more than any of us keeps this place running seamlessly. Without the advice and guidance of Russell Grove on procedure and protocol we would all be cast adrift in the sea of standing orders. Indeed, it was Russell Grove who undertook the significant reform of rewriting the standing orders in plain English during the tumultuous hung Parliament of 1991 to 1995. It was also Russell who produced and edited the *New South Wales Legislative Assembly Practice, Procedure and Privilege*, providing an authoritative reference for dealing with matters within this House.

It is to his credit that he has dealt so patiently with each new set of parliamentarians, and while the faces may have changed, I am sure the Clerk is still being asked the same questions. When I joined this House and then became Leader of the Opposition Russell was very giving of his time and allowed me many opportunities to ask questions and provided a great deal of advice. I genuinely appreciate that and I place on record my appreciation for the time he spent with me and some of my staff providing that advice and assistance. This place is rather different from the other place. To have come in as a new member and also as the new leader, I appreciate the assistance he has provided to me.

Russell has served with good humour and an impassiveness and impartiality that has seen him win bipartisan support. Nothing demonstrates that more than these proceedings today. He has gained the respect not only of both sides of the House but also of the entire range of the political spectrum. I doubt that there is any other person with Russell's extensive knowledge of the procedures and history of this place. Indeed, he embodies much of that recent history. During his 40 years of service in Australia's oldest Parliament, as the Premier said, he has worked with 12 Premiers and eight Speakers but, owing much to his own contribution, only five Clerks, including himself. As the Premier also said, Russell has presided as Clerk of this House for well over 10,000 hours of sittings. That seems a great deal of time to spend sitting at that table listening to what at times I am sure is robust debate and at other times less than exciting contributions.

Russell has always conducted himself with aplomb—an example that many of us could emulate. During his time in this place, Russell has overseen more than 3,000 divisions, the passage of 2,900 bills and the tabling of almost 25,000 petitions. While I could go on and on about Russell's service in this place, it is his service to this Parliament and the institution of our State's democracy that is probably one of his most significant and lasting legacies. It is in great part Russell's drive and determination that has raised the profile of our Parliament through the excellent parliamentary education program and the many school programs that have been conducted across New South Wales during his time in this place. While cynicism and disengagement with the democratic process has sadly been rising steadily within our society, Russell has dedicated his time and efforts to encouraging young people and the community generally to take part in the parliamentary process.

It is a shared belief we hold in this place that our Parliament is here to serve the people of New South Wales, and that if people want to make a change they cannot simply sit on the sidelines and criticise, they must stand up and get involved. We are privileged to have someone in this place like Russell Grove, who has supported the democracy of New South Wales in the same way that members do. It is essential that we who serve within this place continue to engage our society with the discourse of Parliament. I would argue that no-one has been more committed to that goal than Russell Grove. I believe it will be thanks to Russell that the next generation of young leaders will take that step to represent their communities, and it is with great pleasure that I commend him for the drive and vigour with which he has pursued that goal.

While I can scarcely understand how he has found the time, Russell has also been a tremendous contributor to the wider community both at home and internationally. I will not detail the many different areas in which he has been involved because both you, Madam Speaker, and the Premier have already done so. However, I will cite one example of his commitment not only to democracy in New South Wales but also to fostering it across the world, and he is recognised throughout the world for the work he has done in that regard. In 1994 Russell was involved in training and development for the newly elected members of the Malawi Parliament in Africa following that country's very first democratic election.

In 1996 he was also invited to assist in the establishment of Palestine's Legislative Council and to observe Palestine's first election. That was a task not for the faint of heart and it is yet another reflection of his commitment to the democratic process and support for its implementation across the world. While we are here today honouring Russell Grove, it is the members and the people of New South Wales who have been honoured to have been able to lay claim to Russell's expertise for so long. He has not only served this Parliament admirably; he has also served the wider community and done an exemplary job of both. Russell is among the most respected and esteemed in the world within his profession and the New South Wales Parliament has been truly lucky to have him.

This morning I spoke to former Premier Bob Carr and asked him whether he believed there was anything I should say about Russell. I note that Russell just raised his eyebrows. The former Premier said that Russell is highly esteemed for his sense of humour and his great sense of duty to this place. He noted and appreciates that Russell has a genuine love of the institution, it is his passion and he is committed to it. The most telling thing that the former Premier said was that Russell Grove is part of the flavour of this place. That captures the situation perfectly. He has been the Clerk for so long that he is the essence of this place.

While as the Premier said, he is not often referred to in *Hansard* or any of the histories that members write when they leave this place, he will leave a mark that will be remembered for many generations. We will miss Russell Grove and I certainly hope that he enjoys his well-deserved retirement with his wife, Frances, and his daughter. Having read so much about what he has done in his 40 years in this place, I cannot imagine that he will be resting on his laurels doing very little. I am sure our society will still benefit from his contribution. Like the Premier, I pay my respects to Russell Grove. I thank you for your fantastic service to this Parliament and to the people of New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his comments.

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services) [10.37 a.m.]: As the Leader of The Nationals in New South Wales I am delighted to support this motion and to associate all Nationals members with the remarks made by the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and your good self, Madam Speaker, about Russell Grove. Russell Grove's service to this Parliament has been both long and outstanding. Over the 155-year history of this House he has been in parliamentary service for more than one-quarter of its existence having served since 1971 and as Clerk of the House for one-eighth since 1990. During his time in the service of the House, he has seen 11 premiers, including the current Premier, nine as a Table Officer and seven as the Clerk. The significance of this is that while Premiers, governments, oppositions and members come and go, Russell has remained as the keeper of the practices, traditions and dignity of this House come what may.

I was reminded of that fact the other day when on the ABC 7.30 program I saw footage of a past Treasurer and member for Willoughby, the Hon. Peter Collins, address the House as the then Leader of the Opposition. It struck me that the only people now still in the same seats from that time were, of course, the Table Officers, led by Russell Grove in his seat as the Clerk. I imagine that if one watched all the end-of-year blooper tapes compiled by the press gallery in one sitting one would also see that, while people came and went around him, the one constant would be the Clerk. I have been in this place for a relatively short period—about

12½ years. In my early years in Opposition I observed Russell giving advice to Labor Speakers and leaders of the House—characters such as John Murray, John Aquilina, Paul Whelan and Carl Scully. On occasion some of my colleagues suggested that Russell favoured the Labor Party. However, his advice continued to be offered to the Independent Speaker, the member for Northern Tablelands, and subsequently to our Liberal Speaker and the Leader of the House.

Throughout that time Russell's advice has been impartial, procedural and helpful to the effective operation of this parliamentary institution. I am sure that other members appreciate the high-quality procedural advice that Russell has given to them over the years relating to the administration of the House. They would also appreciate his management of the Department of the Legislative Assembly. Being human beings, members sometimes slip up either behaviourally or with their paperwork, but Russell is always ready with discreet and helpful advice. Over the past 40 years there has been the odd incident in this House for which Russell has had to provide his frank, fearless, professional and discreet advice. In my time in this place there have been some amazing incidents that would have made good reading, but imagine what stories Russell could tell if he chose to write a memoir about his 40-year career. I recall a notorious criminal in the members bar, unfortunate incidents in Minister's offices, and the exploits of tired and emotional members in the Chamber, including a famous lunge over a bench in this Chamber.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: And I got thrown out.

Mr ANDREW STONER: At that time the Premier was ejected from this House for using unparliamentary language. These incidents are merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to what Russell has seen in his 40 years of dealings with famous and infamous characters. *The Fog on the Hill*, that notable tome that has been oft-quoted in recent debates, would be outsold and relegated to the bargain basement if Russell wrote his memoir. But, ever discreet, I am sure that Russell will not write his memoir. I will now address Russell's commitment and service to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and his commitment to the community more broadly through Rotary. As many members would know, over the years other parliamentary jurisdictions have called on Russell to draw on his experience and advice on parliamentary matters.

Russell has become an important part of the collective memory of the Westminster parliamentary tradition, particularly in our region. Many members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association abroad, particularly the national Parliament of the Solomon Islands and the autonomous region of Bougainville House of Representatives with which the New South Wales Parliament is twinned, have all relied greatly on Russell's knowledge and experience. They will be as sorry as we are to see him go. In Russell's role as secretary of the New South Wales branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association onerous travel requirements were often placed on his shoulders. Never one to complain, Russell dutifully packed his bags and endured the rigours of travel to numerous and far-flung Commonwealth jurisdictions around the globe. We thank him for that.

As local members of Parliament, many of us Rotarians ourselves, we frequently attend events hosted by Rotary and other service clubs in our electorates. We all understand the significance of the Paul Harris Fellowship that Russell was awarded in 1997 for his service to the international community, particularly in the area of developing countries. Along with his Public Service Medal for his long experience, dedication, commitment and professionalism these are worthy recognitions of his achievements. As retirement approaches, on behalf of The Nationals I wish Russell and his long-supportive wife, Frances, a long and enjoyable retirement. I thank him for everything that he has done for this place. We will never know what Russell's politics truly are. We have no idea, but I know he is an intelligent person. I know that he originally hailed from Kyogle, so should he retire to a regional area I am sure he will be voting National. Once again we extend to Russell, Frances and their family our best wishes. Russell's successor, when confirmed, will have a very big wig—I mean shoes—to fill.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.44 a.m.]: Madam Speaker—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: He made you look good.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: I acknowledge the Premier's valid interjection. The honourable Clerk, as I called him, did make me look good. It is with pleasure that I acknowledge the contribution of Russell Grove, PSM, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. Madam Speaker, I thank you and the Leader of the House for giving me an opportunity to speak at this time. The honourable Clerk, as I call him, will soon be known as Clerk Emeritus. I do not usually pre-empt the outcome of a motion of this House, but I think I can safely do so today.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Russell has got the numbers.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: The Clerk has the numbers today. The Premier, the Deputy Premier and the Leader of the Opposition went through the Clerk's curriculum vitae, listed his numerous achievements and informed us of the various roles in which he performed with distinction. I will not go over Russell's achievements again other than to endorse the remarks made earlier and to congratulate Russell on those achievements. When I was the Speaker of this House I worked closely with Russell, as have all Speakers, including Speaker Hancock, which is a tribute to Russell. I called Russell the honourable Clerk but I do not think he once called me Richard. He always referred to me as Mr Speaker. Russell was from the old school.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: He's got a good memory.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: And he has a good memory. I am pleased to contribute in debate on this motion and to recognise Russell's distinguished service and contribution to the Speakers and members of this Assembly, dedicated staff across the board and, as the Premier said, the people of New South Wales. In the four years in which I had the great honour of serving as Speaker I think I saw the Clerk more than I saw my wife. I do not want anyone to draw any conclusions from that comment but it simply underlines the close and positive working relationship that we had. Russell has continued those kinds of relationships with people at every level and with all the Speakers who have served in this place. As Speaker I could rely on Russell's advice every time. Every time Russell gave me advice he did so with integrity and with the public interest in mind. I never doubted his advice. We dealt with a number of positive issues but we dealt also with a number of tough issues. Russell's professionalism and dedication always impressed me. As I said, I never had any occasion to doubt him.

The Deputy Premier referred earlier to the number of overseas trips Russell made—a truly international Clerk. When I visited even the remotest parts of Africa people would ask me, "Where are you from, Mr Speaker?" When I answered and said that I was from Australia they would ask, "Do you know Russell?" I say in jest that I got used to the fact that the Clerk had a much higher profile overseas than the Speaker of the day, which was appropriate. The high regard that members in this Chamber have for Russell is matched internationally. His advice is sought, he is highly regarded and he is a prolific contributor to a range of activities in Australia and abroad. His work with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, with other parliaments, and with Rotary, which has been acknowledged, is worthy of such special acknowledgement.

I could tell many stories about the lighter moments we shared at some of the conferences that I was fortunate to attend with Russell. However, as members know, the standing orders dictate that what happens between a Speaker and a Clerk at conference stays at conference. I will observe the standing orders. I recognise that my term as Speaker was short compared to Russell's distinguished 40-year career. I have many memories of, and achieved many positive outcomes in, my term as Speaker. I can only imagine how many positive outcomes Russell has achieved in his 40 years in this place. I hope he publishes his memoirs—in about 50 years time—as many of us would need to die before it could be published. I am certain that Russell's memoirs would not be foggy; they would be very clear. I acknowledge all the publications to which Russell has contributed and the many conference papers that he prepared.

I also offer my congratulations to Russell and his family, to Frances and Sarah-Jane. It was wonderful to get to know you. Frances, I know that the support you have given Russell throughout his career resulted in his significant contribution to this place, for which we thank you and Sarah-Jane. My wife Rosemary asked me to pass on her best wishes. I am pleased, honoured and privileged to have worked with the Clerk, who will always be Clerk Emeritus to me. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.50 a.m.]: It is a great privilege to speak in debate on the retirement of Russell David Grove, PSM, from his esteemed role as Clerk of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. When I first came into this place in 1991 it quickly dawned on me that—at least within the walls of this Parliament, the mother Parliament of the nation—Russell Grove was the first and last bastion against the excesses that potentially could impinge on those great democratic freedoms that the New South Wales community enjoyed. There might be other avenues outside the Parliament but he was the man; he was the font of wisdom, very able to give guidance on all aspects of the parliamentary and democratic processes that underpin the democratic freedom that all New South Wales residents take for granted. For a brief time it is worthwhile reflecting on the history of the role that Russell Grove has fulfilled in this place. In fact, the role of the Clerk in Parliament goes back almost 650 years.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: He has been here that long?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: No, Russell has not been here the whole of that time, as the Premier just suggested—back to 1363. The role of Clerk in Parliament has a history, a culture and an understanding that has evolved over hundreds of years. Russell has been the embodiment of so many of those values. In 2002 Ian Harris, who was the Clerk of the House of Representatives, addressed Juris Doctor students on the role of the Clerk in the Westminster system. He noted, amongst other things, that traditionally the Clerk is neither partisan nor politically motivated. Ian Harris highlighted these characteristics by quoting—and most members who have studied this at school will have a dim recollection of it—Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. He quoted from *The Clerk's Tale*, which I believe Russell has not read. Taking licence for just a moment, I think Chaucer's clerk might have come from Oxford but this Clerk came from Potts Point:

*There was a Clerk from Potts Point,
His horse was lean as is a rake ...*

*And he was not very fat, I affirm,
But looked emaciated and moreover abstemious,
His short overcoat was very threadbare.*

*He spoke not one word more than was needed,
And that was said with due formality and respect,
And was short and lively, and full of elevated content.*

*Sir Clerk of Potts Point, our Host said.
You ride as demure as does a maid,
Who is just married, sitting at the banquet table,
This day I heard not one word from your tongue.*

How appropriate for our Clerk from Potts Point. In the time that I have been the Leader of the House, more often than not I have not heard a word; I have simply seen the raised eyebrow—and I have seen that on a number of occasions. Setting aside the characteristics of emaciation and being abstemious, Russell fits all those other descriptors. With due formality and respect he has proffered to members on both sides of the House owl-like advice without fear or favour to premiers and members of Parliament who have served New South Wales over the past 40 years. Russell, I will remember you, not just for the role that you have played in this place and for the advice that you have given me—sometimes quiet advice in your office—which has been enriching, uplifting and reinforcing as we all face the challenges of parliamentary life.

Anybody who has visited Russell's office on the eighth floor knows that it is a juxtaposition of the many intersecting avenues of Russell's life. The first thing that you notice is that there are many wise owls in his office. In addition to this wise owl, Russell Grove, he has many others that I am sure have been gifts reflecting on his role in the parliamentary process. There is the wind chime version as you go onto his balcony where cigars used to be smoked but which are no longer smoked. Another wise owl wears a full cloak that makes it look exactly like a clerk. In fact it looks remarkably like Russell but is not quite as tall as him.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: With the wig on.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: With the wig on they look very similar. Today Russell has his wig on. In all the time that the owl has been in his office it has never worn one of Russell's loud shirts, so at least one of the owls has shown some discretion. There are bulldogs in Russell's office, one of which is lifting its leg. I am sure that from time to time, whenever Russell walks back into his office, he imagines a situation in which the bulldog is lifting its leg on someone who has fallen out of favour. In recent years a forlorn-looking wig has been visible on the left-hand side of his bureau. I remember when he regularly wore that wig. I am delighted that today the Clerks, historically, are wearing their wigs on Russell's last day in Parliament. Russell has other items of interest in his office, such as a platypus, soft toys, a wire lizard and Australian dried flower arrangements. I am sure members are all aware of his notorious incense burner. I have known Russell for 20 years but it seems to me that that incense burner came into Russell's life at about the time Parliament banned smoking, or what was redefined later by Russell as the smell of smoking.

Mr Daryl Maguire: He really is a closet hippy.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I am not sure about that. However, Russell has always been able to examine the intricacies of rules and regulations and ensure that we complied with them, at least in the technical sense.

His office is also the repository of photographs and flags from his representations of democratic traditions at a number of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conferences. I know that Russell likes to travel but I have heard that various institutions throughout the world believe Russell Grove to be the font of all wisdom when it comes to parliamentary procedures. He has not only enhanced the New South Wales Parliament; he has also enhanced democratic roles overseas in a number of places that needed it.

Russell, you have looked after the democratic principles very well here and elsewhere. You have looked after all of us well, ensuring that we understand the importance of protecting those democratic principles, and you have safeguarded these essential issues for the people of New South Wales for 40 years. In 1941 Churchill, reflecting on his own circumstances said, "The journey has been enjoyable and well worth taking—once". Russell, I am sure that is probably how you see it. I hope your journey has been enjoyable and well worth taking. On behalf of many others in this place who will not get an opportunity to speak today I wish you, Russell and Frances, a very happy and continuing journey. I am sure it will be a journey that you now get to enjoy fully. I particularly thank Frances and Sarah-Jane, and their broader family and friends, for sharing Russell with us for the past 40 years. Russell, enjoy your retirement.

I do not have much power but I have enough to be able to change the business paper. Today, in concert with a number of other members, we decided that today was Russell Grove's Day. So far as I am aware the business program has never been dedicated to anybody in the history of the New South Wales Parliament, but today's business program is headed "Russell Grove's Day", reflecting that today is about your retirement, which forms the majority of our parliamentary business today. The business program is signed on the back by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. Russell, we present to you the business program for today, duly framed, and we hope that it takes pride of place in your home and enables you to reflect on the contribution that you have made over so many years. Thank you again, Russell.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [10.59 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to this motion on the retirement of Russell Grove. I thank the House for the opportunity to say a few words because I have worn various hats in this place over many years, none of which of course is like the hat Russell is wearing at the moment. There were some jibes as I walked to the lectern suggesting I had been here longer than Russell Grove. As a matter of fact, the Speaker was unkind enough one day to ask whether I was here when Sir Charles Wentworth was a member of this Chamber. To those members who suggested I was probably here when President Kennedy was shot I say that if that was the case then Russell Grove was here when the archduke was shot. Forty years—since 1971—is an incredible length of service for anyone.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he had been at this place some time prior to his parliamentary career. In 1971 I was walking a beat about a mile up the road from here at the Regent Street police station. I very rarely got to Parliament because this area was patrolled by police from Phillip Street, or No. 4. In 1972 I worked on the front verandah here a couple of times as a policeman when people were on leave. Russell, I have no evidence in my old notebooks that I can bring before the House that would in any way diminish your sparkling career. Russell came to this place in 1971. It was certainly a long time ago. Muhammad Ali and Joe Frazier had a big fight and it was broadcast around the place. Bill McMahon was the Prime Minister, Bob Askin was the Premier, Jim Southey was the member for Mount Druitt and Russell Grove started work at the New South Wales Parliament. Fashion was not at its highest point then. The 1970s were not a good decade for fashion.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: It's never worried you, Richard.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: That is true. I have to say it was better then than it is now because in 1971 the brand label of your underwear was on the inside of the garment, not where it is now. Russell would remember that the top of one's buttocks was not a fashion statement no matter what you were wearing or how good you looked. It was certainly an interesting time. We all knew in 1971 who the heavyweight boxing champion of the world was, who was challenging and what was the result of the last fight. The only electrical device that members looked at in this place in 1971 was the clock, if it was not a wind-up, and I understand a u-tube was something a doctor used to cure constipation. I do not know about anything that has changed since then.

Russell Grove came here as a very junior clerk and his career took a couple of bumps along the way. In about 1973 Speaker Ellis saw a particular problem arising in this Parliament. Since 1965 the New South Wales Parliamentary Bowling Club had not brought back the trophy to New South Wales. Drastic action was needed. The Speaker called on Russell Grove to do the top job and be manager of the New South Wales parliamentary

team. He sent Russell on his first trip to Adelaide to contest the interstate carnival. It is my melancholy duty to inform the House that Russell's team was unsuccessful. Speaker Ellis's efforts to make the New South Wales bowling team number one again were a great failure.

It did not diminish Russell's support of the Parliamentary Bowling Club—I say this half seriously—an organisation that many other former presiding officers and clerks have thought of as a great opportunity to get together not only former members and sitting members but members of all political parties from different States over a game of bowls, a few meetings, conferences and dinners. It was a great institution and as the president of that club I recognise Russell's support over a long time. His great judgement in appointing Les Gönye as manager in the 1990s resulted in the parliamentary team winning the carnival for the first time in 29 years, making Les Gönye the Jack Gibson of the parliamentary bowling team.

I was a shadow Minister between 1991 and 1995. It was a time when the government of the day did not have a majority. Opposition members were able to get private members' motions and even censure motions against the Government carried by this House. Private members' bills were introduced and some were passed. New standing orders were introduced. Having been a shadow Minister at the time, I can say the Opposition could not have functioned without the independent and professional advice of someone like Russell, who played that turbulent time in this State's history so well. The operation of this Parliament and our democracy owe him a great debt of gratitude for his impartial advice and stewardship during a very difficult time.

My time has expired. I think Russell is to be a life member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and I hope emeritus secretary. Russell Grove believes the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association is an organisation that should be strongly supported and that members should take those trips that come about from time to time. No member ever travelled overseas without learning something. Russell Grove referred in his resignation speech to unfounded criticism of the Parliament. Members should proudly take those trips, learn something from them and be part of the advocacy for this Parliament in various places in the Commonwealth. Russell never flinched from that view despite some unfair media comment.

I wish Russell a great retirement and extend my best wishes to Frances and Sarah-Jane. I do not think he will be retired for very long. As a member of the House for only 28 years this Saturday, a shadow Minister and Minister and now Father of the House and Opposition Whip, I can say this man has been one of the stalwarts and a steadying influence on this Parliament. You should be congratulated. Your family and everybody is proud of you. I wish you all the very best for a long and successful retirement.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [11.06 a.m.]: I am honoured to be able to make a contribution to this motion and to honour Russell Grove in the way that others have. I will speak briefly because there is quite a line-up of speakers and time is limited. Firstly, I speak as a friend. I am delighted to see the Clerk in his wig, as it should be. I speak on behalf of my wife, Vasi, who is present in the gallery for this debate, to offer our very best wishes to Russell, Frances and Sarah-Jane on this occasion.

Our friendship started a long time ago, almost at the very beginning of my 23½ years here. It has endured the ebb and flow of political fortunes in this State. I have been on both sides of the Parliament and have been in a hung Parliament. One of the charter signatories to that time is still here. The political fortunes in New South Wales do ebb and flow. This is the lower Chamber of the mother Parliament and it has seen it all. It has been nicknamed "the bearpit" and it takes a Clerk with nerves of steel to be able to navigate the political parties who are here at close quarters. Just 2½ sword lengths separate the two sides of the House. The origin of that expression is that it separates the two sides so that their swords are useless and the quality of debate is the essence of our democracy. Russell Grove has been the custodian through all the vicissitudes of this place including that period of the hung Parliament.

I was Leader of the National Party at one time and I know that on a number of occasions I relied on Russell Grove's advice. I did so, especially during the period I referred to, in the knowledge that Russell was being asked similar questions about political strategy and tactics by the other side and by the crossbench. The advice he gave me was exclusively to the question asked and it was given impartially and perfectly. It had no bearing on advice he might have given to any other party seeking an opinion perhaps on the same matter. The impression I formed at the time has endured and been demonstrated to this Chamber on many, many occasions. Russell is a person of the highest intellect and the highest integrity. I can think of no better person to have occupied the chair that he presently occupies and to have offered such an enormous period of service to the

democracy of this State than Russell Grove. I offer also on behalf of my wife our wishes for the very best of good luck and good fortune to Russell in his retirement, and to Frances and Sarah-Jane as well. All the very best of luck, and thank you from a grateful Parliament and a grateful State.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [11.10 a.m.]: I join with all members in paying due respect and acknowledging the very long service of Russell Grove to this Parliament. Today we see something of tradition—the wigs and the formality—but we also note the warmth of feeling and hear the expressions of recognition and respect being paid to the longest serving Clerk of this Parliament. On that note, I begin my few remarks by recognising country, Russell, my traditional background, because that is an appropriate thing to do today. I will keep my comments brief, Russell, because many speakers are to take part in this debate and I am sure you do not want to hear the same thing said 20,000 times. When I first came into this Parliament in 2003 I recall being—new members would relate to this—a little bit dazed, wondering how it all worked, and thinking, "Oh, I'll get the hang of this in about three months." Well, let me tell you, you do not get the hang of it in three months; it takes about three years.

Mr Andrew Fraser: You'll get there.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: That is correct; you do get there. I remember going to see Russell in his office and thinking, "Wow! This is like stepping back in time." There was the most extraordinary collection of beautiful lamps and items from all over the world. I think there was also a stuffed bird. I thought that was pretty remarkable. That was the first time I approached Russell to ask him to explain something that I did not understand. That is what I want to focus on: how much explaining Russell has done for us on things we did not understand. As I walked out of that remarkable office, I then understood the procedural matter that I went to see him about.

What is remarkable, Russell, about your service here is not only the mechanical and procedural things that you have been able to steer us through—the standing orders, the petitions and so forth—but also the nuances, I am sure some of the tantrums, and of course some of our troubles. When we took our challenges to the Clerk he would steer us through those challenges or our troubles, ensure we understood and then perhaps direct us to a place where they could be dealt with. I have often watched you, Russell, as we all have through the many hours that we sit in this Parliament. I think that you have dancing eyes. I say that because sometimes you would be sitting there and I would wonder, "What on earth is Russell thinking?" Your eyes would dance, and that eyebrow would go up. I never knew what you were thinking, but I was sure it was something pretty well spot-on.

Others have said that in your 40 years of service you have seen off 12 Premiers and eight Speakers, overseen thousands of divisions, and so forth. But I will not conclude my remarks on those sorts of things; I will conclude my remarks on the honourable thing of public service. That is what you have given not just to this Chamber and this Parliament but to the people of New South Wales. It is not just members who are grateful and it is not just members who are paying respect and acknowledging you today. Today we bring with us the gratitude of those who have put their trust and aspirations in us as members of Parliament—the many thousands of people that we represent.

There is no greater honour—we all do it and, Russell, you have done it longer than all of us—than providing a service to the people. The great honour of being a member of Parliament, and the great honour of serving the Parliament, is in being a servant to the people. You have brought about great change in the world—as we have heard from Richard Amery in particular and from other speakers—but, more importantly, you have given the people of this State a service that is nothing short of remarkable and nothing short of honourable. I believe that is something to carry with you and to be extraordinarily proud of, because there is nothing to be more proud of. On behalf of all members on this side of the House I say to Sarah-Jane and Frances, thank you for allowing us to have him for so long; and thank you, Russell, for your service to this Parliament and, most importantly, to the many thousands of citizens in this State.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [11.15 a.m.]: This is such a significant day, as has been reflected in members' comments, that there is now an opportunity for members and staff to share morning tea to celebrate Russell's 40 years of service. It may be appropriate now to adjourn to take advantage of the kind invitation of the Speaker to morning tea in the Speaker's Garden, and perhaps for the House to reassemble, on the ringing of a long bell, in about an hour to permit other members to address the House on Russell's retirement.

The SPEAKER: I extend a very warm invitation to all members, family, friends and members of staff everywhere in this place to come to morning tea in the Speaker's Garden. We have catered for a lot of people. Let's enjoy it.

[The Speaker left the chair at 11.15 p.m. The House resumed at 12.30 p.m.]

RETIREMENT OF RUSSELL DAVID GROVE, PSM, CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [12.30 p.m.]: I join with members of the House to pay tribute to Russell Grove. I express my appreciation for his contribution to the New South Wales Parliament and to me as an Independent member of Parliament. Russell Grove became Clerk of the Legislative Assembly in 1990, which coincided with my first term as the member for Bligh. I have sat here this morning listening to members' remarks about Russell. It has been a very moving occasion. Over the past 21 years in my time here we have seen changes in government and in political leaders. We have seen Premiers Greiner, Fahey, Carr, Iemma, Rees, Keneally and O'Farrell. We have seen changes in the Speaker: Speakers Rozzoli, Murray, Aquilina, Torbay and Hancock. We have seen changes in the Leader of the House. When John Dowd was Leader of the House we sat for 30 hours. We started on Thursday and went through Friday.

Mr Chris Hartcher: We worked in those days.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: It was hell. Fortunately, those days are past. We have had Leaders of the House Paul Whelan, Carl Scully, John Aquilina—each of those leaders had his own style—and now Brad Hazzard. Some members have been here during all that time. In this Chamber—an intense, party-political, combative environment with heated passions, competition and sometimes camaraderie, and majority and minority governments—for me as an Independent the one thing that has been a constant has been the Clerks, led by Russell Grove. They have always been calm, friendly, helpful and wise, and ready to advise. They ensure the effective running of the Parliament and, importantly, support us in our electorates. They play an incredibly important role in that regard.

I support the member for Canterbury when she talked about honourable service. That is what we all pay tribute to here today. Members have been told by the Leader of the House to keep their speeches brief. It has been a great honour for me to have Russell Grove and his wife, Frances, as my constituents. From their location in Springfield Avenue in the heart of Kings Cross they have given me feedback about the night-time activities in Central Plaza. We also have a common interest in the Pearl Beach area, so I know that although Russell is retiring I will still see Russell, Frances and Sarah-Jane. I wish you all the very best.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [12.33 p.m.]: I would like to be a bit like Marc Anthony, but unlike Marc Anthony I have come not to bury you, Russell, but to praise you. I join with all other members in paying tribute to the contribution you have made to the Parliament of New South Wales and to the Westminster system. You may not recall our first meeting. In 1988 I was a very young member of the House and I had a magnificent head of hair. I was very new and unaccustomed to the procedures of the House. You and I had never spoken until Christmas Eve at the end of 1988 when I arrived with my tribe of young children in tow to attend midnight mass. There you were in the church with the only available pew and we all forced ourselves on top of you and Frances. Afterwards we had our first talk. I went home and my wife said, "He's a very nice man." I said, "Yes, he comes across that way, doesn't he, but it is all very different when you are in the New South Wales Legislative Assembly."

Unlike other members, my wife's family has a history that goes back a long way with your family. Like you, my wife is from Kyogle. Many stories have been told about your Kyogle days, when kids walked to the local public school and played in the parks. A number of salient features stand out about your family's history in Kyogle. Your mother was famous for her beautiful garden. She, like my wife's mother, had a great interest in her garden. I have heard stories about you and your brother bringing clippings and flowers to my wife's mother and you would act as mercury on the interchange of the floral arrangements between the two Kyogle families. Earlier today you confessed to me that while your father attended my wife's father who was the town doctor, you were somewhat disloyal and went to the other doctor in town. Even then you were avoiding the political connection that obviously would have taken place.

Another story is told about your family in Kyogle. You were one of the only families in the whole town of Kyogle that had a collection of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. You were famous for that. In those days there was no internet and no way of finding out all the information needed for school projects. Other kids at school were always envious of the fact that your school projects were much better than theirs because you had access to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. You were well respected and renowned at Kyogle as a member of the school debating team and you were regarded as one of the school's best speakers. In 1968 you completed sixth form at Kyogle High School, where you were vice-captain and prefect. With the leave of the Speaker, I present to the House a photograph of Russell at his high school graduation. I will hold it up for the benefit of the cameras. I present a copy to the Clerk and a copy to the Speaker.

The photograph shows the entire high school graduating class, which consists of about only 25 people all dressed up in their finery. The girls are in their splendid ball gowns. Russell has a very serious look on his face. Your serious look is quite extraordinary. You are fifth from the left and you have your glasses on. Your glasses are perched towards the end of your nose and you are looking down on everyone, even then. Even then you looked down on the rabble that was before you. While *Hansard* cannot incorporate photographs, it is a great photo of you and your graduation class. You left Kyogle long ago and blazed a trail of achievement for the residents of your graduation class of 1968. You have always maintained a good humour and an extraordinary sense of self-discipline watching the proceedings of the Chamber. No-one would ever guess how you vote every four years and I am sure no-one will because your political impartiality has been absolute and renowned.

Russell, your contribution to the New South Wales Parliament is worthy of note. With the leave of the Speaker, I bring you special greetings from my wife, Elizabeth. As I said, her family and your family were interlocked for so many years. I also bring special greetings from the Henry family, Lance and Merran Henry, who are the parents of Aaron Henry, research assistant for Chris Spence, the member of The Entrance. Lance and Merran Henry, the parents of Aaron Henry, are in that photograph with Russell at Kyogle High. They met at Kyogle High, got married and now live on the Central Coast, and Aaron now works for the member for The Entrance. Like every other member I pay tribute to you, Russell, and like every other member I wish you all the best for a happy retirement.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [12.39 p.m.]: I am honoured to be able to say a few words about Russell Grove. If I were asked to sum up Russell in one word it would be "gentleman"—above all else, he is a gentleman. Members in this House have spoken about Russell in great terms. We are fortunate to have inherited the Westminster system and other great institutions from the United Kingdom, which bring to Australian society a great deal of stability and, dare I say, civility. Civilising factors are required within each arm of the factors and institutions that make up our society. Russell Grove has been a civilising factor in this place, a factor without which I think this place, even if in a small way, would have been diminished. He is an expert, a sage, an adviser and, as far as the impartiality required of his role, he is a friend. But, most importantly—and this is what I tell my kids to be—he has been an example. Russell Grove has fulfilled his role without a hint of partisanship, either in fact or in perception.

Russell is an expert on the standing orders. I was elected to this place on 17 September 2005 in a by-election, along with the member for Marrickville, who came from the other place, and the former member for Macquarie Fields. Because he did not have the inundation of members that occurs at a general election, Russell had time to sit and advise us about the things we should do. He, along with John Aquilina, impressed upon me the need—suggested very strongly—to know the standing orders and sessional orders, and all the procedures of this place. I undertook that endeavour in earnest. I have enjoyed asking Russell many questions about the standing orders over time, and as I have grown more confident about them I have always enjoyed jousting with Russell about his interpretation of them. I have to say there has not been an occasion when he has not been able to convince me that he has been right and I have been wrong. I would not be Robinson Crusoe in that regard.

Russell, I have enjoyed your counsel. Even though we speak about our great privilege to know you, it would have been a tremendous privilege to have been employed here for 40 years, to have held the role of Clerk in the bearpit, to have seen all the things that have passed through this House and the great changes, for better or worse, in society, and to have seen the giants and the minnows and all in between. You have been a very fortunate man and we have been fortunate to have enjoyed your time. You will forever be a reminder that true public service should be and can be a thing of inherent dignity. One of my favourite poems is a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson entitled *Ulysses*. There is a single line in the poem that I love. It says, "I am a part of all that I have met". I met you in this place, Russell. Thank you.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [12.43 p.m.]: It is with great sadness that I speak with other members on this motion today—sadness on a personal level but also on behalf of the citizens of New South Wales. I too came to this place 21 years ago. I assumed at the time that the Clerk had been here forever, as I think most people had. I found out very quickly what Keating's J-curve meant. When you come into this place, as was mentioned by the member for Canterbury this morning, what you think you know and what is reality are two different things. One person who gave me great advice was the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Russell Grove. The first advice he gave me was to learn the standing orders, as the member for Maroubra mentioned, because when you learn the standing orders you understand a little more about how this place operates.

As Whip, as shadow Minister and now as Assistant-Speaker I still go to the Clerk. The other day when I met him in the corridor and I raised with him some standing orders that I felt needed to be changed he gave me the sage advice then that even though he is leaving this place he is happy to act as a paid consultant in future. I have travelled a reasonable amount in my 21 years here—not as much as many of my colleagues have—and I have seen many of the Commonwealth parliaments across the world, including in Scotland, England, Wales and Canada. Without exception people from those parliaments have asked me to pass on their respects and their regards to Russell Grove and to thank him for the assistance that he has given to them individually and as parliaments. I attended a conference last year at which 19 or 20 different parliaments were represented. Every person from each of those parliaments mentioned Russell Grove with great respect.

Behind every good man there is an even greater woman. Frances, I congratulate you on being such a great partner to Russell over all those years. I get to Parliament House or across to the coffee shop pretty early every morning and I see Russell emerge from the House to get his coffee. Back in the days when we had strategy meetings at 6.30 and 7.00 in the morning Russell Grove would always beat us in. He was always here for us and for the Parliament. Over my period of time in this place my wife, Kerrie, and I have developed a friendship with both Russell and Frances, and that is a friendship that goes beyond politics. Quite often I look at the expression on the Clerk's face during debate in this House and I often wonder if he wished he could contribute to the debate and, if he did, whether he would make more sense than a lot of us have.

Members have spoken of Russell's integrity and intellect, and his eccentricities—his elephants, his walking sticks and all those magnificent little artefacts in his office. Russell Grove is truly a decent man. He is a man of integrity and intellect, but he is a decent man. I believe nothing more highly can be said of anyone than that they are a decent person. Russell, Frances and Sarah-Jane, enjoy your retirement. Kerrie asked me to pass on her very best wishes and to let you know that you are always welcome at our home during your trips up to the North Coast, for a cup of tea, a scone, an Anzac biscuit and a lamington—I will make sure they are there when you come through. Please enjoy your retirement and stay in touch.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.47 p.m.]: I also pay tribute to Russell Grove, the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, who has given 40 years service to this Parliament and to the people of New South Wales. That is quite an extraordinary record. As we have heard, Russell has been Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for 21 years and is our longest-serving Clerk. I pay tribute to Russell's intelligence, his dedication and his discretion and, above all, his great interest in and knowledge of parliamentary practices and procedures—an interest and knowledge that is not necessarily shared by everyone in this House. But we have all benefited from Russell's knowledge and we have all been able to fulfil our responsibilities representing our constituents much more effectively.

Russell is a significant authority not just in Australian parliamentary circles: He has played a significant role internationally through the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and other organisations. He has also made an enormous contribution assisting and supporting many countries in our region, including East Timor. I know that Russell gets a great deal of satisfaction and joy from his international work, but it also enhances the reputation of our Parliament and of our State. As we have heard, Russell has written numerous scholarly articles on parliamentary procedure, and of course we all know that Russell edited the first edition of the *New South Wales Legislative Assembly Practice, Procedure and Privilege*, which was the culmination of many years' work. I can still remember when the book was launched at Parliament and how proud Russell was of the work that he and others had done. As the then Speaker, Richard Torbay, said in the introduction to the book:

Parliamentary practice and procedure is a topic that few parliamentarians ever really appreciate and become experts in.

We all rely on the experience and knowledge of the clerks, and I am happy to confess that some of us rely on them more than others. For that to work effectively the clerks at the table must have the respect of both sides of

Parliament, and Russell has always commanded that respect. That is no small feat when one considers the larger-than-life characters that have occupied this Parliament over the time that Russell has been here. As others have commented, Russell is somewhat inscrutable and I sometimes wonder what he is really thinking when he has to remind Ministers and others time and again of some of the more basic parliamentary procedures so that we get things right when we are at the table. He is always far too discreet to ever show any sense of frustration.

I thank you, Russell, for the advice and support that you have provided to me and for your forbearance and good humour. Your role as Clerk has necessitated considerable personal sacrifice. That has impacted on you and it has also impacted on your family. I pay tribute to and thank your wife, Frances, and daughter, Sarah-Jane, for their support of you and, in turn, of the people of New South Wales. All of us want to be able look back on our lives and know that we have made a contribution and made a difference. Russell, you have done that with distinction by serving this Parliament, assisting all members to fulfil their responsibilities and by using your great knowledge and authority to assist so many other countries. Thank you, Russell, for all your personal support and for everything you have done for the people of New South Wales. I hope that in retirement you have some time to enjoy a more peaceful and relaxing life with your family.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Minister for Transport) [12.51 p.m.]: This is an historic day for the New South Wales Parliament as we farewell this Chamber's longest-serving Clerk, and in doing that we farewell an individual who is synonymous with maintaining the history, good order and integrity of this place. His 21-year tenure as Clerk will be difficult to beat. In fact, we need to go back to 1887 to note the second-longest serving Clerk, Stephen Jones, who retired after serving 18 years in the role. The closest contender last century was William McCourt, who served for 17 years and retired in 1947. The bearpit is known for being robust and adversarial, but behind each member on both sides of the House there lies a supreme responsibility. It is our privilege to serve the community and to give a voice to those who otherwise would not have one. It is crucial to all of us if we are to do our jobs to receive the impartial advice and support of the Clerk and his office. For that, Russell, we are truly and deeply grateful.

In addition to his obvious role, the Clerk has a responsibility to maintain the integrity of the institution of this Parliament, to respect its history and to ensure that it remains relevant to the people it serves. For several generations of members in this place, Russell Grove has undertaken that role with the dignity and respect it requires. It is telling that he was responsible for one of the most substantial procedural reforms: rewriting the standing orders in plain English and ensuring that the Parliament maintained its relevancy to the people. If only we could read Russell's thoughts on what he has witnessed in this place during his 40 years of service, including his 21 years as the Clerk. I am sure that on many occasions when members enthusiastically get to their feet and make grand pronouncements Russell has seen and heard it all before and that is a good thing. His institutional knowledge and thorough understanding of how this place works makes his job look seamless and simple, but we know it is far from that.

In addition to these functions, Russell has brought other relevance to the role. He has a deep and abiding love for our State and all the great opportunities our democracy offers. Anyone, like me, who has had the great fortune to visit his office will find representations of all of New South Wales symbols and emblems. I suggest that anyone who has not made that visit do so while Russell still occupies it. He has many waratahs displayed in his office, which are our floral emblem. He has kookaburras, our bird emblem. He has a platypus, our animal emblem. He even has a black opal, but I will not say where that is. Members will have to discover it for themselves. Russell recently admitted to me that the only emblem he does not have is the blue groper, our fish emblem. We will have to rectify that.

In addition to his outstanding service to this Parliament, the great processes of democracy and the standing orders, Russell is a great Rotarian. I once had the tremendous privilege of addressing his Rotary Club and seeing him in action. He has been awarded the Paul Harris Fellowship for his service to the community. On top of his busy schedule in this Parliament, Russell maintains a love for his community, which he contributes to through the great organisation of Rotary. Russell, you have made an enormous contribution to our State, its history and its democratic process. You leave this place with our deepest gratitude and respect—much more than many members of this House can say after their time in this place. On a personal level, all of us have you to thank for helping us settle into this place.

Our staff extend their thanks to you; they cannot do their jobs without your support. Today is a wonderful day for our Parliament, and for you and your family. You are now part of this great institution. It is difficult to imagine this place without you because you are such a permanent fixture. But I know you still have much more to contribute to the discussion of public life in our State. I look forward to reading the future books

that I am sure you will write. Again, on my behalf, and on behalf of my staff and all of us in this place, we thank you enormously. We feel a sense of history and are glad to be part of this history by sharing today with you.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [12.55 p.m.]: I pay tribute to Russell Grove on 40 years of sterling service. Earlier today he was given a framed edition of the Order of Business for the day. That is a terrific memento. It reminds me of my own last day. I had a single entry in my diary: "12 noon meet Governor." Russell's 40 years in this place and his most recent posting as Clerk has been characterised by three key elements: his respect for the institution and conventions of our Parliament; his knowledge of parliamentary practice and procedure; and his personal qualities. I speak specifically of his discretion and integrity. His is an arcane body of knowledge to have.

While it is central to our democracy and central to parliaments around the world, not many people have this knowledge residing in them. But Russell knows perhaps better than anyone how important it is for the effective running of a Parliament and a democracy. It is not fashionable in Australia to give ourselves a pat on the back for successes when we perform well as organisations or individuals, but it is fair to say that the New South Wales Parliament, as the oldest Parliament in Australia and as one of the oldest in the world, looks to Russell as someone who has been the architect of those democratic principles and procedures that many of us have not only observed under him but have watched him help develop in others.

We know for a fact that nascent and developing democracies around the world have benefitted greatly from his contributions. Although there has been the occasional cheap shot in the media regarding travel, and there has been a tongue-in-cheek reference to it today, the fact remains that the work Russell has done with those developing democracies has benefitted hundreds of thousands of people outside his own purview. That work has gone ahead untrumpeted by him, which is characteristic of his devotion to duty and service and his commitment to the principles that underpin well-functioning democracies. We pay tribute for those gains that he has made not just in New South Wales but within the Commonwealth and around the world.

In closing I will simply say this: From observing people who are good at what they do throughout life it seems to me that there is a common element, whether they are great sportspeople, surgeons, lawyers, leaders or whatever the case may be. The thing they have is plenty of time. They never appear to be rushed and they certainly never rush. Russell, you always appear to have plenty of time. I think that is a tribute to your class. I thank you. I thank your family as well; they are getting you back. The unsung heroes of parliaments are the family members of the parliamentary officials and parliamentarians. They are by our sides as we serve day in and day out, and they welcome us home late at night with a cup of tea. Russell, we thank you for your service on behalf of the people of New South Wales and around the world. Good job.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [12.59 p.m.]: I am delighted to support this motion acknowledging the enormous contribution by Russell Grove over the years he has served this Parliament. Russell and his staff are the first people you meet when you are elected to this place and have the honour of representing your electorate. Through the introductory programs you understand very quickly that they are here to help you integrate but, importantly, you learn about the qualities of the people here—the Clerks, the staff and others. That has to be attributed to leadership in gathering good people around you and ensuring that they do their job. In that respect I pay tribute to all the staff who have worked under Russell's leadership.

As members will know, the Clerk is an early riser, the Premier is an early riser, John Aquilina was an early riser and I am an early riser. I learnt very quickly in this place that if you wanted to talk to the Clerk, any time after 5.00 a.m. is a good time. You dialled 2222 and you would always find Russell there, or you could take the opportunity to visit Russell's office, as other members have said. I have taken that opportunity many times to seek information. It is true it is like Aladdin's Cave; it is very eclectic. Members who know me know that I am into collecting. The signal usually was a waft of pipe smoke, which I am sure came from the garden or somewhere outside, which signified that Russell was there, and I would have a chat with him about whatever the issue was. I knew that if I needed something such as a pair of cufflinks or a tie as a gift and the stores were shut, if I went to Aladdin's Cave, like a genie Russell would produce from a cupboard some rare gift or piece of memorabilia that I wanted to give to a visiting dignitary or someone else.

I have enjoyed the discussions we have had in that office and the history, knowledge and good counsel that you have imparted, particularly in my role as the Whip. The first time I took the opportunity to visit Russell's office I saw him unshaven, hair a bit scruffy, and dressed in a T-shirt, shorts and sandals and I thought he had had a blue with Frances and she had kicked him out and he had slept a bit rough that night. I learnt

quickly that Russell always turns up looking like that. Someone who was unaware of that could walk in there and think some homeless man had broken into the Parliament and taken up residence. I have learnt that that is a trait of Russell's and I think it shows he is very calm about what he does and very relaxed until work starts.

I do not know anyone else in this Parliament who has more banged-up cars than Russell, whether it be the old Ford Falcon with the bum hanging out of it or the Toyota that has had a few accidents along the way. I am sure they were someone else's fault. Indeed, when I have asked Russell about it he certainly indicated that that was the case. I hope he treats Frances better than he treats his motor cars. I am sure that he does. I acknowledge the role Frances has played in the partnership during Russell's years here. It has been appreciated by our partners and others. I wish you both well in your retirement.

I understand you have a holiday home at Pearl Beach. I guess it beats living under the bridge in Woolloomooloo because that is where I have always thought Russell may have lived while sleeping rough. I am sure that Pearl Beach will turn out to be a wonderful retirement for you and I wish you both well. Russell, I want you to know, as the member for Coffs Harbour also said, there will always be a place for you in Wagga Wagga. We are always happy to see you and Frances and the door is always open, as I am sure it is for many members who have spoken. You have been more than honourable; you have dedicated yourself to the Parliament. Indeed, you are renowned throughout the Commonwealth and it is true that people ask about your welfare. They will continue to ask and we will continue to respond that you are in good health, you are enjoying your retirement, and that we see you often. We wish you well as you walk the road of retirement. Stay in good health and keep in touch. You have a lot of friends here and throughout the world and we care for you very much.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY (Heffron) [1.04 p.m.]: I support this motion to pay tribute to Russell Grove and I endorse and acknowledge the many laudatory comments made by my parliamentary colleagues on both sides of the Chamber. Russell, it is difficult for me to comprehend that someone could be in this place for 40 years. Forgive me for making this reflection but it is also difficult for me to comprehend 40 years when I think about the fact that I was two years old when you commenced work here. I cannot imagine the changes you have seen in this Parliament since you began your career—the physical changes in this Chamber alone and the changes to standing orders over the years.

Indeed, in my first term I thought your primary job was to read aloud the petitions that had been submitted to the Parliament. I know that perhaps you look forward to the day when you never have to think about the sale of pets in pet shops again. You have seen changes in the style and practice of politics over those 40 years and you would have seen trends in politics change, including the election of women to this Chamber. We know you were not here in 1925 for the election of the first female member, Millicent Preston-Stanley, from the eastern suburbs.

Mr Andrew Fraser: He came the year after.

Ms KRISTINA KENEALLY: That was you, I think. She was a National Party member, I believe. However, Russell would have been here in 1984 for the first female Minister, Janice Crosio, in 1998 for the first female leader, Kerry Chikarovski, in 2008 for the first female Deputy Premier, Carmel Tebbutt, in 2009 for the first female Premier, and now, in 2011, for the first female Speaker. You have also been a strong supporter of women rising to high ranks in the Clerk's office and in the Parliament and a great supporter of women taking up leadership roles. I acknowledge Ronda Miller, who is at the table today, and Elaine Schofield who is elsewhere in the Parliament, and I also thank Mark Swinson and Les Gönye who have demonstrated in the work they do a reflection of the values and the integrity you have brought to the Clerk's office.

I thank you for the work you have done with me and my electorate office, the work you did with my ministerial offices and the work you did with my Premier's office. I can only imagine that you have been asked the same questions over and over again by successive generations of parliamentarians and I am pretty certain I have asked you the same questions multiple times. I thank you for your patience in answering them. When I think of Russell I think of a smiling personality, I think of those crinkly eyes, his laugh and his occasional wry comments. Those, along with your professionalism and your knowledge, will be greatly missed. I acknowledge you today, I acknowledge your family who are here in the gallery, and I acknowledge your contribution. Parliament will not be the same without you sitting at the table. You stand as a giant in this place and in the history of this place—a man of giant intellect, giant integrity and giant personality who made a giant impact on democracy here and across the world.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [1.08 p.m.]: I support this motion to recognise the contribution of our Clerk, Russell Grove. As the member for Lismore I am honoured on behalf of

the electorate, the community and especially the town of Kyogle to say how proud we are of your achievements in this place over 41 years. I suppose only one other person would be more proud than I am to have stood here today to recognise your efforts. I refer to the late Bill Rixon, a former member for Lismore. I am also honoured to have had an association with your family for over 40 years. Mention has been made of Kyogle today.

Russell is the son of the late Doug and Connie Grove. The late Doug Grove worked for the community. He managed the hardware section of Juniors Kyogle, a household name to those who had any association with Kyogle. Doug and Connie were very much involved in the swimming club. Russell and Kim might not have been the very best of swimmers, but they were always there, knocking on the door, getting second or third; you always tried. We have already heard about your achievements at school. I know your brother Kim would be very proud of those achievements. Both of you have been very active. It has already been documented that you were an outstanding student at Kyogle.

I have been assured, as I see every day, that Russell looks very much like his father. He has his father's good looks. I know the Grove family are very well respected in the Kyogle community; each and every one of them would be very proud of Russell and his achievements. It was ironic that Russell gave me the honour of auctioning the braces, because Russell has been to the forefront of providing support for communities and the needs of community organisations and making sure that this House and this Parliament support those organisations. I well remember one of the most successful Pink Ribbon day breakfasts held here at Parliament, because Russell asked me whether I would be good enough to do an auction for him. He bought the very first item, to make sure everything went well. He won the raffle that day, but immediately donated it back. That is typical of his generosity.

We all know about Russell's eating habits and what was the "Grove special": rump steak, well done, with chips, bacon, egg, tomato and fried onion. Now I often see him go down to Café Quorum and get not just one but two pies, and a sausage roll—just in case he gets hungry. There is one thing I am disappointed and surprised about: he no longer butters his bread rolls; though Norco is the household brand up north, Russell does not use the Norco butter any more. But that is good: have a look at his weight now; he looks really well.

Russell, we are all disappointed that you are retiring as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of New South Wales. Your contribution to the Parliament, the State and the wider community is unequalled, and you will be missed. Members of Parliament, employees of the Parliament and parliaments around the world have benefited from your contributions, which have assisted in the understanding of parliaments. You have always been there to give advice and support not only to members but also to members' staff. And in difficult times you have been the first to extend a helping hand, to listen and to provide advice whenever it was needed. I appreciate that.

I have appreciated our association not only through work but also as a friend at the many social occasions on which we have had the opportunity of enjoying each other's company. I also recognise that your success and achievements would not have been possible without the love and support of Frances and your lovely daughter, Sarah-Jane. On behalf of my wife, Deborah, my staff Bronwyn, Annie and Tracey, the electorate and especially the community of Kyogle, I wish simply to say thank you for your contribution and ask that God will continue to bless both you and Frances in the future with health and happiness in your retirement.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for his comments.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [1.13 p.m.]: The British abolitionist and member of Parliament William Wilberforce remarked that Parliament is a lot like Noah's Ark—populated by more animals than people. Of course, I mean that with absolutely no disrespect to any members here today. Today I pay tribute to Russell Grove for his long service on this particular ark—from his beginning as a parliamentary officer in 1971 to his appointment as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly in 1990. Russell, clearly, some of those times have been wonderful, but some were really tough.

Russell, we know your record as principal adviser on parliamentary law, practice and procedure to the Speaker and to all of us, and we are aware of your award, and rightly so, of the Public Service Medal for your outstanding services to this Parliament, but I think a great tribute to you was your award as a Paul Harris fellow for your service to the international community and your focus on developing countries. I think your greatest gift to the democracy of the New South Wales Parliament and other countries has been your incredible knowledge and the time and support you gave not only to members in this Parliament but also to members across the world. I thank you for that, because you have enhanced democracy not only in this place but also across the world.

I first came to Parliament on 8 September 2001, three days before September 11. I remember trying to manage a very diverse electorate in what seemed like very fragile days, while at the same time trying to find my feet here in Parliament. You were my first contact; you helped me in a number of different ways to get through those first few months. Kristina Keneally, the member for Heffron, said earlier that you have given incredible support for everyone in this Parliament, but I would like to thank you particularly for your support for women in this place and your understanding of the issues that women face as parliamentarians. Your assistance will never be forgotten. I needed your advice and your wisdom quite often; I am sure you were sorely tested by me many times particularly because of my lack of understanding of this place in those initial days. But thank you for your help, and thank you for all your support over the years.

Russell, you are really well-known for your wit. Kristina Keneally referred to it as your wry comments or wry sense of humour. You will be remembered for that. I loved it. I loved the wonderful way you read petitions. I was very upset when we changed the standings orders—which I will never get to know properly—and petitions were read out in their short form. I thought that was a disaster. When the system was changed back I was so happy, because it was just wonderful to hear Russell tell us how many pet sale petitions and other petitions there were. You read them not only with aplomb but also with a straight face. I often wondered what you were thinking.

You will be fondly remembered for your professionalism in serving members, for the advice that clearly came from your wisdom and years of experience as well as your incredible intellect and knowledge. It is wonderful, too, that you have mentored your staff and the people who work with you. You have done that in many different ways other than your knowledge: one being your example of leadership. The people who have benefited are here today: Mark and Ronda, who are sitting by your side, and Elaine, who is sitting in the gallery with your lovely wife and your daughter.

Forty years is a long time. I think you have probably enjoyed most of those 40 years. I have enjoyed knowing you, and I hope your retirement will not mean the end of the relationships that you have built with everyone in this Parliament, those who were here before me and those who will come in the future. To your wife, Frances, and your daughter, Sarah-Jane: thank you for letting us have Russell from early in the morning until late at night; thank you for your support of his incredible and brilliant career. His success has been made possible because of your support in standing side by side with him. I wish you the best, Russell, in your retirement. I hope you are looking forward to it. But do not let that great intellect go to waste. Let us still be the benefactors of that. Let us still enjoy that. Good luck.

The SPEAKER: I thank the member for her comments.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.19 p.m.]: After more than 40 years of admirable dedication and a record term of over 21 years as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Russell Grove has left an enduring and substantial legacy in and for the New South Wales Parliament and democracy. Since receiving the Public Service Medal in 2000 Russell continued to provide outstanding service for more than another decade as Clerk. He has commanded respect from all quarters—obviously, as reflected by this motion. However, it is ironic that having been instrumental in the smooth running of this place for so many years, Russell's imminent departure brought it to a standstill with an extended morning tea today.

I first met Russell almost 20 years ago through a Rotary forum. I remember the then bearded man who, impressively, was a Clerk of the New South Wales Parliament—although then I was not quite sure what that entailed. As a member of Russell's class from 2007, I now have a better appreciation of the challenges faced by and the contribution of this remarkable gentleman. I also note that his involvement with Rotary continues, acknowledged by you, Madam Speaker, including his role next year as president of Rotary North Sydney. Accordingly, other community causes no doubt will benefit from his departure as Clerk, albeit he will continue as Clerk Emeritus.

Russell fully appreciates the importance of a properly functioning parliamentary democracy. He has provided valuable formal and informal insight, including thorough the publication of *New South Wales Legislative Assembly Practice, Procedure and Privilege*. As other members have acknowledged already, Russell has served with honour, integrity and good humour. He also has shared his extensive knowledge and wisdom not only in this place, but with other Commonwealth parliaments. Thank you, Russell. I am honoured to add briefly to this historic record of appreciation for your contribution to public service. I wish you and Frances all the best for a long and happy retirement.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.21 p.m.]: My pop worked for the New South Wales railways for 43 years. He turned up to work on time, never complained, loved his wife Mollie more than life itself, and then retired. It was during his retirement and during my childhood that I knew him. I remember my first memories of him and, apart from my parents, I could ask for no greater role model. He loved his community, cared for his neighbours, did not boast and looked after those with whom he came into contact. When my mother's parents died, my pop and nan effectively became parents to her. Pop and nan could not have kids of their own, but they cared for all the neighbourhood children, particularly my mum whose mother was close a friend of theirs. That is why growing up I knew them as my nan and pop. Unfortunately, pop died when I was nine but he left one of the strongest marks on a person that one can: to love without condition and to serve without being asked. My nan died when I was 16.

On one or two occasions I heard that my pop worked for the railways, but that did not mean all that much to me and I did not regard it with any significance. When nan died I was given a parcel by my mum. I wondered what was in it. It contained a gold watch and Mum told me to look at the back of it. Inscribed on it was the New South Wales railway logo, my pop's name and two words, "43 years". Mum told me that when he retired he was given the watch but he refused to wear it and said, "This is for Jai when he turns 21." One would have thought that he would have liked to have worn the watch or at least make some sort of song and dance about it for his time at the railways, but that was not his way. Only after receiving the watch and looking at the inscription of "43 years" did I fully appreciate its significance. Apart from what it means sentimentally, the watch symbolises a man working in one organisation for his entire career.

These days it is absolutely unheard for someone to work that long for one organisation. It is fast becoming the norm for most people to change jobs five or six times before the age of 30 as well as later in their careers. It was absolutely amazing to think that one man worked in one place for all that time. I could only imagine the stories my pop could have told and the changes he would have seen. That leads me to why I am speaking in debate on this motion. For only the second time I have discovered another man who has worked for the same organisation for 40 years. Of course, I speak of Russell Grove, PSM, Clerk of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly—a position he has held since 1990. We heard today that he started his career in parliamentary service in this place in 1971.

It should be noted that Russell Grove is the longest-serving Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and has served with distinction. He has been at the very heart of all things parliamentary and since 1984 has been the Honorary Secretary of the New South Wales Branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, an organisation I was proud to join this year on my election to this House. I was first introduced to Russell almost eight years ago when, for a time, I was employed by the Parliament. Although my employment was related to that other place, I knew Russell only as that person with the fuzzy hair who seemed to know a lot when I casually observed this House in action.

Since being elected this year as the member for Wollondilly I met Russell in a professional capacity. From day one he was only too happy to assist me with my transition. I recall a conversation in his strange office the week after coming to this place from which I gleaned his enthusiasm for the parliamentary process. Not content with only helping new members of Parliament, Russell has worked with various overseas aid authorities preparing a program for the development of parliamentary processes in Africa, South-East Asia and Pacific nations—a very noble and most important task, and something for which I have a great deal of respect, particularly as my wife's grandfather also works with certain Pacific nations.

Russell was an early promoter of the formation of the Australian and New Zealand Association of Clerks-at-the-Table and was the inaugural secretary of the association. We have heard that Russell is a Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration Australia, and a member of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group and the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table in Commonwealth Parliaments. He has been awarded the Public Service Medal and Centenary of Federation Medal for service to the Parliament, and is an Ambassador for the White Ribbon Campaign. Russell is also a Paul Harris Fellow and a member of the North Sydney Rotary Club, of which he will be president next year. Russell is married to Frances and has one adult daughter, Sarah-Jane, both of whom are present in the gallery.

Although I have known Russell professionally since my election this year, I have learnt very quickly that he will be sadly missed. I would love to hear the stories—perhaps more appropriately behind the scenes—he has tucked away about the goings on of this House. I know that a couple of members on this side of the House would not want them published. Just like my pop, Russell's service to his community is at the heart of

who he is. Although we are not children, but sometimes might act like them, Russell certainly has gone out of his way to help us when needed. Also just like my pop, who left an indelible mark on my life, Russell has done so on this place. We thank him for that.

We wish Russell all the best in his future endeavours and honour his 40 years of service. On behalf of the class of 2011—I believe I am the first speaker today from that class—I have been asked to thank Russell for everything he has done for us. We note the significance of his 40 years of service. Many of us on this side of the House at least would like to stay here for 40 years, but I suspect the public will have something to say about that over many future elections. We honour Russell and his family—wife, Francis, and daughter, Sarah-Jane. We all know in this place that without family one's life can never be truly fulfilled. We certainly appreciate their support for Russell. Once again, thank you and congratulations on a fine career. We look forward to hearing of your next endeavours. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [1.27 p.m.]: I support the motion and also pay tribute to Russell Grove, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. Russell always has been willing to impart his wisdom and experience to the newer members of this House—knowledge that always has been gratefully received. One notable aspect about Russell is his love of the institution of the Parliament. In a recent conversation with him he demonstrated that love. I was encouraging him to write his memoirs. I said:

Russell, you must have seen it all over the years; a wide variety of members, some good, some bad. You should write all of this down.

He said:

Well, look, one of the interesting things about Parliament is that it is such a diverse place. People come to this place from all walks of life. Anyone and everyone can get to Parliament and you get some good members and you get some bad members. But that's not necessarily a bad thing. The diversity of members in this House actually shows that Parliament is working.

Through all Parliament's faults and foibles, Russell has promoted it and protected it. New South Wales has been very lucky to have such a guardian as Russell is and has been over the years. This House will be poorer for Russell's departure. Members, particularly newer members, are extremely grateful for his assistance over recent months. We wish Russell nothing but the best in his retirement.

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

Motion agreed to.

[The Speaker left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

PAYROLL TAX REBATE SCHEME (DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT) BILL 2011

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

CLUBS, LIQUOR AND GAMING MACHINES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

HERITAGE AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Messages received from the Legislative Council returning the bills with amendments.

Consideration of Legislative Council's amendments set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that in the absence of the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women will answer questions relating to his portfolio.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.24 p.m.]

BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the power index has named Nick Greiner ahead of the Premier as the most powerful figure in New South Wales—

Mr Andrew Stoner: It doesn't name you at all.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: You are not there either, mate. Unlike you, I'm not offended.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition may ask his question again.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the power index has named Nick Greiner ahead of the Premier as the most powerful figure in New South Wales, why will he not require him to appear before budget estimates next week?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Madam Speaker and Clerk Emeritus, we need no greater example that Labor has not learned the lesson of the last election than that question. For them, it is all about power. For us, it is all about the public interest. Wherever I rate on any list across this State, for as long as I am in this job I will be driven by the public interest. That is why we are getting on with the job. We are fixing our infrastructure. We have set up Infrastructure NSW with a board—

Ms Linda Burney: With Nick Greiner chairing it.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Canterbury should let me answer the question. I was about to say that. I say to the member for Canterbury what I said to schoolchildren last week: The best lesson in life is to put the brain into gear before opening the mouth.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier will return to the leave of the question. The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The second-best tip I give to students is to not interrupt others when they are talking unless they say "excuse me". One of the problems we are tackling is to deliver infrastructure—roads, rail, hospitals, schools, ports—that this State deserves so we have jobs and a strong economy and the opportunities that go with it. We established Infrastructure NSW, headed by Paul Broad as chief executive officer. The board comprises both the public and private sectors and is chaired by Nick Greiner, a former Premier of this State.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In their latest stunt those opposite seek to have a chair of a body come along to estimates hearings. To the best of my knowledge it has never been done before. The former Premier is making the point that these are budget estimates. The board of Infrastructure NSW has nothing to do with the budget process. In fact, it is role of the Treasurer and Government. Paul Broad, who is the chief executive officer, will be available if he is required. But we will not drag chairs of boards to estimates hearings.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We will front up to estimates committee hearings. Unlike those opposite, we are running a responsible Government. My Ministers will front up to estimates committee hearings. We will take questions and we will answer them.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. The member for Monaro will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: All I know about the power index is that the Leader of the Opposition did not make it. The Leader of the Opposition is one of the few people in the world who has traded one job that did make it with another that did not. When he ran Unions NSW the unions ran government in this State. As I have said time and again, the unions may still run the Labor Party but they no longer run government in this State. We will run the estimates hearings as they have been run in the past.

CHILD MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: My question is addressed to the Premier. What action is the Government taking to protect children travelling as passengers in cars?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Gosford for his question and his interest in this area. He comes from the Central Coast, an area with a higher proportion of young people than the State average. He understands the importance of road safety. During the election campaign we were almost witnesses to an accident in his electorate. We are determined not only to improve roads but also to ensure we send the strongest possible message to drivers. Every now and then we hear of traffic incidents that leave us feeling horrified and make us shake our heads in disbelief. The example that stuns me most is when a parent engages in most reckless and dangerous driving whilst children are in the car. It is bad enough that people drink drive or drug drive or take on the police in high-speed pursuits, but to do so with a child in the car, putting a young life at risk, is unbelievable and incredibly irresponsible.

There have been numerous cases recently where precisely that has happened: children have been put at risk. A driver in Balmain returned a blood alcohol reading of 0.144 with five children in her car in January this year. The children ranged in age from 18 months to 11 years. Another driver in Plumpton returned a blood alcohol reading of 0.192 with two young children in her car in March this year. A couple of weekends ago there were two reports by police of people driving cars under the influence of alcohol with children in their car. That sort of crazy behaviour should result in tougher sanctions by the courts, and under this Government it will.

We are introducing legislation to require courts to make the presence of children an aggravating factor during the sentencing of drivers for serious traffic offences. That means that courts will be able to impose tougher penalties on drivers convicted of major offences when a child under the age of 16 is in the vehicle. The sanction will apply to those convicted of a range of offences including drink-driving, drug-driving, engaging in a police pursuit, failing or refusing to undergo breath analysis or refusing to provide a sample for drug or alcohol testing. The courts may impose a higher fine or a longer sentence if there is a child in the car at the time of the offence. It could mean the difference between a fine and a jail sentence, and so it should. In the past five years at least nine children under the age of 16 have been killed and a further 124 injured as a result of a driver drink-driving. That figure would spiral even further when we take into account serious speeding and dangerous and reckless driving offences with children in the vehicle.

I am concerned that the police commissioner advised me today that this is becoming more of a regular occurrence and, sadly, women are becoming the worst offenders. That is why the police have joined with the Roads and Traffic Authority to strongly support this measure as a genuine road safety initiative. As the parent of two teenage boys I cannot imagine anything more irresponsible, more dangerous or more unacceptable than engaging in drink-driving or drug-driving with children in the car. Our message is clear to drivers across the State: If you drive with alcohol or drugs in your system over the prescribed limits with children in your car you will face the toughest of penalties in our court system. We are taking action to protect young children and hopefully ram home the message to parents that they cannot put young lives at risk when they are behind the wheel of a car.

OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANGS

Mr NATHAN REES: My question is directed to the Attorney General. Is the Government committed to legislating to give police extra powers to deal with outlaw motorcycle gangs and their organised crime?

Mr GREG SMITH: We are determined to get these laws right. It is essential not to rush important legislation. We will be cautious in the drafting and we need to get the necessary legal advice to ensure that it withstands legal challenge. Sound familiar? That is what the member for Toongabbie and former Premier said on the *7.30 Report* on 31 March 2009 when discussing the new biker legislation, and yet he brought it in a couple of days later. And what happened? It failed miserably in the High Court of Australia. We said at the time that it had been rushed without the views of expert constitutional lawyers or other people being sought. Our response is that we need to consider what is in place. The High Court has made two decisions since the former Government's announcement: one regarding South Australia, a failure; one regarding New South Wales, a failure.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Standing Order 129. The question was quite specific: What is the Government going to do? Is it still committed? The bikies have slipped through their fingers. The Government has had seven months to do something about it—talk, talk.

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

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Point of order: Does the member for Maroubra have to declare an interest? How are the Bra Boys going?

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

Mr GREG SMITH: We need to consider what is now in place to identify deficiencies and to ensure that the introduction of any new provisions does not weaken, dilute or complicate existing measures. Police have a wide array of tools at their disposal to investigate and combat organised crime, and they are using them effectively. In fact, we should not be talking about this today because there is a trial going on in the Supreme Court in which the jury is still out. If that trial aborts we will know who to blame. We are looking at new solutions that will bolster rather than hinder the ability of police to tackle gangs—

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

Mr GREG SMITH: —including measures that have been effective in overseas jurisdictions. I am working closely with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on this issue.

Mr Nathan Rees: Four months.

Mr GREG SMITH: It took you 18 months after that urgent legislation was put through to even put in an application to the Supreme Court. Where was the urgency then? We have been consulting with other States after the Premier emphasised the importance of having a national approach to this problem.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not a debate.

Mr GREG SMITH: I expect the matter will be further discussed when the Attorneys meet in Launceston next month.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: Unlike the Rees Labor Government, we will consider any legislative changes carefully to ensure that they are both constitutional and effective in combating the problem of bkie gangs. We do not want to be slaughtered like the Rees Labor Government.

BUSINESS MIGRATION

Mr PAUL TOOLE: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government making New South Wales more attractive for high-value migrants?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Bathurst—Mr 36.7 per cent—for his question. The Government is committed to growing the State's economy and creating jobs: that is our priority. We want New South Wales to be Australia's first place to do business and a leader in the Asia-Pacific. One way we can achieve that is to make our State more attractive for high-value migrants who are considering coming to Australia. That is why today I can announce further reforms to the business migration program arising from a strategic review of the program. We welcome business migrants. We want the best and brightest business people from around the world to come to New South Wales to run a business here and create jobs. Our reforms will cut red tape and put a greater focus on economic outcomes. Under the previous Government the business migration program was a mess of red tape, which discouraged business migrants from choosing to invest in New South Wales. A comparative analysis showed that our competitor States were considered to be more flexible and encouraging to business migrants.

Mr Michael Daley: Does your wife agree, Andrew?

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: I will always cherish the initial misconceptions I had about the member for Maroubra. Our reforms will deliver sustainable jobs and investment while maintaining the integrity of the program. I previously advised the House of a number of reforms to the business migration program: removal of the requirement for pre-application visits on a 456 visa; removal of the requirement to provide an unnecessarily onerous business plan; and the opportunity to attend an interview during which they can outline a business

proposal. Additional reforms will be introduced from 1 November 2011, including separate thresholds for sponsorship for Sydney and regional New South Wales to encourage more applicants to consider doing business or investing in regional New South Wales; revised thresholds for sponsorship of the Business Talent visa subclass 132 to make New South Wales more competitive with other States; better arrangements for applicants who wish to change their proposed business activity in New South Wales in response, for instance, to changing market conditions; relaxation of the need for an applicant's business proposal to be consistent with their skills and experience, to offer more flexibility for business migrants and investors; and exclusion of a limited number of low-value industries from business migration to Sydney—

Mr John Robertson: What are they?

Mr ANDREW STONER: Things such as cafe and retail. I will send you the whole briefing if you like, old mate.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Sadly, your lot were not very interested in this over the last 16 years and that is why the New South Wales economy slipped from number one to right down the bottom. We will give you some education on it, mate.

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

Mr John Robertson: Can people apply from Nauru?

Mr ANDREW STONER: Do you want to talk about Nauru? What is your view on onshore processing? What is your view on the carbon tax? You are all over the shop.

The SPEAKER: Order! I advise the Deputy Premier not to respond to interjections. Members of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I would not raise the Gillard Government in here if I were you, mate.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: This Government wants to attract these valuable business migrants and their dollars to New South Wales, in particular to regional New South Wales.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Transitional arrangements will apply to applications that have already been received. These reforms are intended to make New South Wales more competitive for business migration.

Ms Linda Burney: Are you still going to Canberra?

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: When the member for Canterbury came in here she was nice; now she has turned nasty.

The SPEAKER: Order! I advise the Deputy Premier not to respond to interjections and to return to the answer.

Mr ANDREW STONER: We want to ensure that New South Wales is not only open for business but that our State becomes more business friendly. We understand that when business migrants choose New South Wales they maintain their business networks in their countries of origin. With the help of our new multicultural business advisory panel, we can leverage these links and enhance the State's international business performance. Unlike those opposite, we know New South Wales operates in a global economy and we must look for and create opportunities beyond Australia.

REGIONAL RELOCATION GRANT SCHEME

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. In light of today's figures showing that the unemployment rate in regional New South Wales has worsened since he took office, why will he not dump the Government's failed Regional Relocation Grant Scheme and adopt our proposal to create incentives for regional businesses to employ more people?

Mr ANDREW STONER: It is a worry that this bloke is in fact the shadow Treasurer because he does not understand the lag between economic data such as employment figures and the policies that were implemented by the Opposition in the 16 years that it neglected regional New South Wales. If members opposite want to discuss economic data just six months into a new Government they ought to be careful because they are commenting on the effect of their own policies. I will address our regional kickstart package and, in particular, the Regional Relocation Grant Scheme. This side of the House is aware of Labor's 16-year program of centralisation, cutting back on resources and providing no encouragement to the regions. There were the jobs for the boys—we remember those. There was a fair bit of attention given to Wollongong, but none was given to the rest of regional New South Wales.

Through a tough period in regional New South Wales, including one of the worst droughts on record, we saw little in the way of policy response from those opposite. On this side of the House, we put together a regional kickstart package with three elements: a big new infrastructure fund for regional New South Wales; a payroll tax rebate to create 40,000 new jobs in regional New South Wales; and a Regional Relocation Grant Scheme to encourage people to move. In my last answer I outlined to the House how we are going to get business migrants into regional New South Wales. This Government has a positive and proactive policy approach. In relation to the relocation grants, we are about to put together a marketing campaign to spread the good news to city people—although regional New South Wales really can sell itself. It has cheaper housing and clean air, and it provides a wonderful environment in which to raise children. The other positive thing is that there are no Labor members of Parliament in regional New South Wales.

Mr John Barilaro: What about Keira?

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Keira is not Country Labor. "Old Crazy Eyes" over there is not country. I will quote from an authoritative source on this.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Parliamentary Library's background paper on the 2011 election written by that noted electoral expert, Antony Green, says, "The Labor Party won no seats classified as country." That confirms that there is another attraction to living and working in country New South Wales. Unlike those opposite, who had 16 years to come up with some good ideas to encourage people to live and work in the regions to achieve decentralisation, this side of the House has a positive and proactive policy.

WATER DESALINATION PLANT

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: My question is directed to the Treasurer. What progress has the Government made in its commitment to the long-term lease of the Sydney Desalination Plant?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Cronulla for his question and for his long track record of fighting for community issues in Cronulla.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Every day is another day that the O'Farrell Government gets on with the job of turning around New South Wales. We get on with the work while the Opposition tries to wreck the place. That is the truth. The Coalition is delivering on its commitments and is getting on with the job of building desperately needed infrastructure. One of our longstanding commitments in this regard is the long-term lease of the Sydney Desalination Plant, which was first announced on 8 June 2010.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The long-term lease of the desalination plant is going to unlock funds so we can actually build the infrastructure, not just talk about it. The Government builds things; the Opposition talks. This transaction has three objectives and the members should be clear on what those objectives are. The first is that, contrary to Labor's scaremongering, this transaction will have no impact on water prices. We know that members opposite are not truthful. They know that they are not truthful. The member for Toongabbie knows better than most that they are not truthful. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal sets the prices, and the cost of the plant is already reflected in the prices. Therefore, this transaction will have no impact on water prices and the Opposition should start telling the truth.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As often as they appear—and we did see Bill and Ted appear on the *7.30 Report* with Quentin Dempster to talk about it—they need to be truthful because there will be no impact on water prices. We are going to maintain the reliability of the plant and ensure its responsible operation. Stewardship obligations will be imposed to ensure the highest quality standards. We are also going to get maximum value for taxpayers in this State. That is what this Government is about.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Progress on the transaction is already underway. A steering committee has been formed. We have appointed expert advisers and we are finalising the structure. We are in the midst of bringing an amendment to the Water Industry Competition Act that will introduce competition into the water market—another good thing for this State. We will ensure a level playing field for new entrants and ensure that retailers pay some share of the cost of providing water security for the people of New South Wales.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: New licences will have regard to the Metropolitan Water Plan and relevant government policy. They will also enable owners of water infrastructure to access private lanes to maintain their pipes. This access is similar to that held by water, gas and electricity utility companies. But what amazes me—although it probably will not amaze others in this House—is the position of the Labor Party. When those opposite were in government the Premier said they opposed the sale, but what were they really doing? They were getting on with the job of selling it. That is exactly what they were doing. The Treasury note that the Premier previously alluded to in the House says that on 25 January 2010 the Treasurer made a presentation to Sydney Water regarding disposal of the Sydney Desalination Plant and that following the presentation the Treasurer requested Treasury to work with Sydney Water to pursue the opportunity. A steering committee was formed and met from approximately 9 March 2010 to 15 June 2010.

Mr Nathan Rees: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. Will you be paying for water when the plant is turned off—yes or no?

The SPEAKER: Order! That was another question, not a point of order. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: All contracts remained in place. Labor put the contracts in place. That is the answer to that question.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When this was going on, who was overseeing the transaction? On 8 January 2010 guess who was appointed the shareholder of Sydney Water? It was Mr Middle Management. He was overseeing the transaction at the same time. He should have taken his idol's words to heart. This is what David Brent from *The Office* said: "If at first you don't succeed, remove all the evidence you ever tried." It is still there. We are getting on with the job of fixing the infrastructure in this State and Labor is not going to wreck it.

MAJOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT APPROVALS

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. What impact has the repeal of part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act had on approvals of major developments in New South Wales?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Madam Speaker—

Ms Linda Burney: You're a slow reader.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: No I am not; *The Fog on the Hill* is good stuff. I keep going over it, page after page. The member for Canterbury did not get mentioned, nor did some of the members sitting next to her. The member for Toongabbie got a mention. It is disappointing, isn't it? But it is a good read. Everyone should read Frank Sartor's book *The Fog on the Hill* and they will understand what the Premier was saying earlier. If people in the gallery have not seen the book I can tell them it is a great book. It tells you that this lot over here, who have been decimated, have no interest in public policy.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I was asked about the book.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question contained no reference to the book.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It is an excellent book and it has quite a bit to say about the member for Toongabbie. I thank the member for The Entrance for his question. When you go to The Entrance and sit in The Entrance Road and have a coffee with the member you understand that he is interested in his local community and you get a sense of why we are in government and members opposite are not. One of the first things we did on coming to office was to repeal Labor's corrupt planning laws—I stress "corrupt planning laws"—and in particular part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. These were the laws that allowed former Labor Government planning Ministers to decide which major development projects went ahead. In many cases approvals were given to developers who had given huge donations to the Labor Party. There was a belief that it was a "dollars for deals" culture. I agree with members: It is a shame. Did the Labor Party get the dollars? Yes, it did. Did the Labor Party destroy the credibility of the planning system? Yes, it did. Did Labor get a clear message on 26 March about the community's anger at Labor's corruption of the planning system? Yes, it did.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I am sure the next book will mention you guys, so just relax. The Liberal-Nationals Government honoured its commitment to repeal part 3A. We put a new system in place, which has given power back to local councils and local communities to decide whether projects should proceed in their areas. But at the same time, projects of genuine State significance are being approved. Members opposite should listen to this. I know they usually only hold a discussion around Noreen's table of knowledge. Projects are being approved by the independent Planning Assessment Commission at arm's length and they are transparent. In fact, since the March election the commission has approved 175 projects and modifications worth \$6.2 billion. Those projects alone will create more than 23,000 jobs. In other words, the Liberals and The Nationals are getting on with the job, and we are doing it openly, transparently and honestly.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: If a major project is going to improve services in New South Wales, create jobs and get this State moving, it will get the attention it deserves. For example, the Planning Assessment Commission has approved Wollongong Private Hospital, a new eight-storey, 154-bed hospital, where it is urgently needed in the Illawarra. It will cost \$114 million to build and create nearly 400 construction and operational jobs.

[Interruption]

As the Deputy Premier said earlier, the member for Canterbury was so nice when she first came here. She should listen carefully. The Liverpool cancer, pathology and clinical training project, a state-of-the-art facility in western Sydney, will create 150 construction and operational jobs. That is another approved project. A \$130 million aged care facility in Randwick will provide 65 dementia care beds, 222 low level care beds and 41 special care beds. These proposals are not being considered behind closed doors by the Minister. There are no more dodgy deals; it is all being done honestly and openly. Applications and determinations are made by the independent Planning Assessment Commission. That is the huge difference. Under Labor, housing starts fell to an all-time low.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It was a 50-year low. On the watch of the member for Heffron, the former Minister for Planning, housing starts fell to their lowest in 50 years. We are getting on with the job; those opposite are still asleep after the March election, and New South Wales is on the move.

CORRECTIVE SERVICES BUDGET

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Attorney General. How many offenders will need to receive community-based orders rather than full-time custody so that the Minister can meet the financial targets in the Corrective Services budget?

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

Mr GREG SMITH: The estimates hearings are next week. The cost of running prisons is covered by the budget. The closure of Parramatta, Berrima and Kirkconnell has resulted in a reduction in the cost of services elsewhere even though all the people from those facilities have been placed. More than 240 officers of the department have accepted voluntary redundancies and others are being considered. These matters are going well. Last year the deficit under Labor's watch was \$118 million and in fact in the whole 16-year period of Labor Government the deficit grew each year. This year there will be no growing deficit and we do not have to put anybody on community programs to save costs in the budget. We have it all covered.

STATE CYCLING PLAN

Ms CLOVER MOORE: My question is to the Minister for Transport.

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

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Will the Government respond to the recommendation of the University of Sydney's School of Public Health's prevention research group that 1 to 2 per cent of the State's road budget go to the State Cycling Plan so that more people get urgently needed exercise and State health costs are reduced? It is important to us all.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I seek the indulgence of the House to especially welcome students in the gallery from North Ryde Public School—I went to that school. They have a great local member in the member for Ryde and Minister for Citizenship and Communities. I acknowledge the member for Sydney's interest in all issues relating to active transport. As members know, active transport includes cycling, running and walking, and is an important part of our transport network. The approach from those on this side of the House to transport planning is based on sound analysis and integration. That also means involving the many important peak community organisations and experts in the process. I am pleased to advise the House that the New South Wales Government is determined to deliver an integrated transport master plan that includes active transport—that is, cycling and pedestrian access.

Transport for NSW, the new integrated transport authority, which I am pleased to announce commences on 1 November, will guide the approach of the New South Wales Government to public transport planning, including the involvement of key stakeholders and community groups in this process. We know that all too often the previous Labor Government treated active transport as an afterthought. It loved promising projects before elections, but then failing to deliver them; then promising them again at the next election. I do not think the House wants me to remind them of Labor's bike plan and all the projects it announced as part of the bike plan of 1999. But then, when the bike plan came out 10 years later, all those same projects were in it. Do I need to list them all? No, I will not.

With students from my old school here, I will be on my best behaviour. The Government is focused on delivering a transport master plan that includes active transport and getting on with the job of preparing for this process. But for active transport to make our city easy to get around it needs to be fully integrated; it cannot be treated as stand-alone. There is no doubt that active transport is a healthy and environmentally friendly way to get around but, unfortunately, due to distance it is not an option that will suit everyone. I do not know whether the member for Penrith disagrees but, for example, a commuter who lives in Penrith and works in the city would have to be some sort of super-worker who could cycle more than 50 kilometres to the central business district, put in a full day's work and then cycle another 50 kilometres to get home.

I make the point that whilst active transport is not an option for everybody, clearly there are other commuters in our great city and our great State for whom cycling, walking or jogging to work is a great option, and we will do everything we can to encourage more of that active transport. The huge challenge for government is to accommodate the transport needs of all commuters, whether they live close to work or further afield, whether they choose to use active transport or public transport. That also means creating networks that allow people to move around not just in the peak periods but also the off-peak and on weekends, and not just to work but to undertake other activities. The transport master plan will look at all those issues.

I am also pleased to advise the member for Sydney in particular that in the 2011-12 budget funding process is a dedicated \$31 million to support the continued growth of cycle programs in all parts of Sydney. Additional announcements will be made about the master plan and active transport in that regard. This Government is continuing to work closely with local councils and other stakeholders on these issues. I repeat: the New South Wales Government is committed to active transport, and for the first time in our State's history—unlike the other side of the House and its treatment of active transport as an afterthought or as a pre-election gimmick—we on this side of the House take this matter seriously; it will form part of a truly integrated transport plan. I thank the member for her question.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. What contribution are young people and students making in leadership roles in New South Wales?

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for Port Macquarie for her very important question about leadership and the way we try to encourage young people in this State to take on leadership roles. I acknowledge the 40 young people in the gallery, all in leadership roles in their various schools—North Ryde Public School, St Michael's High School, St Kevin's High School, Ryde East Public School, Northcross Christian School and Truscott Street Public School. I pay tribute to a young man in Dubbo, Ben Costa, whom I have met on a number of occasions. He is a young Aboriginal fellow who is a student at the senior campus at the Dubbo college. He was also this year Young Citizen of the Year in Dubbo—a great example of young leadership in New South Wales, particularly in regional New South Wales. He is doing well. He won an award at the State Training Awards a few weeks ago. He is a great example of what young people are doing across the State in leadership roles. Before I continue, I apologise if I look a bit awkward: I have got a bit of a Linda Burney—a pain in the neck, from sleeping on a fold-up bed.

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

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: You just can't help yourself, can you?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will not incite Opposition members.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member for Toongabbie should not get too excited; after a long bike ride, I am likely to have a real Nathan Rees—a pain in the—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: The Minister for Education, with 40 students in the gallery, so far has made a sexist comment about the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and is now making crude comments. The Minister is not setting an appropriate example for the 40 school students in the gallery.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I have asked the Minister to return to the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It is all about having a sense of humour. We would all go made if we did not have a sense of humour. The question was about leadership and what good leadership is. I spoke about Ben Costa of Dubbo and the 40 fine young people in the gallery. But there are examples of not so fine leadership from young people. I refer to a newspaper report today about Sam Dastyari. Now, there is a young leader well on his way in life. The Labor Party used to be run by faceless men in backrooms; now it is run by baby faceless men in backrooms. It is important to note this because he is a leader—a leader of the political party that is the alternative government in New South Wales.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: I refer to relevance under Standing Order 129. The Minister was asked a serious question about student leadership. He is embarking on a political frolic that is not even funny. I ask that the Minister be directed to return to the question.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The question is about young leaders in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is correct.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Sam Dastyari is a young leader in New South Wales, and he plays an important role.

The SPEAKER: Order! I draw the Minister back to the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: He is the leader of the Labor Party.

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

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: The Minister is clearly flouting your ruling.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have drawn the Minister back to the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The question was about young leaders. What, is he not young, or is he not a leader? What is the objection? Sam Dastyari was reported in today's press as talking about rolling the Prime Minister of Australia.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: Madam Speaker, the Minister has flouted your ruling on at least three occasions, and continues to do so.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have looked carefully at the question, which asks: What contribution are young people and students making to leadership roles in New South Wales? That is fairly wide ranging. The Minister may continue. However, I warn the Minister about making personal comments about other members in this place.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: This is a serious question. Sam Dastyari is reported in the press today talking about potentially rolling the Prime Minister of Australia. This is an unelected young leader—not that he would call himself a young leader—talking about potentially rolling the Prime Minister of Australia. What are his qualifications? Was he elected— ?

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: Considering the interruptions, I ask that the Minister be given additional time to complete his answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has an additional two minutes to conclude his answer.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We have to look at the qualifications of Sam Dastyari. Was he elected to Parliament? Did he go to the people? No, he was not elected—not even elected by the Labor Party; it would not dare do that. What has he done? He was on the University of Sydney ALP Club—Young Labor; he has had some real world experience. He spent six months in the office of Nathan Rees. But, even beyond that, he had some genuine experience in the real world.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. The question is about leadership, but it was to the Minister for Education. One would think the Minister would answer the question in respect of matters pertaining to his portfolio.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is a good point of order, but I cannot uphold it because it is very general. I have to accept the Minister's answer.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member for Mount Druitt is a dear friend of the whole Chamber, but he does need to move with the times. Let's face it—he still puts stamps on his emails. He has to get with the times. He should read the paper when he gets up in the morning. This is serious business. This man potentially will roll the Prime Minister.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order is different as it relates to tedious repetition under Standing Order 59.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not uphold the point of order. The Minister has the call.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: That is not a point of order, nor is sour grapes. We were talking earlier about the power index. This is what it says about him, "Loves French champagne." That is so Labor. I was in Parramatta today and people were not talking about French champagne; they were talking about a measure of good leadership in the Labor Party. [*Time expired.*]

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

PETITIONS

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

The CLERK: Madam Speaker, for years members have called for the entire petition to be read. So on this occasion I will read the whole body of them. From the member for Sydney a petition calling for bus services to Walsh Bay, which states:

To the Honourable Speaker and members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, this Petition of the people of New South Wales brings to the attention of the House:

Walsh Bay is a rapidly expanding precinct, with 700 residents and some 3,000 workers coming and going each day, plus thousands of visitors to the arts and cultural enterprises.

Residents, workers and visitors all require transport. The lack of bus services makes access difficult for workers, patrons and customers, encouraging people to drive and adding to parking and traffic congestion. People without private vehicles have little choice.

Workers have little choice other than driving to Walsh Bay for work, and then competing to find parking spaces or paying for expensive private parking.

The undersigned petitioners therefore request the NSW government:

- **Expanding the 433 bus service to full time;**
- **Building the promised light rail to Circular Quay and Barangaroo; and**
- **Providing ferry services to the new wharf at Pier 2/3**

There follow 25 names. The second petition for the day opposes the sale of animals in pet shops and the third petition requests a ban on exotic animals performing in circuses.

Pet Shops

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

Animals Performing in Circuses

Petition requesting a ban on exotic animals performing in circuses, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Members conveyed their appreciation by acclamation.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROYAL NATIONAL PARK CABINS

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [3.20 p.m.]: I draw the attention of this House to some significant historical landmarks within my electorate of Heathcote—the Royal National Park cabins. The roughly

200 shacks or cabins dotted along the coast were built in the first half of the twentieth century, many during the Depression. As people struggled to find work or make do with what little income they could muster, many migrated towards the bush, away from the rising cost of living. These people clustered together and formed the now recognised four communities—Little Garie, Era, Burning Palms and Bulgo. The shacks generally are simple structures built in the absence of planning controls or basic infrastructure or amenities.

Most of the cabins can be accessed only via long, steep bushwalks or by the sea, which usually is far too rough to allow safe landing or unloading. For these reasons the cabins rely largely on solar panels, kerosene appliances and gas bottles that must be carried in by hand. Many cabins have been passed down through generations from the original occupants and currently are occupied under licence agreements for short-term recreational use. The users and owners feel a powerful connection to the cabins and to their former communities. After visiting these areas it is easy to understand why. Looking up at the patchwork of tiny makeshift roofs and gardens lining the hillsides one is reminded of a far simpler time and a far simpler way of life.

One can imagine coalminers returning home to this paradise after gruelling shifts underground at Helensburgh. They would tend to their vegetable patches, catch and cook dinner with neighbours, and share whatever they could. I cannot imagine a more perfect example of Australian resilience and camaraderie. Even though the original inhabitants are long gone this communal sentiment remains, and nowhere more evident than in the surf life saving club. The Era clubhouse is a makeshift structure that has been built and rebuilt four times by the members of the community, with every brick and even a large generator carried down from the top of the hill. The club receives no funding from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and many of the 65 active members travel several hours to traverse the bush and perform their patrol duties.

The building houses Era's only television, so naturally the whole community is drawn to it for major sporting events. Many wayward backpackers have stumbled on this scene at night after embarking on a bushwalk too late in the day. Imagine their surprise when they are met with a cold beer and warm company after trekking for hours through the dark and dense bush. Currently the club is seeking permission to expand and refurbish its premises in a sensible and sensitive way. I support its efforts. Era's neighbour and friendly rival, Burning Palms Surf Life Saving Club, which has a similar story, was founded in 1939. Despite their small sizes and access difficulties, both clubs have passionate members that compete at State and national surf lifesaving carnivals.

There were once similar shacks up and down the New South Wales coast but most have now vanished. The protection afforded by the Royal National Park has ensured that these communities represent the largest remaining collection of shacks in Australia. Their heritage significance has been recognised by the National Trust, the Australian Heritage Commission and Wollongong City Council. In 1993 the National Trust listing said that the site held "importance for demonstrating the distinctive way of life of the community and its processes which are both of exceptional interest and in danger of being lost". The Era-Burning Palms Protection League, which formed in 1945 to prevent the destruction of the shack communities and which is credited as being one of the earliest conservation organisations in New South Wales, celebrated its sixty-fifth anniversary last year.

Since its formation, the Era-Burning Palms Protection League has successfully saved the land from development in the 1950s. I would like to see those cabins retained and support moves to guarantee their protection in the future. They are an accident of history and such structures could never be built today. I believe it is in the Australian spirit not to begrudge these people who I believe to be our lucky neighbours. I believe that the people of Heathcote, like me, would say, "Good for them", and perhaps even thank the cabin owners for guarding and maintaining these important artefacts of our local heritage.

CORRIMAL SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB CENTENARY

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [3.25 p.m.]: Today I refer to Corrimal Surf Life Saving Club, an important club in the electorate of Keira that recently celebrated its centenary—a milestone in the life of that club. Corrimal Surf Life Saving Club has been conducting patrols since the 1911-12 summer season. Its historian and life member, Graham Yates, compiled and released a book entitled *100 Years in Black and White*—a tribute to Corrimal Surf Life Saving Club, which does fantastic work in our local community. The club has a reputation for being family orientated and for encouraging nippers and young people to join. The club has a tremendous history and has won numerous State and national titles across a range of areas. However, the club is all about volunteers and ensuring that when people come to the magnificent coastline in the Illawarra, in particular

northern Illawarra, which is where I am from, they are safe and protected. If they have any concerns they can access someone on the beach who will not only help them but also do so with a smile and with humility. That is what Corrimal Surf Life Saving Club is about.

Recently I joined club members to celebrate the club's centenary—a great event and a well-run day. Jason Northey, the club's president, is doing a fantastic job in promoting that club. Those members who are lucky enough to live in coastal electorates would know that surf lifesaving clubs do more than just protect people at our beaches. Often they are the first to assist when something goes wrong in the community and often they are the first to lend a hand when other charities or groups need support. Surf lifesaving clubs often are the first to be involved in our local schools and encourage people to enjoy our coastal areas safely and sensibly.

I pay tribute to the work of Corrimal Surf Life Saving Club, which has been active for 100 years. One has to ask oneself: How many hundreds of lives has the club saved in that time? It has brought smiles to people's faces when it has helped family members or their loved ones in treacherous seas. It has brought hope to those it has taught to swim, to navigate out of a rip, or educated about beach safety, which happens at a young age in communities that live on the coast. It is vital for our young people to learn surf safety. Clubs such as Corrimal Surf Life Saving Club are fundamental in teaching young people. The club is run entirely by volunteers and no-one is paid. The volunteers give up their weekends, evenings, and afternoons on many occasions during the summer and winter months, all in aid of supporting and giving back to our community and supporting those who love our coastal lifestyle.

I thank not only the surf lifesaving volunteers but also the sponsors, the committee and those in the community who contribute to making Corrimal the great surf lifesaving club that it is. I thank Mr Graham Yates who has taken an enormous amount of time to compile a book that is more than just a tribute to Corrimal Surf Life Saving Club—it is a tribute to surf lifesaving in this country. Members on both sides of this House and those who reside in our magnificent coastal areas understand the important role that surf lifesaving clubs play and continue to play in keeping our beaches safe and supporting our local community.

RUSE PUBLIC SCHOOL VISION SUPPORT TEAM

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [3.30 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to inform the House of the good work being done by the Vision Support Team at Ruse Public School, especially as member for Vacluse, the Parliamentary Secretary for Education, is in the Chamber. On Monday 17 October 2011 I had the privilege of attending Ruse Public School for the presentation of a National Australia Bank award of \$25,000 to support the wonderful work being done by the Vision Support Team and University of Western Sydney students involved in the Classrooms without Borders. The Vision Support Team is based at Ruse Public School, which is located in Campbelltown—that great opal of the south-west—and it works with children in both mainstream and special schools across Campbelltown and in the greater Macarthur region.

The team comprises quiet achievers and includes Peter Akins, Assistant Principal, Adam Matthews, Glen McClue, Julie Brockenshire, Ana Levar and Natalie Akins. This team of wonderful educators supports our children who are blind and vision impaired. They teach braille, literacy, orientation, mobility and cane skills, and ensure that children with sight disabilities are able to access all aspects of the curriculum. Currently the team cares for the educational needs of about 31 children. In Campbelltown we are blessed with the wonderful University of Western Sydney. I have spoken before in this House about the tremendous contribution that universities, especially the University of Western Sydney, make to our communities. Within the Masters in Teaching (Primary) degree course is a unit of study called Classrooms Without Borders.

This compulsory service learning unit is designed to assist student teachers to learn about the complex nature of teaching. This includes learning about the diverse needs of children and their families and takes into account the time outside the usual 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. school hours. Led by the illustrious Assistant Professor Diana Whitton, School of Education, this group of talented and committed students, our future educators, undertake real-life education experiences. These students include Clare Willmot, Sarah Rush, Karen Stevenson, Dahlia Hijaza, Michael Shipley and Amelia Lamond.

The task facing the students was large and complex. With the change in the braille code there is a need to update the storybooks. At the same time, how can we enrich the reading experience of our children? How can we bring colour and the vibrancy of a story to life? How can we represent concepts such as magic? In partnership with the Ruse Vision Team, the Classrooms Without Borders students have made a range of braille and tactile books for blind children and digital books for low-vision students. These resources are not generally

available on the commercial market. I ask members to imagine, to close their eyes and to run their fingers over the pages as these children do. The braille story is recorded and supported with tactile representations of colour, kites, cows, pigs, rain and birds' nests and they indeed bring magic to life. Each page is illustrated with handmade representations made with love, care, heart and an educator's skill.

To see the joy on the faces of the children as they read these delightful stories, such as *Who Sank the Boat?* by Pamela Allen, to see the joy of children being able to access good-quality literature and to see the children's love of books, language and literacy is to understand the reason why the partnership is worthy of recognition. The partnership applied for a seed grant from the National Australia Banks' Schools First Award program. It is clear why they were so successful in winning a \$25,000 grant, which was presented by Mr Suhki Singh and Toese Faapito of the National Australia Bank. The partnership of our Vision Support Team at Ruse Public School and the students from the University of Western Sydney represents the very best of Campbelltown, the very best of the opals of the south-west.

HUNTER EXPRESSWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [3.35 p.m.]: I raise an issue in the House today that is of considerable concern to residents in my electorate—that is, the construction of the Hunter Expressway. I speak on this issue today on behalf of my constituents because they feel their voices have gone unheard. I respect the privilege of private members' statements in this House and I will try to avoid making a political statement. If I stray, I welcome being brought back on course. The construction of the Hunter Expressway is taking place in a rural area. Housing and properties are widely spread and the expressway is going through the middle of them. The residents welcome the Hunter Expressway and have been working with the Roads and Traffic Authority on design and layout. In fact, they suggested a better and more direct course to the Roads and Traffic Authority. Such consultation has been occurring over the past 15 to 20 years.

Conditions for consent were granted for the construction of the road. The road is well underway and should be opened in 2013, as expected. With this type of road construction comes a great deal of truck and transport movement and the need for concrete batching plants and workshops. The conditions of consent that were granted at the time of approval were specific about where and how facilities should be placed.

Unfortunately, at present, those conditions are not being complied with, which is impacting significantly on the residents. Workshops and a concrete batching plant will be located within 200 metres of about four homes. These facilities will operate from approximately 5.30 a.m. up to 8.00 p.m. Residents will experience a couple of hundred truck movements every day. Dust from the concrete batching plant will fall on their roofs and in their water tanks. The waterways that feed into their dams will be exposed to dust from the concrete batching plant, as well as from the construction and earthmoving work. The impact on the residents will be significant.

The concerned residents have tried to work with Abigroup and the Roads and Traffic Authority, who are constructing the road. To a large extent they have been fobbed off. Their voices have gone unheard. I am pleased to say that the Minister for Roads and Ports instructed the Roads and Traffic Authority to meet with the residents. The Roads and Traffic Authority and Abigroup organised a nice evening in the vineyards where we all came together and residents had an opportunity to ask questions. Unfortunately, the road construction groups, Abigroup and the Roads and Traffic Authority, were not prepared. Residents had read the documentation and the planning reports. They understood the occupational health and safety and environmental issues. However, the road construction groups were not up to speed and could not answer their questions. They did not have the detail and let themselves down.

After the meeting residents had to wait 28 days to obtain responses to their questions in writing. However, one hand does one thing while the other hand does another. The road construction groups submitted a recommendation to the Department of Planning that they be given permission to construct a workshop outside the conditions of consent. That workshop has a chance of being approved where, clearly, it does not comply with the conditions of consent. The conditions of consent were set up to protect the residents. It is understood that if the conditions are not complied with there can be impacts on residents. I again advocate on behalf of the residents to the Minister and the Roads and Traffic Authority that they try to resolve this issue. The area has a great deal of bushland and space away from housing that could be used for these facilities but the residents are not being heard.

I have been unable to arrange a meeting with the Minister and I have not been provided with adequate responses to my questions. I asked Opposition members in the other place to put questions to the Minister, but

the Minister once again evaded and dodged. As I have said, the Minister originally instructed the Roads and Traffic Authority to meet with residents. All power to the Minister and I thank him for doing so, but the issue remains unresolved. The voices of my constituents are not being heard. No-one suggests that the road should not go ahead or that the workshops are not required. But they should not be located within 200 metres of residential housing or contrary to the conditions of consent. Today I raise the issue in the House and put it in *Hansard* so that these residents' voices are heard through their local member. That is the purpose of private members' statements. I implore Government members in the House to ask the Minister to talk to the member for Cessnock about these issues so that they can be addressed.

RURAL WOMEN'S GATHERING

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.40 p.m.]: Today I raise in the House the issue of Rural Women's Gatherings. On the weekend I had the pleasure to attend the nineteenth Rural Women's Gathering at Gloucester on behalf of the Minister for Primary Industries Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, the Minister for Women Ms Pru Goward, the Minister for Citizenship and Communities Mr Victor Dominello, and the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing and local member Mr George Souris. It gave me great pleasure to attend the nineteenth Rural Women's Gathering and to be part of this special event. In many countries women are the last family members to eat and their nutritional needs are met only when and if the men and children have had enough. Women can have little or no status: they frequently lack the power to secure land rights or access vital services such as credit, inputs, extension services, training and education.

Thankfully, we live in a country where women are celebrated, and that is what occurred at Gloucester at the weekend. Last Saturday marked World Rural Women's Day and to acknowledge the day I officially opened the nineteenth annual Rural Women's Gathering. World Rural Women's Day aims to give value to the work of women. This special day was proclaimed at the United Nations Conference for Women held in Beijing in 1995 and it is celebrated in more than 100 countries around the world. In Australia we have much to be grateful for and this day was about celebrating and acknowledging our very own women of the land. But even here in New South Wales and Australia life on the land is not without its challenges. More and more rural women are taking on paid work to bolster the family income, which they have not had to do before. The rise and fall of the Australian dollar can also impact on exporters and productivity on the farmlands in our regional areas. Climate change conditions continue to make us rethink the way we are operating our farms.

The Government recognises the important role that Rural Women's Gatherings play in providing opportunities for rural women to come together to network, to share experiences, to support each other and to gain access to information, decision-makers and service providers. I am also learning just how important these gatherings are in showcasing the talent and creativity of host communities. Women's Gatherings are well established as an annual state-wide community event, and this year about 250 women, and quite a few men, came to Gloucester to experience the theme of the gathering: Friendship and dreaming beneath the Bucketts. On Saturday I was delighted to announce that the Government, through the Department of Primary Industries, will provide \$30,000 funding support for the twentieth Rural Women's Gathering, which will be hosted by Parkes, in my electorate, in 2012. I also had the privilege to announce additions to the 2011 Honour Roll, which formally acknowledged the efforts of 140 women volunteers nominated by their communities.

I congratulate from my community Carolyn Rice, OAM, who hails from Cookamidgera—a small community near Parkes. She was included this year on the Honour Roll with many women from the Central West. Carolyn moved to a farm at Cookamidgera in 1967 and has three sons. She is chair of Parkes Rural Women's Gathering and co-chair of the recent Opera at the Dish that I spoke about last week in this Chamber. Carolyn also sits on the Lachlan Health Service board, delivers Meals on Wheels and cares for her grandchildren and her mother-in-law. In 1988 Carolyn joined Quota and was elected International President in 2005. In 2006 Carolyn was awarded the Order of Australia medal. Women are so often the backbone of families and communities, but they also contribute to society, as Carolyn has, in many wonderful ways. I pay tribute to her and congratulate her and all the nominees on the Honour Roll.

New South Wales has more than 1.7 million volunteers and without their support many groups, including charities, emergency services, the arts, the environment, social justice, education and sporting organisations, would struggle to survive. Women make a wonderful and significant contribution to our society and I was honoured to be involved in World Rural Women's Day celebrations this year. I had the additional pleasure of being able to attend the event with my mother, Rhonda, who also had a fabulous time. I thank the organisers of this year's event at Gloucester and I thank the Ministers for giving me this very special opportunity and privilege to be a part of it. I eagerly await the twentieth anniversary of the Rural Women's Gathering in Parkes in 2012.

EGYPTIAN COPTIC CHRISTIANS PERSECUTION

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.45 p.m.]: This afternoon I speak on behalf of all good people in my electorate regardless of whether they have a religious conviction or not, and, if they do, regardless of what that conviction is, to support the good Coptic people who reside in my electorate. Their forebears, their family members, their friends and their ilk, are suffering terribly at the hands of the military regime in Egypt and have been suffering for decades under the regime of Mubarak. Earlier this week I was pleased to see a motion passed in the Federal Parliament expressing outrage at the attacks that have occurred on Coptic Christians in Egypt.

I was heartened to see that the motion was carried unanimously and that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister issued strong statements. I was pleased to see an indication from the House and the Federal Government that the Australian Government will continue to make the strongest representations to the Egyptian Government in relation to Egyptian citizens in an effort to see that Government provide equal rights and protections for all Egyptian citizens, regardless of their race or religion, which is a fundamental human right of all people. I have received strong representations from Coptic people in my electorate. St George Church in Kensington, on the outskirts of my electorate, serves the Coptic people in my electorate, and good people such as Father Matthew Attia and other good priests preside over that church.

I attended that church when I was Minister for Police, and in December last year, also in my capacity as Minister for Police, I attended St Mary and St Mina's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral at Bexley. Some security issues arose, which I will not go into, but I was joined at the cathedral by the member for Macquarie Fields and the Hon. David Clarke to unite with the Coptic people in expressing absolute outrage at what has been happening to them—attacks on their people, attacks on their churches—for decades. At that time we were all hopeful that the revolution which got rid of the tyrannical President Hosni Mubarak and his regime might have brought about some change and some betterment in freedom and peace in Egypt for people of all races.

Unfortunately, that does not appear to be the case. There is now a military regime in Egypt which refuses not only to enforce the rule of law but which, as recently as just over a week ago, has presided over the deaths of dozens of people—mostly of Coptic Christian persuasion—who were killed in clashes with security forces. More than 200 people were injured in the fighting that was associated with protests in Cairo. I recall watching one of the media outlets earlier this week and seeing a report on a Muslim man—who spoke very good English—who went down to Tahrir Square. He said that notwithstanding he was of the Muslim religion he was outraged by the persecution of the Copts and he went down to the square, like many others of his kind, to support those people who have long been victimised. I do not know who that gentleman is and will never meet him, but good on him and the people like him who did that.

The violence follows an increase in sectarian tensions that have affected Coptic Christians since the beginning of the year and earlier. A number of attacks on people and churches have taken place. Although I will not move a motion in the House today on this issue I know there would be universal condemnation in this place against those attacks on religious institutions and people. The electorate of Maroubra has a strong and proud Coptic community, which has expressed its concerns to me. I know that I would be joined by all members in this place in condemning these attacks. I congratulate Federal members of all persuasions on taking up this issue. People in the Western world of good conscience will keep speaking out for the people in Egypt who do not have a voice. I have been to Egypt. It is a wonderful place. The Egyptian people are wonderful people and these actions by the military regime do nothing for their international reputation.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [3.50 p.m.]: This afternoon I want to speak about the remarkable contribution of the Rural Fire Service to this State. That contribution cannot be overestimated. Whether it is fighting bushfires, community education, backing up NSW Fire Brigades or, as we saw in the 2000 Olympic Games, providing support to our Olympic security, it is hard to imagine the State of New South Wales functioning without this invaluable emergency service. The Rural Fire Service is something for the people of New South Wales to be truly proud of. From starting out as Australia's first bushfire brigade at Berrigan in 1900, it has grown to become the world's largest fire service with more than 70,000 volunteers.

Members may recall that in my inaugural speech to this House I pledged to work to provide more recognition for our volunteer emergency service workers. I said that it is incumbent upon us as a community to ensure that every attempt is made to recognise these unsung heroes who surely will come to our aid when we need their assistance most. In keeping with this pledge it was an honour for me to attend the presentation of

long-service and national medals to 51 deserving Hills District based rural firefighters yesterday evening. These brave volunteers regularly place their lives on the line in the interests of our community without any thought of remuneration. I said to them last night that if the best thing we can do for our volunteer emergency services workers is give them a gong every 10 years we truly need to reflect on how we recognise their contribution.

Such a remarkable commitment to local communities is inspirational and it is a clear indication of the spirit of community service that is well and truly alive in this State. We owe these volunteers a great debt of gratitude, a debt that cannot be repaid as all attempts would fall short of the recognition they deserve. The simple fact that yesterday's 51 medal recipients had a combined 1,258 years of commendable service illustrates this point. That 16 national medals were received for long service and diligent service in times of crisis is outstanding.

I have had the pleasure of working for three combat agencies: the New South Wales Police Media Unit, St John Ambulance and the Australian army. In each of those combat agencies I had cause to serve with the Rural Fire Service. I vividly recall attending the January 1994 bushfires when I worked for the Police Media Unit. During this tragic event the Rural Fire Service spent thousands of hours in saving lives and property.

The St John Ambulance was regularly required to back up and provide first-aid posts to the fire line of the Rural Fire Service. I vividly recall the October 2002 bushfires on the Central Coast in which we were required to assist on short notice. In the Australian army as a staff officer attached to the Defence Centre in Sydney I was required to assist in DACP, defence aid to the civil power, requests which the Rural Fire Service would implement when it found itself short of support and would need to turn to the military for assistance.

When working in those combat agencies one deals with man's inhumanity to man, but the Rural Fire Service deals with nature's crises. There is nothing more brave or courageous than a man who is prepared to stand up to a fire to protect life and limb. I congratulate the deserving medal recipients and all Rural Fire Service volunteers. I look forward to recognising their further achievements and delivering further reports of their receiving their due rewards.

ROAD AND HELICOPTER MEDICAL RETRIEVAL SERVICES

BORENORE FIELD DAY

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [3.55 p.m.]: I draw the House's attention to recent events in the Orange electorate and I once again refer to the petition of more than 30,000 signatures calling for the retrieval service based at Orange to be extended to a 24-hour service. I will now update the House on the progress made since I spoke on this matter last month. The Minister for Health met with the mayors from Central NSW Councils [CENTROC] last month. At that meeting the Minister was asked if the review into helicopter services could be brought forward as the Central West contract does not expire until 2014. It needs to be noted here that the Central NSW Councils' mayors had never raised this matter with the previous Labor Government in the years since the helicopter contract was signed in 2008. The Government is starting from scratch with respect to this issue. The Minister replied that she would consider that request.

I am pleased to report to the electorate that since that meeting the Minister has confirmed that the Director General of Health, Dr Mary Foley, will get the review into helicopter services moving as soon as possible. This is a positive step forward. The Minister's response is confirmed in a letter to the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly dated 13 September in response to the petition. The letter confirms that a review of road and helicopter retrieval services will commence in 2011 and that the review will include the needs of Orange and consider whether the helicopter retrieval service based there should be extended to a 24-hour operation. The Minister also informed the mayors that there would be opportunity for input into the review from the public and medical practitioners. That is also a positive development that shows commendable willingness to have an open and meaningful review. Progress is being made, albeit more slowly than those who signed the petition would probably like to see. However, it is important that the review will be done properly and, to this end, it cannot be done overnight.

The extension of the retrieval service to 24 hours was not an election promise but it is something that I support and would like to see introduced as soon as possible. But we need to get it right. Government members are fully aware of the monumental mess that the Minister inherited on 26 March when the Coalition was elected to government. The Minister has been confronted with problems to solve from Tamworth to Wagga Wagga, Grafton to Westmead, Gulbong to Broken Hill and has made great inroads in addressing the 16 years of neglect

of the health system by those opposite. Health in regional areas has been neglected for too long and is being given a long overdue overhaul. The Minister was faced with the need for overdue infrastructure upgrades at a number of country hospitals and, in addition, had to deal with the backlog of 1,800 patient reports from specialists that had not been referred to the patient's own medical practitioners. Once she intervened this backlog was eliminated in a matter of weeks.

Last month's budget allocated record funding for health, which will go a long way towards restoring health services to where they should be. The health Minister should be congratulated for what has been achieved in health in just seven months in government. I am sure that with input from Orange-based trauma specialists the Minister will be able to progress the matter further to finalise terms of reference and to proceed with the appointment of the reviewing panel. I look forward to working with the Minister and her office to speed up the process of reviewing this vital service.

Unfortunately, there will always be those who seek to use this issue as an opportunity for petty points-scoring. It is no coincidence that those people's interest in the issue seems to have commenced only after Labor lost power on 26 March. As I said in a previous address to this House, the public are sick of the carry on by local Labor politicians. They did nothing about this issue for years when Labor was in power, but have suddenly found their voices. I can only say that the medicinal effects of a looming local election on rusty vocal chords never ceases to amaze. I note that not one of them has contacted my office to make a single constructive contribution to this campaign. They can play their petty politics, but the Government is getting on with the business of cleaning up the mess that Labor left. That is what I am focused on with respect to this vital service.

I also mention that this week in Borenore near Orange I attended the opening of the 2011 Australian National Field Days with The Nationals Federal Leader Warren Truss. This was a memorable event as this year is the sixtieth anniversary of the field days. From its humble beginnings in the 1950s when tractors were rapidly taking the place of draughthorses, Australian national field days have grown in stature to the point where they now attract more people to Orange over the three days than any other event in the area. This event, run by volunteers, creates an economic boost for the Orange district every year. At the opening ceremony this year many of those who pioneered the field days movement were recognised, including Cliff Armstrong, who attended the inaugural event in 1951 and has not missed one in the 60 years since.

Cliff was seated in the front row at the opening ceremony on Tuesday and after the ceremony he recalled many of his early memories of the event. Cliff related how his father had insisted that he come with him to the field days to inspect the machinery that was now available to take the place of horses on their farm. The Australian National Field Days, as an event, provide a valuable economic boost to the Orange and Cabonne districts. It also plays a vital role in supporting agriculture and food security. I congratulate the current committee, led by Chairman Andrew Jaffray, and his hard working team of volunteers, on organising a wonderful event to mark the sixtieth anniversary.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.59 p.m.]: I support the comments of the member for Orange, who has been a very strong advocate for the people of his electorate and the wider Central West. He should be congratulated because we have made a lot of progress on the helicopter service already. We have never before seen a meeting of mayors from the Central West like that one in relation to such an important service. The member for Orange, the member for Dubbo and I have been knocking continually on the Minister's door to raise this matter. She is well and truly aware of the matter. As a Government we are committed to making sure that things are done properly and that this review process is looked at in the most efficient way. As the member for Orange said, it is about getting it right. I congratulate all those involved. We will continue to fight for the people of the Central West.

MENAI MEN'S SHED

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [4.00 p.m.]: Men's sheds are a vital social outlet for men who like to tinker in a meaningful way. I believe they provide an important community service to men of all ages and from all walks of life. I have recently seen my local Menai Men's Shed start from scratch, so I know how much work has been undertaken to make it happen. It took a wonderful combination of enthusiasm and determination by these men to find members and an appropriate location for their proposed shed. I congratulate them on having the wherewithal to get it up and running for the community.

What is a men's shed? It is something much bigger than the traditional backyard shed many of us grew up with and that has long been a part of Australian culture. I recently had the honour of cutting the ribbon at the

Men's Shed in Menai. About a year and a half ago I sat in the Menai Community Centre with a group of men all eager to start their own men's shed. I felt as if I was being allowed into the sacred men's domain. They proposed sausage sizzles at Bunnings and other ideas to raise funds to set it up.

Dr Geoff Lee: Secret men's business.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: That is right. Advertisements and letterbox drops went out, and members started signing up. I found it remarkable that there was already an instant group of volunteers and potential members that came forward from our community. In fact, in the initial planning stages the membership of the Menai Men's Shed even outnumbered the established Engadine Men's Shed—not that there is any competition between the member for Heathcote and me. I am glad to see that he is in the chair today. Everyone was so energetic to get the men's shed off the ground, and I know that projects to help the elderly in our community were undertaken straightaway.

Just over a year ago I joined the group again at a morning tea where we launched the new Menai Men's Shed. There was such excitement that morning, but while the concept was officially launched there was no building, no premises, and no home to operate from. That was why it was such a pleasure to help the group open their permanent home at Alford's Point on 16 August. I was also able to show the brand new Menai Men's Shed to the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Victor Dominello, earlier this year during our community Cabinet visit.

Dr Geoff Lee: A good Minister.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: A good Minister. I know the Minister was happy to see the level of commitment and enthusiasm for this endeavour. The Menai Men's Shed goes far beyond men indulging in some handiwork with their mates. Menai Men's Shed has already been in talks with the youth centre at Menai to look at how its members could mentor and teach their skills to our young people. These kinds of skills are steadily being lost as they do not get passed down through generations as readily as previously, and many people just do not have a shed at home. I think this could be a great initiative and a great way to use the group's skills to equip our younger generations.

When Karen Howell, the Manager of Menai Community Services, first mentioned this idea to me I thought it would be a great addition to our community—and after seeing it in action I know it will be better than I expected. I have already made contact with another enthusiastic group of men who want to start a men's shed in Moorebank. They also joined me at the Menai Men's Shed opening and were clearly invigorated by seeing another men's shed in action. I look forward to working with them to make their dream a reality and establish another great men's shed in my electorate.

I have been a firm supporter of the Men's Shed movement and I am so proud to now have a men's shed in my electorate. I must take a moment to acknowledge some of the other benefits of having such a great facility available to the community. Men's health remains an issue of priority for Australian men. We already know that Australian men are more likely to have serious health problems than Australian women. Traditionally, men have largely ignored their health because of their attitude to their masculinity and how they express it. Social factors, such as unemployment and the ignorance of male health issues, also play a part. Initiatives such as this have repeatedly proven to be of great benefit to men's health and wellbeing, particularly in assisting men to cope with isolation, loneliness and depression.

Men's sheds provide an outlet for men of all ages to come together to talk, to create and construct a variety of projects, and to address health issues. It is a unique space for activity, social interaction and peer support that they might not otherwise have the opportunity to enjoy. One of the things we take for granted when working full time is the companionship of workmates and the social environment of the workplace. This is also one of the noticeable holes left on retirement, which must be filled if we are to have a long and enjoyable retirement.

I recently launched the Sydney branch of the Success Women's Network, which will provide support for women while they are in the workforce. Men seem to need greater support on retirement to help them integrate in a meaningful way into their community, perhaps for the very first time. There are benefits from the physical output, the teaching of skills and the opportunity to share stories, and being able to get out of the house and make new friends. Importantly, it gives members a chance to talk to each other about anything that may be

troubling them, to alleviate loneliness and to talk about men's health issues in a safe and understanding place. I look forward to seeing what the future holds for the Menai Men's Shed and hopefully the Moorebank Men's Shed in the future, and I wish them all the best.

HAROLD PARK DEVELOPMENT

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.05 p.m.]: Today I raise an issue in relation to a development in my electorate. The Harold Park development, as it is known, has become a significant issue in my electorate. It was recently the subject of a public meeting I held in Glebe, which close to 200 residents attended to hear the facts about this development. The Greens are supporters of appropriate development. In particular, there is an important place for increasing densities in the inner city. When it comes to our record in local government, I point out I have been the Mayor of Leichhardt Council since 2008, and Leichhardt is an example of a council getting on with the job of approving new dwellings. All local governments have targets for new dwellings for their council areas by 2036 and Leichhardt is almost 20 per cent ahead in its numbers. We are getting on with the business of ensuring there is appropriate development in the community. By bringing the community with us and consulting them we can get good results.

In June 2009 the City of Sydney resolved to commence the rezoning of Harold Park Paceway and the former Rozelle tram depot site to allow for residential development. Leichhardt Council, the Glebe Society and other organisations expressed their concerns about several aspects of this proposal. In November last year the planning proposal for the site was exhibited and later adopted. The plan outlines the general arrangements of the dwellings on the site, the heights and parking provisions. It is not an approval for the development but it provides an overall planning framework for it and applications will be lodged to then construct the development. The planning proposal includes 1,250 new dwellings in residential apartment buildings ranging from three to eight storeys; 1,000 square metres for affordable and seniors housing—that is land, not the buildings; 7,565 square metres of non-residential floor space; 3.8 hectares of public open space; restoration of the heritage listed former Rozelle tram sheds; creation of a street network; and spaces for approximately 1,375 cars.

I will address some of the concerns my local community has raised in regard to the development applications that have now been lodged with the City of Sydney. They will be assessed not by the City of Sydney but by the Central Sydney Planning Committee. Those issues are: excessive height; insufficient details on traffic impacts; traffic generation issues; access to Toxteth Road, Boyce Street and Arcadia Road; vehicle access to Maxwell Street; and the ill-defined public open space. Even though the planning proposal is incredibly generous, the development applications lodged by Mirvac increase the heights over the upper limits of five to seven storeys to eight storeys. The eight-storey limit was to be the maximum on selected areas of the site but now the developer has attempted to introduce eight storeys on buildings where the heights were only five storeys or seven storeys.

The heights outlined were already excessive. Breaching the current heights should be rejected as the proposals provide overwhelming visual bulk and scale and will constitute an overdevelopment of the site. With regard to traffic, a development of this size requires a full micro-simulation model so the impact of the proposal on the wider street network, including streets at The Crescent and Parramatta Road as well as local streets in Forest Lodge and Annandale, can be understood. This is a critical issue that must be taken up in the assessment process. The claims made by the developer that there are methods to reduce traffic generation are untested and weak. They should be discounted until there is a detailed microanalysis and full assessment of the impact of each of the development applications.

When it comes to the stairway access to Toxteth Road, steps should be taken to minimise impacts on local residents from the scale and density of the development by excluding the proposed stairway to Toxteth Road, Boyce Street and Arcadia Road. When it comes to Maxwell Street, the developer is seeking to breach limits set by the already overly generous planning proposal and should be strongly opposed. Vehicle access to Maxwell Street should be removed in order to maximise the value of public open space and reduce the risk of serious vehicle-pedestrian conflict in Maxwell Street. Here in particular I recognise the points made by St Scholastica's College and how important it is to make sure those people are protected.

The other issue is that we need to ensure, before this development proceeds, that the public open space matters are resolved, including the full-size sporting fields, to ensure that all of the issues that the developer has committed to are followed through before the development application process goes through. I have made a submission to the review of this development application, as have a great number of other local residents. It is important that all these issues, in particular a detailed micro-simulation analysis of the traffic impacts, be

undertaken in order to fully understand the impacts of this proposed development. I will work to support the community and to support local business to ensure we have a development that we can be proud of, and not one that will deliver a whole range of negative impacts on our local community.

HISTORICAL AIRCRAFT RESTORATION SOCIETY

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [4.10 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to identify and commend the work undertaken by the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society, known as HARS, which is based at the Illawarra Regional Airport at Albion Park Rail. The Historical Aircraft Restoration Society consists of a dedicated group of more than 450 unpaid volunteers, who are working together to collect, maintain and operate important examples of Australia's aviation heritage. The stated objective of the society is to ensure future generations of Australians will have working examples of important types of aircraft to study and to watch in their natural environment. I recently inspected the most impressive collection of flying and restorable-to-flying historic aircraft based at the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society, and I recommend it as a most interesting visit for persons, groups or families of any age.

One of the most impressive examples I came across is that the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society currently operates the only flying Lockheed Super Constellation four-engine airliner in the world. This aircraft was the one selected by Qantas in the 1950s to start its international Kangaroo route services; 14 of these aircraft were the backbone of the then international Qantas fleet. I was particularly impressed with the reality of that aircraft. Historical Aircraft Restoration Society volunteers rescued this aircraft from its scrapped, non-flying status at the United States Air Force "Graveyard" at Tucson Arizona. Volunteer teams worked for seven years, using blocks of visits of three weeks at a time, to fully restore the aircraft to flying condition and then flew it back to Australia. I seek leave to table a document giving a brief overview of the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society so that members can view it if they wish.

I congratulate this large group of volunteers on their achievements in forming the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society and for relocating it to the Illawarra Regional Airport from its former homes at Mascot and Bankstown airports. I commend the initiative and foresight of Shellharbour City Council for encouraging the society to relocate to this region, and to develop the significant tourist complex that is now being assembled at Albion Park Rail. I also identify the major achievements and plans of the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society for both this South Coast region and the actual site at the Illawarra Regional Airport. First I acknowledge the achievements already undertaken. The Historical Aircraft Restoration Society has essentially, with private sector sponsorships and donations, and with the work of unpaid volunteers, constructed the major stages of a large and significant tourism complex at the Illawarra Regional Airport consisting of three very large hangars and a museum complex.

The museum section incorporates the Cockpit Hall, a shop, aviation archives, conference centre and training rooms, as well as the society's administrative centre and members lounge. It also houses a legally separate aircraft rebuild organisation that employs a number of full-time staff. This Historical Aircraft Restoration Society complex is not yet completed, and I commend its completion requirements as important priorities for any organisation or sponsor, whether government or non-government, that would be able to assist with these important completion tasks. I am aware that the society is planning to apply for Federal regional development funds to complete the complex at Albion Park Rail, and I add my strong support for that application when it is made in the near future. I particularly commend the efforts of the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society to attract and involve the young people of this region to take part in its activities.

The Historical Aircraft Restoration Society has—voluntarily and at no cost to the taxpayers or the community—housed the local 338 City of Shellharbour Air Force Air Cadet Squadron, and the Air League Boys and the Air League Girls squadrons so that they parade each week at the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society, which provides them with facilities and a wonderful environment to involve young people with actual aircraft and related equipment. The society also hosts year 11 students for aviation-related studies from local high schools and has hosted the Kidsfest celebration each year. I praise the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society for its voluntary support of important regional events. Each year the society's volunteers fly up to four historic aircraft over the regional Anzac Day marches at Wollongong, Shellharbour and Kiama.

In November each year the volunteers of the society fly historic aircraft over the annual Hargraves Festival Celebrations at Stanwell Park and Bald Hill, at which celebration day many of the year 6 students from Illawarra regional and also Sydney schools learn about kite flying and the achievements of one of this region's most important historic figures, Lawrence Hargraves. One of the most important regional tourism events—the

annual Wings Over Illawarra, which has been running annually for the past six years—was started through the initiatives of the Historical Aircraft Restoration Society, and its senior staff still provide the event coordinator and flying coordinator roles for this major annual event. Wings Over Illawarra 2011 was run in February this year and attracted a majority of out-of-region attendees, with approximately 15,000 people enjoying a marvellous day at the Illawarra Regional Airport. [*Time expired.*]

MALDON TO DOMBARTON RAIL LINE

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [4.15 p.m.]: I speak on the Maldon to Dombarton rail line, a partially completed infrastructure project with the potential to provide transport, freight and employment opportunities for the people of Wollondilly. The Maldon to Dombarton rail line is a 35-kilometre standard gauge rail line connecting the Illawarra rail line from Wollongong to the main southern line running from Sydney via Picton and Maldon, in my electorate of Wollondilly. It is a vital infrastructure project that was overlooked by State Labor for the past 16 years. The proposed Maldon to Dombarton rail line will provide a critically important additional freight corridor to Sydney via the southern freight line. It will bring economic benefits and job creation to the Wollondilly and Illawarra areas. The Maldon to Dombarton rail line will also provide a strategic alternative for supplying the rapidly expanding Port Kembla.

The Maldon to Dombarton line would also increase south-west Sydney's economic competitiveness by giving industry and business a direct link to the Illawarra and Port Kembla; it will significantly boost the Wollondilly-Macarthur economy. The 2009 pre-feasibility study found that completing the Maldon to Dombarton rail line had long-term economic benefits for Wollondilly and the surrounding region. The study concluded that the Maldon to Dombarton rail line "could become the critical link in a Port Kembla-based container supply chain to handle forecast growth in demand for the Greater Sydney Region." The Maldon to Dombarton rail line would also take the pressure off the F6, the Hume Highway, Appin Road and Picton Road, which currently serve as the main freight corridors for transporting goods from Wollongong into Sydney and the south-west. The Maldon to Dombarton rail line would also provide vital support for potential employment land generation in south-west Sydney.

This project has been subject to a number of pre-feasibility and feasibility studies over the years. Just this week Prime Minister Julia Gillard and her band of merry men were peddling false hopes, touting the possibility of completing the Maldon to Dombarton rail line by announcing—wait for it—another study. Federal Labor is dangling yet another hollow promise of this rail link in front of the people of the Wollondilly, Macarthur, Hume and the Illawarra regions, promising \$25 million for detailed engineering plans, and what it describes as a "realistic" construction timetable and new cost estimates. In a stunning display of lack of leadership, the Prime Minister has also refused to comment on whether she believes the 35-kilometre rail line would ever be constructed. She has decided to hand the ball to the Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, Minister Anthony Albanese.

This is the same Minister who is sitting on the long-awaited \$3 million feasibility study, refusing to release it to the public. This rail line would open Wollondilly through increased transport options while providing a suitable alternative to heavy freight on our roads. I am supportive of this project being completed; it would provide job opportunities for the residents of Wollondilly, provide transport options and alleviate congestion on our local roads. Unfortunately those opposite left us with a \$5.3 billion budget black hole as a result of their financial incompetence. Many good infrastructure projects will suffer as a result of Labor's poor economic credentials. Labor was too busy looking at the polls instead of addressing the infrastructure deficit that they created.

Dr Geoff Lee: Shame.

Mr JAI ROWELL: It is a shame. That is why this Government has established Infrastructure NSW to look at infrastructure plans that go beyond a political cycle. I believe this is a project worthy to go before Infrastructure Australia for consideration in the future. According to the Federal Government, the cost to complete the rail line is approximately \$600 million. It is time the Federal Labor Government did something for the people of the Wollondilly, Macarthur and Hume regions apart from delivering a body blow to industry and small business with its carbon tax.

If the Federal Labor Government is serious about this issue, it should stop dragging its heels and release the study for consideration. I encourage Infrastructure Australia also to consider it and not listen to the Prime Minister, who says it needs to be shovel ready; that is just a cute way to say that nothing really is going to

happen by her Government. I apologise for that error as it is not her Government, it is The Greens-Independent alliance Government. That is why the public is getting ready to give the Gillard Government the ability to be shovel ready. Politics must be removed from this issue and I encourage Infrastructure Australia to get involved.

EASTERN CREEK PIONEER SOCCER CLUB PRESENTATION DAY

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.20 p.m.]: As local members, we attend many community events within our electorates. If we were to mention them all, we would do so every day. On Sunday I attended the Eastern Creek Pioneer Soccer Club presentation day, as I do every year. I do not speak about that event in the House every year, but on this occasion I shall because it was special. I have been involved with this club for almost 30 years. Previously it was known as the Rooty Hill Pioneers Soccer Club and prior to that as the Combined Churches Soccer Club. My daughter, who is nearly 35 years old, started playing netball at six years of age for the combined netball and soccer club. My son started playing soccer in the early 1980s, aged four years. I am pleased to say that on Sunday my 31-year-old son attended the function as a local businessman and club sponsor.

I raise this year's presentation day not to talk about my family history with the club but because it was a special occasion for those who have made this club a community-based organisation for so many decades. As I remarked on Sunday, these sporting organisations do not spring up from the fields on which the children play; they come together through the hard work of volunteers who do it for nothing. At the presentation it was announced that the club secretary, Ross Chivers, will retire at the annual general meeting later this month. Ross has held this position for seven or eight years, but has been a supporting parent member for much longer. I pay tribute to Ross for looking after all the club's legal and insurance paperwork so diligently. He will be sorely missed and leaves big shoes to fill.

Also announced was the retirement of Ken Edmonds, who has been club president for some 15 years. As many parents do when their children no longer participate in those events, Ken will step down from his role with the club but will remain in a back-up coaching role. The person I particularly mention is Mrs Helen Beck, who has lived in the Rooty Hill area her entire life, and her husband, Peter. Her parents and grandparents have been involved with the local community for generations. I first met Helen when I was as a new resident of Rooty Hill and at that time realised that this was the club for my children to participate in various sporting and other activities. Helen Beck is a life member of the club, but at the presentation she received another well-earned recognition award. The Blacktown City Council recently considered naming one of the Eastern Creek soccer fields in honour of a local community member.

I am delighted to announce to the House that the decision was to name it the Helen Beck Field. I had the great privilege and honour as the local member to present Helen with a sign provided by the club for prominent display at the soccer field complex. I trust that those who come long after Helen's involvement with this club will recognise the great work she has done for this club for so many decades. As I stated earlier, my first involvement with the club was enrolling my daughter in netball—at that time Helen Beck was a netball player and coach as well as a club administrator. Helen's sterling efforts should not go unrecognised. I have been associated with the club for the best part of the past 30 years. I am a patron of the club and my son is a sponsor, but it would be remiss of me if after all those years of attending this club I did not say, "Well done and congratulations" to such a local champion as Mrs Helen Beck. I congratulate her on her recognition by the Blacktown City Council naming one of the fields in the complex the Helen Beck Field.

AUSTRALIA-NEW ZEALAND CROATIAN SOCCER TOURNAMENT

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [4.25 p.m.]: As an avid soccer fan, I was honoured to attend the thirty-seventh annual Australia-New Zealand Croatian soccer tournament, co-hosted by the King Tomislav Croatian Club and the King Tomislav Soccer Club at Edensor Park, which is situated in the symbolic heart of my electorate of Smithfield. Since its inception in 1975, the tournament has been instrumental in uniting the Croatian communities of Australia and New Zealand. Participating teams representing different Croatian clubs and communities from those two countries compete for the honour of winning titles in the most popular sport embraced by the Croatian community and western Sydney. Soccer, which we know as football, is the most popular and fastest-growing sport in New South Wales and, indeed, Australia. The sport boasts the highest number of registered players amongst all ages from under six years to mature over-50s.

Soccer is the world's game and is the most watched game across the world. Locally, statistics are mind-blowing: 168,360 under 18s play football in New South Wales and there are 240,000 registered players at

more than 800 New South Wales football clubs, with a 40,000-strong army of community volunteers. The Australian and New Zealand Croatian community has been on the front foot in producing a significant number of world-class soccer players for Australian soccer and, particularly, the Socceroos. Names such as Mark Viduka, Mark Bosnic, Zelko Kalac, Ante Covic, Jason Culina, Branko Culina, Tony Popovic, Josip Skoko, David Zdrilic, Ned Zelic and Mark Rudan reverberate across Australian and international sporting arenas.

The tournament was held from Thursday 29 September to Sunday 2 October 2011. Some 50 soccer teams, including men's and women's teams, participated in this special tournament. Qualifying rounds began on Thursday and played throughout Friday and Saturday with the finals being decided on Sunday. The Division 1 championship was won by Melbourne Croatia, while the Division 2 Men's Champions were Wollongong Croatia and Women's Champions were Canberra Croatia. The highlight of the tournament was the glamorous Miss Croatia Australia and New Zealand Gala Ball 2011, which was held at the Sydney Convention Centre, Darling Harbour, on the evening of Saturday 1 October 2011.

The Master of Ceremonies was sporting legend Mark Bosnic accompanied by the glamorous Mariana Rudan and assisted by sporting celebrity Andrew Paschalidis. About 1,200 guests attended this very successful event, which included a number of popular sporting personalities and distinguished business and community leaders. Also in attendance were His Excellency Vicencije Biuk, Ambassador for the Republic of Croatia; Mirjana Piskulic, General Counsel for the Republic of Croatia; Ivan Vuletic, President of the Croatian Soccer Federation and Tomislav Lerotic, President of King Tomislav Croatian Club.

The highlight of the Gala Ball was the 14 beautiful contestants, representing different soccer clubs across Australia and New Zealand, who competed for the 2011 titles. Finally, and after some very difficult decisions by the judges, Miss Melbourne Croatia, Ivana Raspudic, was crowned as Miss Croatia 2011. The function featured the popular local Sydney rock band Sto Na Sat, which entertained the audience throughout the night. At the end of the event it was announced that the winning bid to host the 2012 tournament was the Gold Coast team. The announcement sparked jubilation and celebration by the small but vocal Gold Coast contingent who promised an excellent tournament next year.

GUT FOUNDATION

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [4.30 p.m.], by concurrence: Last Tuesday I hosted the launch of a regional bowel cancer screening pilot program with the Gut Foundation at Parliament House. The Gut Foundation was founded in 1983 with the main aim of promoting awareness and understanding of gut problems, their symptoms and treatments. The foundation is a non-profit foundation that specialises in research and education of gastrointestinal and digestive health. These conditions include bowel cancer, coeliac disease, irritable bowel syndrome, malnutrition, indigestion reflux, diarrhoea and stomach ache. As part of the education program the Gut Foundation publishes information pamphlets and detailed booklets. These publications range from bowel cancer, coeliac disease—informing people of the disease, its symptoms, causes and treatments—Crohn's disease and colitis, dietary fibre and health, to child-related issues such as milk allergy in children and diarrhoea in children. All these publications can be downloaded from the Gut Foundation website.

Each year the Gut Foundation holds two fundraising events: the DeGUTstation Dinner and the Rock 'n' Laughter night. One of the goals for the Gut Foundation is to change the attitudes about bowel disease and diet. Bowel cancer is the most common internal cancer, with a mortality rate second only to lung cancer within our community. Bowel cancer kills 12 Australians each day, 80 Australians each week, more than 4,100 per annum. This number of national deaths leads the world. Bowel cancer is the only potentially preventable cancer in men and one of two in women. The number of deaths in women from bowel cancer is second only to breast cancer. Approximately one in 10 cancers occurs under the age of 50 and the risk increases with age.

The risk of bowel cancer increases two to four times if a close relative has had bowel cancer or polyps, you have already had bowel cancer or polyps, or you have had extensive ulcerative colitis. In the past 15 years rates of disease in young people have increased by 64 per cent, which is more than five times the increase seen in all other age groups. Although Bowel cancer is the second-highest cancer killer in Australia, most cases are potentially preventable. Most bowel cancers develop from benign polyps and if removed bowel cancer is highly preventable. Screening helps to identify those who have polyps or cancer, especially individuals who show no symptoms.

As I mentioned, on 18 October the Gut Foundation, in partnership with John Singleton, launched a 12-month program in the Riverina district aimed at increasing bowel screening, and reducing and preventing bowel cancer deaths. This program will be the first of its kind and will involve the Riverina Division of General

Practice and Primary Health, Rotary and the Cancer Council of New South Wales. A general practitioner will be employed to oversee the program and measure its outcomes. The Gut Foundation President, Professor Terry Bolin, stated at that launch:

Deaths from Bowel cancer in Australia are unacceptably high and we know from the latest research that people living in the bush are more likely to be diagnosed with colorectal cancer at a later stage than people living in big cities.

Currently there are two options for testing: faecal occult blood testing [FOBT] and colonoscopy. The reduction in mortality from screening for faecal occult blood testing is 15 to 30 per cent and with colonoscopy it is 67 to 90 per cent. An intensive media campaign will encourage people to be screened with Rotary's new faecal occult blood testing kits. Positive tests will then be followed up with colonoscopies carried out by specialists in local public and private hospitals. The results from the campaign will be collated and the outcomes measured. Awareness is important, as this disease is preventable and curable if detected early. I place on the record my sincere appreciation to all those involved in bringing this program to the Riverina and to Wagga Wagga. I thank that great Australian John Singleton who, through his generosity, has provided the financial where-with-all to conduct this pilot program.

I note the work of Professor Terry Bolin, and all those who developed this program and put it together for the benefit of the people of the Riverina. It may be ironic that as we were launching this program in the parliamentary precincts members were debating the plumbing and drainage bill. Although that could give rise to some quips and, dare I say, funny remarks, the fact is that bowel cancer is very serious. We can have a laugh and a giggle about the fact that those bills were being debated, but we cannot laugh about cancer deaths—we must take bowel screening seriously. I say to my colleagues that at our age it is important that we get out into the community to encourage people to undertake the screening. We should not be shy; this is something we need to talk about and act on to help to reduce the incidents of deaths from bowel cancer.

LEGACY CENTRAL COAST

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [4.35 p.m.], by concurrence: In March 1918 the Great War was in its fourth year and Germany had defeated Russia on the Eastern Front and Italy on the Southern Front; there remained only the Western Front of Britain and France. The German high command was extremely concerned about the rapid arrival of the American forces, America having joined the war in 1917, and determined that it had to launch a last offensive if it were to have a chance of winning the Great War. It developed its armies from troops reinforced from Russia and Italy to launch its final offensive, the Kaiser offensive. On 5 March a raiding party was led across from the allied side to seize prisoners to try to ascertain the extent of German preparations and the timing of the German offensive.

In that raiding party, led by Captain Brodie, a number of prisoners were seized. As the raiding party retired to the allied trenches a German stick grenade was thrown, and Captain Brody was seriously and eventually mortally wounded. His last words to one of his men who tried to rescue him were, "I'm done for, sonny; see to yourself." He left behind a five-year-old girl and a two-year-old boy. That five-year-old girl was my mother, who was never fated to remember her father and the two-year-old boy who was born after his father had left for the Western Front never saw him. My mother was raised by her own mother and by Legacy. Throughout her life my mother had an enormous respect and commitment to Legacy.

On Saturday at Gosford we celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of Legacy on the Central Coast. My mother's education at Catholic schools was paid for by Legacy. When my mother left school, Legacy organised a job for her in the New South Wales railway system under the statutory requirements at the time that required all public service agencies to give preference to the dependents of ex-servicemen or women who had been killed in the Great War. Through the railways she met my father. Accordingly, Legacy has played an enormous part in her life, just as it was to play a significant part in my life. When I became a solicitor on the Central Coast I became the honorary solicitor for Brisbane Water (NSW) Legacy, and I met many of the people who were dependants, widows and families of Australian servicemen in the First World War, in the Second World War and as the Vietnam War continued, in the Vietnam War.

Legacy has made a great contribution to the cultural development of our nation in that it symbolises not just the spirit of those who served in the great wars but the spirit of the community at home who were determined to support the servicemen and women, and support the families of the servicemen and women who had fallen or who were unable to cope with the stress or pressure of life. Legacy is not as significant today as it

was. Legacy Day in September was once one of the biggest single events of the year. I remember the only occasion I saw Premier Askin, a Liberal Premier from 1965 to 1975, was when he was walking down Martin Place—in those days without staff, bodyguards or police escort—to attend the annual commemoration of legacy at the Cenotaph war memorial. I acknowledge the many men and women on the Central Coast who have played a part in Brisbane Water Legacy.

I acknowledge the present chief executive officer Peter Lawley and president Richard Cranna. I pay tribute to the hundreds of men and women who give up so much of their time to assist the dependents of ex-service personnel. At the event held on Saturday I was joined by my colleagues the member for The Entrance and the member for Gosford, who are great supporters of Legacy. The occasional address on the day was delivered by recently retired Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie, AC, who has made an outstanding contribution to the Australian Defence Forces. I urge the House to continue to commemorate Legacy. It is a great Australian institution that has done great work and has played a great part in the lives of my family.

CHARLESTOWN ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [4.40 p.m.], by concurrence: It gives me great pleasure today to acknowledge the staff and students of schools in the Charlestown electorate. As I said in my inaugural speech, I am committed to supporting a great public education system and this means supporting our schools, students and teachers. As present, thousands of students throughout New South Wales are sitting their Higher School Certificate examinations. I wish them all the best of luck, particularly those in my electorate. Recently I have had the privilege to attend the year 12 presentations of two great local high schools, Warners Bay High School and Kotara High School. I was struck by how polished and impressive all the graduating students were. I look forward to attending the graduation ceremony for Hunter Sports High next month and that of other local high schools at later dates to be determined.

It is a great credit to the schools, staff, parents and, most importantly, the students that today's year 12 graduates are such a fine cohort of graduates. I wish all the graduating students the very best of luck in their future endeavours and I have every confidence that they will go on to make a substantial contribution to our community. I also recently had the pleasure to witness some of the talents at our local primary schools. My wife and I attended the Eleebana Primary School concert, a three-hour extravaganza that provided the opportunity for every student to perform. The performances were fantastic and it was a credit to the staff and students. I also had the opportunity to visit St Mary's Primary School at Warners Bay for their open day concert. Again, the bands and choirs were of professional quality. The school and school community should be very proud.

I had the pleasure to attend the opening of new facilities at Garden Suburb Public School, Cardiff South Public School and Belair Public School, again all great local schools that are central to their communities. I very much look forward to attending more performances at our local primary schools, as it gives me an insight into what my two young sons can look forward to over the next few years. I also have had the chance to visit Gateshead, Warners Bay and St James schools and witness firsthand the dedication of the teachers and their students. Today I had the great pleasure to welcome 34 students of Dudley Public School to State Parliament. I hope one of those students has the opportunity to serve their community in this place.

I want to place on record my appreciation to staff and congratulate students at schools in my electorate. Those schools are Garden Suburb Public School, Dudley Public School, Eleebana Public School, Belair Public School, Cardiff Public School, Cardiff South Public School, Charlestown East Public School, Charlestown Public School, Charlestown South Public School, Gateshead Public School, Gateshead West Public School which at present is a special school for children with autism and other disabilities, Lakeside School at Gateshead, Glendon School at Hillsborough which is another special needs school, Hillsborough Public School, Kahibah Public School, Kotara School, Kotara South Public School, Mount Hutton Public School, Warners Bay Public School and Windale Public School.

The private schools are St Joseph's Public School, St Paul's Public School, St James Public School, St Mary's Public School and St Pius X Public School and the high schools are Cardiff High, Hunter Sports High, Kotara High, Warners Bay High, Whitebridge High, St Mary's High and St Pius X High. To all those schools and their students, I thank the teachers for a fantastic year. All members of this House acknowledge the wonderful work of teachers and are keen to support them. I congratulate all the students at the schools in my electorate. To those graduating from year 12 or finishing year 10 and moving on to a trade, I congratulate them and wish them all the best for the future.

LITHGOW QUOTA CLUB

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.45 p.m.], by concurrence: It gives me great pleasure to speak in the House about an important event that occurred in my electorate last weekend. During private members' statements today we have listened to members talking about their communities and various events that occur in their electorates. We have so many people and organisations in our electorates that we can be proud of. It is testament to the hardworking volunteers in our communities. The event I want to talk about took place in Lithgow last Friday night, 14 October 2011, that is, the Quota International of Lithgow Annual Craft Fair. I had the privilege of being asked to officially open the fair, which was held at Lithgow Union Theatre. Without singling anyone out, I congratulate all members of the Lithgow Quota club for this successful and enjoyable evening. The many people in the local community who attended were impressed with the event.

The Lithgow Quota club is made up of members of various ages, occupations, background and nationality. In the past Quota membership was made up of only women. Now men are allowed to be involved in Quota as well. Quota is an organisation that is made up of a committed, hardworking group of volunteers. The motto of Quota is "We share". Quota members epitomise what it means to help and encourage others while developing friendships and working towards various projects in their community. Quota carries out projects both internationally and at a local level. Internationally it does humanitarian type work; at a local level it could be a project that is significant to a local community. Included in the international humanitarian types of services that Quota provides is helping women and children who may be disadvantaged and raising funds, and helping those who are deaf and those who have a speech impediment. The money the organisation raises is very important.

The Lithgow Quota club certainly displayed sentiments of camaraderie and friendship on the opening night of the show. The Quota craft show went on for three days, and over that weekend many people from the local community and surrounding areas attended the function. I was very pleased to be able to see what was on display there. Only last year the Lithgow Quota club craft show raised \$5,000, which is a pretty good effort. That \$5,000 was given back to the community—it went towards purchasing equipment for the Lithgow Private Hospital. This year the funds that Quota raised have been given to the Three Tree Lodge.

I congratulate all the exhibitors at the show. It is the premier craft fair held in Lithgow every year and this year there were 22 exhibitors. It featured something for all craft fans—spinning, weaving, crochet and bead making—and all the craftwork was on display. The teachers of these crafts are very talented people. Craftwork is a dying form of art. I congratulate the teachers who are still giving up their time to ensure that they are passing on those skills to younger people in the community so these crafts can be continued. I congratulate the Lithgow Quota club on the fantastic job it did over the weekend with its annual craft show. I look forward to attending the show next year because it was a pleasure to be a part of such a special event in the Lithgow community.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 4.50 p.m. until
Tuesday 8 November 2011 at 1.00 p.m.**
