

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 8 November 2011

The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 1.00 p.m.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ST JOHNS PARK HIGH SCHOOL

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [1.00 p.m.]: Since being elected last March I have visited a number of schools in my electorate and my aim is to continue visiting all of the schools in my electorate on a regular basis. There is probably no government service more important than the education of our future leaders. With that in mind, today I will be speaking about my visit to St Johns Park High School. The school captains are Susanna Tieu and Leni Nguyen and the vice-captains are Cathleen Phimdert and Justin Morozoff. St Johns Park High School is located in the south-western Sydney suburb of Greenfield Park in the Fairfield local government area and the State electorate of Smithfield. It is a large school with approximately 1,200 students. It is a comprehensive school serving a multicultural community.

On Thursday 23 June the school captains visited my office and voiced their concerns regarding the condition of the school's toilets and security fence. The students of the school strongly believe that, as they have been making significant improvements to their reputation in terms of academic and sporting achievements, they deserve not to be let down by their environment. They want their school to be the best it can possibly be and they want to show the community that their school has continuously improved over the past 30 years. Susanna told me that the goal of the school captains at St Johns Park High School has always been to ensure that the students are safe and respectful learners, and this means ensuring that students are in a secure and hygienic environment that is conducive to their learning.

The school was built in 1978 and up until this very day its toilets and security fence have not been refurbished or changed. Many adjustments have been made to improve the overall physical quality of the school, including the repaving of pathways and laying of flower gardens all around the school and the addition of a new agricultural farm, a new modern hospitality commercial kitchen and innovative science labs. Almost 80 per cent of the classrooms have Smart Boards. But the two major problems for the school remain—the school needs a new toilet block and a new security fence.

Unfortunately, the state of disrepair of the toilets requires that they remain closed for extended periods. How are students able to access toilet facilities when the toilet blocks are inaccessible for a whole day and sometimes longer? School toilets are an essential facility that are used every day by both students and teachers; however, because of their deterioration the toilets at St Johns Park High School do not function properly and are regularly rendered unusable. This is an unacceptable situation. We cannot expect our children to do well at school if they do not have the necessary facilities. Uncleanliness has the potential to cause disease and we cannot let this happen. I understand the problem has recently worsened to the extent that some students avoid the toilets completely, waiting until they go home in the afternoon.

A second issue at the school is the lack of a complete security fence. The students have a right to feel safe in their school, and the best way of ensuring the security of students while they are at school is with a security fence. A security fence is also important for the image of the school. Community members will judge a school by its appearance, and the first and most noticeable part of a school is its fence. A rundown fence will give the impression—even if untrue—of a rundown school. Students at St Johns Park High School take pride in the presentation of their school. Hence, they would like a new security fence, which will provide a better image for the school and safety and security for its students and staff. I was recently invited to St Johns Park High School by the school captains—*[Time expired.]*

MOUNT KEIRA DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [1.05 p.m.]: I congratulate the staff, students and parents of Mount Keira Demonstration School, which celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. In the coming weeks I will be joining the school's principal, parents group and students to celebrate this fantastic occasion. Mount Keira Demonstration School is 150 years old and looks out over the magnificent Wollongong and Illawarra coastline. Nestled in the foothills of Mount Keira, it sits very high on the local escarpment and the views from there are absolutely spectacular. On the couple of occasions that I have been to the school I have commented to students and teachers that I do not know how they get any work done with such magnificent views over our region.

Commencing in 1861 as a slab-and-board building adjacent to the Mount Keira colliery, this school has stood the test of time. Back in 1876 a sandstone building was erected on the site and today that building still plays an important function in children's learning in that school environment. The school is led by Rhonda Morton. She is one of those fine principals that I am sure many elected members see in their local communities, but she is even more special because she is a teaching principal. Principals of smaller schools not only have the difficult job of leading the school—with all that encompasses—they also have to continue to teach the students. Rhonda Morton is a fantastic principal. She is a great leader and representative of a fine school.

Mount Keira Demonstration School is so named because it has a close relationship with the University of Wollongong and its teaching students and undergraduates. As a former teacher who studied at the University of Wollongong and did some practical training at Mount Keira Demonstration School, I know that a parent who sends their child to that school does so with an enormous amount of pride and satisfaction. Parents know that their child is getting a world-class education in one of the most picturesque and magnificent environments in New South Wales. The school has an incredible academic record across all testing regimes. It has a record of providing a fantastic quality of teachers, mixing experienced teachers with new teachers. The school is heavily focused on information technology. Its relationship with the University of Wollongong means that the school is always at the cutting edge of new developments in curriculum, pedagogy and school management.

Mount Keira Demonstration School is proud to celebrate 150 years in our local community. It is also proud of the extracurricular activities it provides, particularly in performing arts. The school participates in all major eisteddfods and southern showcases, including the Southern Stars showcase in the Illawarra. As a community we are proud of this school and as the local member I am proud of the work of the teachers, staff and parents. I have met with the parents on a couple of occasions, the most recent being when I attended their parents and citizens meeting the other night. There was an amazing sense of energy at the meeting. Everyone was looking forward to celebrating the 150th anniversary. It is an important milestone not just for the school but for the local community. I thank each and every one of the former and present students, staff and parents who have contributed to the fine educational service offered at Mount Keira Demonstration School.

SUSSEX INLET BUSINESS AND VOLUNTEER AWARDS

TRIBUTE TO REGINALD WOOD

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [1.10 p.m.]: On Saturday 22 October 2011 I attended the Sussex Inlet Business and Volunteer Awards Gala Night at the Sussex Inlet Returned and Services League Club. As always, it was a huge pleasure to join with local businesses, residents and volunteer organisations to acknowledge their contribution to our local community. I have been going to this annual function for about eight years and I have enjoyed every event. Organised by the Sussex Inlet Chamber of Commerce and Tourism and Dave Tarbert, who represents the volunteers, the gala night acknowledges the hardworking men and women in the business and volunteer community who contribute so much to Sussex Inlet and the Shoalhaven region.

I was again pleased to sponsor the Volunteer Group of the Year award, which this year was won by the Sussex Inlet Cancer Support Group. I congratulate Robyn Land and Betty Webb and all of the committee members on their continued hard work and on the important role they play in our community. The Sussex Inlet Cancer Support Group has four facilitators who offer advice, comfort, solace and all possible information in managing cancer treatment and care. The support group also pays fuel expenses for patients travelling to receive medical treatment. In some cases the Sussex Inlet Cancer Support Group offers assistance in meeting treatment costs for patients who would otherwise have to go without the treatment due to its cost.

The Sussex Inlet Cancer Support Group's work does not stop in Sussex Inlet; members are also part of the Shoalhaven Linear Accelerator Committee, which supports the construction of cancer treatment services at

Shoalhaven hospital. Not only are the group's members invaluable to cancer sufferers, they are also a tremendous comfort to relatives and friends. Similar to the rest of the South Coast, Sussex Inlet has an abundance of volunteer organisations. I congratulate the Rotary Club of Sussex Inlet on being awarded the Volunteer Group of the Year, Worthy of Special Mention. The Rotary Club of Sussex Inlet donates thousands of dollars to a host of worthwhile local groups and organisations in need of assistance. The club conducts a range of fundraising events to contribute back to our community, including the annual Sussex Inlet Duck Dash. The organisation also fosters and promotes local youth through various courses and training programs. The club also conducts youth leadership courses and science seminars and participates in student exchange programs.

Other awards given out at the gala night included the one for the Volunteer of the Year, which was this year most deservedly presented to Mr Reginald "Reg" Wood, who has been involved with the surf lifesaving movement in New South Wales for 66 years and is still going. Reg's love affair with the ocean began when he became a member of Avalon Beach Surf Life Saving Club in 1945. Retirement saw him and his wife, Marjorie, head south and move to Sussex Inlet where his affiliation with surf lifesaving and the bounty of knowledge and skill he possesses transferred to the small local club. Sussex Inlet Surf Life Saving Club began from humble beginnings—a caravan back in 1981. The club graduated to calling a shipping container home in 1984. A few years later construction began on the clubhouse where it stands today.

Reg's achievements with Sussex Inlet Surf Life Saving Club are numerous. He was awarded his radio officer certificate and advanced resuscitation certificate in 1992. In 1993 he received his training officer certificate and qualified as an advanced resuscitation certificate instructor. In 1994 he qualified as a surf lifesaving certificate instructor, following this up the year after with a level one chief instructor certificate. In 1996 he was awarded certification as a resuscitation examiner and Bronze Medallion examiner and in 1998 he successfully undertook the demanding scrutineering course. Reg has played an active part in encouraging, teaching and supporting the local Nippers group and has always been on hand to assist with any aspect of surf lifesaving safety and technique. After nomination by me Reg was awarded the Premier's Community Service Award in 2005 and has since been the recipient of many accolades acknowledging his service to the local community. I congratulate Reg on his award.

Other recipients at the awards evening included: John Nicholas for Volunteer of the Year, Special Mention; Narelle East for Employee of the Year; Steve Hedger for Business of the Year; and Peter Loobey for Best Community Spirit. I thank the sponsors of the evening, including the Sussex Inlet Returned and Services League Club, Berrara Beach Chalets, Harbour Bridge Climb, Radio 2ST, Milton Newsagency and the Sussex Inlet Weekly, for their kind donations and support of this important event. I sincerely thank Ingrid Brown, President of the Sussex Inlet Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, and the entire organising committee for their terrific organisation of the evening. I thank the Sussex Inlet Returned and Services League Club Bamboo Restaurant for providing guests with fantastic service and meals. I also, of course, thank Dave Tarbert.

LAKE ILLAWARRA AUTHORITY

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [1.15 p.m.]: A prestigious event recently occurred in the Wollongong electorate: I had the great honour of opening the new Lake Illawarra Authority Illawarra Rowing Club on Northcliffe Drive in front of a large crowd of rowing enthusiasts. Age or gender did not discriminate amongst the membership and I congratulate those "mature" people involved. I am not sure I could cope with such an activity, although a number of invitations were issued to me to give it a go. I indicated I may take up one of those invitations at some stage in the future when I am a little less busy.

The Lake Illawarra Authority was formed by the Unsworth Government in 1988 and has been strongly supported by the community and governments alike since its inception. It has provided lots of improvements on the lake foreshores to support water sports, cycling and walking. Most of these can be attributed to the leadership and guidance of Mr Doug Prosser, who has been a diligent worker and advocate for the authority over the years. Those who have lived in the area for a long time can attest to the lake's great change and improvement.

In 1989-90 the Public Works Department, Wollongong City Council and the Lake Illawarra Authority completed major dredging works in Griffins Bay to remove large shoals from the bay to make it more usable for sailing and rowing craft. In 1994 the council and the authority collaborated to get a rowing centre established on the land reclaimed by the earlier dredging works. Funds for the first stage of this building were provided in 1998 through grants by the State Government and Wollongong City Council. But the first stage of the building, completed in 2004, did not include a concrete floor or a mezzanine level. An insurance payout received

following the accidental burning of the clubroom at the canoe club on Mullet Creek allowed the council to direct \$300,000 to the construction of a concrete floor, mezzanine level and other minor works. Council supervised these works and the Lake Illawarra Authority has also completed other minor improvements.

In 2011 the Lake Illawarra Authority entered into a five-year licence agreement with four user groups: Illawarra Canoe Club, Illawarra Dragon Boat Club, Five Islands Outrigger Canoe Club and Rowing NSW. The Illawarra Rowing Centre Management Committee consists of one representative from each user group as well as Wollongong City Council and the Lake Illawarra Authority. The Illawarra Rowing Centre provides a first-class facility for a range of paddle sports. The building has change rooms, ample storage space and a large meeting room. The completion and operation of the building demonstrates the successful partnership between the Wollongong City Council, the Lake Illawarra Authority, the New South Wales Government and local sporting clubs.

I congratulate Mr Brian Dooley of Lake Illawarra Authority on his vision and dedication to this project, as well as all the members of the various rowing clubs who were present on this special day. I make special mention of the lovely blessing given by the Reverend Yow from the Nan Tien Temple, Berkeley. The Reverend and her monks blessed each of the rowing craft and all in attendance. Eyes were painted onto the craft to keep them safe in their endeavours. I also acknowledge Bob Combs, who has been a very active member in promoting water activities and education at the club. The opening was well attended by a varying age group, which is testimony to all involved. Young, not so young, mature, more mature and further mature people were connected at this one place. We all enjoyed a magnificent sausage sizzle—I can vouch for it. I hope that sufficient funds were raised to assist the club that day. It was a wonderful day for the whole community to enjoy, as we in Wollongong do so well.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN STRAIN

TRIBUTE TO GLORIA WADE

TRIBUTE TO BOB JOHNSON

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [1.20 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to three people who have touched my life and who have recently passed away. John Johnston Strain—better known as Jack—was born in Casino on 27 November 1927. Life was not easy for Jack: his father died when he was nine. He attended Mallanganee Primary School and Casino High School. It was evident that Jack had a strong love and attachment to the land from a young age. In the early 1950s Jack met Madge Everingham, the love of his life, at church. Over the years Jack and Madge became loving parents to Mark, Lance, Robyn and Kym. Jack believed his family should be well educated and, with Madge's support, they made it happen. Jack's number one priority in life was the care of his family. During the 1970 beef cattle recession Jack worked at the Northern Co-operative Meat Company as a night cleaner. This allowed him to support his family while continuing to successfully manage his cattle property.

The recession and drought caused him a lot of heartache and worry. The drought coincided with Paul Fuhrmann, Arch Northam and I starting a long personal association as his stock and station agents. That association continued—especially with Arch Northam—until his passing. But it was not until my election in 1999 as a member of Parliament that I appreciated Jack's love of politics and his respect for former Prime Minister John Howard—he adored him. After the last election I thanked Jack for his support. He replied, "You won. That's all the thanks we need." I will always be indebted to Jack and Madge, and the Casino Branch of The Nationals, for the support I have received over the years. Jack is survived by his loving wife, Madge, his children and their partners—Mark, Helen, Lance, Robyn, Raymond, Kym and Ivan—and grandchildren David, Peter and Jessica.

Gloria Wade recently lost her battle with cancer. Gloria retired in the early 1980s to enjoy her days with her grandchildren and to pursue her many artistic hobbies and interests. Gloria did voluntary work for Lifeline and secretarial work at the neighbourhood centre. In 2000 tragedy struck Gloria and husband Charlie with the loss of beloved son-in-law Dennis. Whilst the family struggled with the sudden loss, Gloria remained strong. She was brave through this difficult time and was a grounding influence on those around her. The Marist Brothers football club at Lismore are indebted to Gloria and Charlie for their contributions over the years. In 2003 fate dealt another difficult blow with the loss of daughter Julie to a sudden and aggressive cancer. Once more Gloria and Charlie regrouped and were pivotal in enabling the family to heal and move through a difficult

time. Father Paul Pidcock has been a great help to the family over the years, and particularly in the past few weeks. It is hard not to think about Gloria without smiling. She is survived by Charlie, Jenny, Vicky, Stuart, Steven, Greg and their partners and family. They are assured of our continuing support.

Last week I attended the funeral of Bob Johnson. Bob gave 43 years service to the Coffee Camp Bush Fire Brigade, of which he was a founding member. He was an elected captain of that brigade until its amalgamation with the Goolmangar Fire Brigade in 1990. Bob was then elected captain of the new Goolmangar Coffee Camp Brigade—now known as Goolmangar brigade. In 1993 he was appointed to the position of group officer within the Lismore district, where he provided management and operation support to the brigades within the Nardi group of the district until 2004. Bob assisted the Lismore Incident Management Team during the notorious 1994 fires. He also continued as an active member of the Goolmangar brigade. His funeral was testimony to the support of the Rural Fire Service in recognition of his 43 years service. He is survived by his lovely wife, Lola, Robert and Nives, Garry and Jan, Maree and Ross and their families. Vale Bob Johnson: a man who dedicated his life to the community and the Rural Fire Service.

MENAI DISTRICT BUSINESS AWARDS

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [1.25 p.m.]: Today I offer my congratulations to the local businesses that were recently honoured in the Menai District Business Awards. It was great to see a mix of longstanding businesses and those that have recently begun but are flourishing in our community. As a lifelong local I know many of the businesses well, and it is a pleasure to acknowledge some of them today. The Soccatoos—a dedicated soccer activity and development program for preschoolers—was a finalist in the fitness, training and recreations category. Since its formal establishment in 2006 the Soccatoos has provided more than 10,000 hours of soccer fun for young children. Pilates Insync, an award-winning boutique Pilates studio, was named the winner of this category. Contours Illawong and Menai Dance Centre also deserve to be noted for their contributions.

ABC Schoolwear Specialists at Bangor have been winners of Menai business awards since 2005: this year it received a highly commended award. ABC Schoolwear Specialists has provided school uniforms and accessories for a number of years and continues to be the one-stop shop for families in the area. I recently visited the shop with the fair trading Minister, the Hon. Anthony Roberts, who was also impressed by this hardworking small business. Special mention also goes to Crossroads, Lowes—last year's winner—Noni B and Suzanne Grae.

In the fresh produce category, I would like to congratulate Colin's Butchery at Illawong, which also won the SShed Award for the business with most potential for growth. The SShed is a business accelerator located in the grounds of Loftus TAFE that is designed to help businesses grow. I know everyone in the area loves this beautifully decorated butcher shop. I also mention Fresh and Tasty Fruits of Illawong and Gary's Seafood of Menai, who were well-deserved finalists. I refer also to Dianne Andrews at Menai Eye Care who has been in the Menai district since 2002 and is a continual award winner and finalist. The healthcare category finalist was Bangor Community Pharmacy's Owen Barnett who once again raised money for cancer research by participating in the Tour de Cure 2011, which is a bike ride from Sydney to Melbourne.

A community man, Owen educates as many people as he can about the effects of cancer and what we can all do to support finding a cure. The hospitality category saw Al Martino's Italian Restaurant take home the prize, with Grissini Italian Restaurant receiving the only highly commended award on the night. Both are venues I frequent regularly, so I would like to congratulate them. Bellezza Pizza pride themselves on being local and have 45 years' experience in the art of pizza and pasta cooking. They employ a lot of locals, particularly high school students who have been on work placement programs and who want to stay on. They teach the art of pizza culture to young students.

I mention also Leone Saxby and Roslyn Cunningham of Saxby Cunningham Accountants who took home the professional advisory services category award. It too is a local firm that has been operating since 2002. They are very involved in the local community and in the Menai District Chamber of Commerce. Two businesses that battle it out each year are Heavenly Hounds and, I am proud to say, my own vet, the Carter Road Companion Animal practice. Heavenly Hounds won this year. Another tough category is automotive services, with Gateway Automotive winning again this year. The real estate category is very competitive, with the three finalists all well established in the community. Last year's runner-up, Manson Property in Bangor, fought it out to become the winner, with Century 21 Realty One Menai and Ray White closely following.

There are two categories that seem to cost me a lot of money—general retail and cafe and takeaway. We have a very tempting café in Bangor and I was pleased to see the hardworking ladies who own and run Much More Than Coffee were awarded on the night. They have combined a cafe with a gift shop and I never leave with just coffee. It is a great idea that has added considerably to the Bangor community. The general retail category saw Novak's News Post in Illawong take home the award. I called in to buy the paper from them on the weekend and walked out with that and a few other impulse buys, including a Christmas decoration. They were up against a large number of finalists in the Menai Marketplace, including the popular Menai Floral Creations and the beautiful home wares store In House Habits.

Members can probably tell I am a glowing local member. I am proud that although we are a small area we have our own local awards. They highlight the hard work and effort put in by our local businesses. The awards night as always was wonderfully hosted by Club Central Menai and sponsored by Sutherland Shire Council, Menai Marketplace, Penfolds, *Shire Life* newspaper, Warren Saunders insurance brokers, VB, and the Galloping Press. I thank them and the community for their support by nominating the businesses and getting involved.

CREATIVE ARTS IN PUBLIC EDUCATION REGIONAL SPECTACULAR 2011

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [1.30 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a fantastic event that happened over two big nights in Tamworth last Friday and Saturday. I am referring to CAPERS 2011—the Creative Arts in Public Education Regional Spectacular. It is pulled together with the public schools of the New England region in association with Education and Communities New England. The evenings of Friday and Saturday 4 and 5 November brought together every school in the New England area to put on a spectacular we can be proud of. It was held at the Tamworth Regional Entertainment and Conference Centre, which is a fantastic venue. Three thousand students from 40 schools across New England contributed and it was an absolute pleasure to be there.

Mr Richard Torbay: They are great schools.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: They are great schools indeed. I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Northern Tablelands. His schools were there. The schools were Armidale High School, Armidale City Public School, Bingara Central School, Bullimbal School, Currabubula Public School, Dungowan Public School, Duri Public School, Farrer Memorial Agricultural High School, Glen Innes High School, Glen Innes Public School, Gunnedah High School, Hillvue Public School, Inverell High School, Macintyre High School, Manilla Central School, Moree East Public School, Moree Secondary College, Narrabri High School, Oxley High School, Oxley Vale Public School, Parry School, Peel High School, Quirindi High School, Quirindi Public School, Somerton Public School, Tamworth High School, Tamworth Public School, Tamworth South Public School, Tamworth West Public School, Wallabadah Public School, Wyallda High School, Wee Waa High School, Werris Creek Public School, Westdale Public School, Willow Tree, and Woolomin Public School.

Those schools put on a fantastic show. A lady who has for many years put much time and effort into this particular event is the producer, director and assistant director, Mrs Di Hall, who is also the Regional Arts Coordinator. Where she finds the energy no-one knows but every year she pulls together a fantastic show. I have been to the last couple and this year's show was very special. She deserves to be congratulated because she pulls together a team of people who work in harmony, and with an event of this size the logistics are a nightmare. She does that in association with teachers, administrators, musicians and students from kindergarten upwards, and it is no mean feat. This event pulls together for CAPERS 2011 not only all the students but also a lot of the resources of our region—audiovisual, sound, lighting, catering and the creative team—with everybody working towards one goal that highlights the excellence of our public school system.

A major feature of this year's spectacular apart from the 40 schools was the Bushwackers, who are well known throughout public schools because many schools have a 1981 dance album of theirs that gets played in the mandatory bush dance in primary schools. The Bushwackers, God bless them, led by Dobe Newton and Roger Corbett, put in an appearance and played their bush dances such as the *Polka Dot Dance*, *Toe Polka*, *Strip the Willow* and *Waves of Bondi*. The kids have been listening to this music for years but on this occasion they saw the band perform it live. It was a spectacular sight. The Bushwackers also sang *I am Australian*, which they co-wrote, and it gave the 3,000-odd people present goosebumps to watch and hear the kids sing it as well. It was an uplifting and emotional moment when the Bushwackers sang what is almost a national anthem. I congratulate the Regional Director, Jim White, a good man who runs the New England region as smooth as silk, and the hundreds of people who pulled together CAPERS 2011. I am already looking forward to CAPERS 2012. Congratulations to all.

PHILIPPINES INDEPENDENCE 113TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.35 p.m.]: On 18 June this year I had the great pleasure of being invited to celebrate the 113th anniversary of the declaration of Philippines independence. This year the celebration was held at Fairfield Community Hall. As Mayor of Fairfield City and State member for Cabramatta I thank the Philippine-Australian Society for Senior Citizens and especially their president, Jose Relunia Junior, and vice-president, Rolly Esturninos, for their kind invitation. The history leading to the Philippines' independence is a long one. Europeans first arrived in the Philippines in March 1521. The next 333 years saw the Spanish military fighting indigenous Philippine revolts and various external colonial challenges. The powers of the Spanish empire eventually declined and a revolution began on 12 August 1896 when Andrés Bonifacio and members of the secret society of the Katipunan renounced their allegiance to Spain.

The Spanish governor-general negotiated peace with the revolutionaries on 15 December 1897, but under the terms of the agreement the leaders of the Katipunan, headed by General Emilio Aguinaldo, were exiled to Hong Kong. The ceasefire was temporary. When the Spanish American war broke out in April 1898, United States warships brought Aguinaldo and the Katipunan leaders back to Manila. Aguinaldo immediately ordered the revolution to recommence. This time they were successful. On 12 June 1898 Aguinaldo read the declaration of independence signed by 98 leaders of the revolution and declared the Philippines a republic. This is the date we celebrate today. However, the declaration was recognised by neither the United States nor Spain and the dreams of the Philippines were crushed later that year when the Spanish ceded the country to the United States in the Treaty of Paris.

This event was the catalyst for the Philippine American war of 1899 which continued until 1913, finally ending when Aguinaldo was captured by American troops. Philippine independence was finally internationally recognised on 4 July 1946 when the Philippine conflict with the United States ended. In 1964 President Diosdado Macapagal signed into law the establishment of 12 June as Philippine Independence Day. The heroism of the Philippine national hero, Dr Jose P. Rizal, and the Filipino people during their long struggle for independence is inspiring. May we strive to produce some of their collective and gallant energy in protecting our freedoms and our independence. I congratulate the Philippine-Australian Society for Senior Citizens whose office has been a beehive of activities for members of the Fairfield Filipino community for the past 26 years.

Created in 1985, the Philippine-Australian Society for Senior Citizens was the first Filipino seniors group to be incorporated in Australia and has been an active member of the Fairfield seniors network throughout the years. The Philippine-Australian Society for Senior Citizens provides a place for seniors to enjoy an array of activities and receive support on wellbeing issues. The society continues to grow and progress, not only to support the Filipino seniors group but also the wider communities of Fairfield and Cabramatta. I thank the Philippine-Australian Society for Senior Citizens for organising the celebration and giving us the chance to celebrate Philippine Independence Day together.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE NORTH-WEST REGION HEADQUARTERS

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [1.40 p.m.]: Today I seek Government assurance that political interference has not scuppered the relocation of the headquarters of the State Emergency Service north-west region from Moree to Inverell. The New South Wales State Emergency Service region boundary review working group has made a cogent case in its report that the move would constitute a more logical operation and administrative alignment. It also said it should be considered as a high priority due to the impending redevelopment of the north-west region headquarters. The working group's recommendations, arrived at after an extensive consultation process, were accepted by the State Emergency Service senior executive group.

I am advised that Cabinet has now approved all the working group's recommendations, except for the relocation of the State Emergency Service north-west headquarters from Moree to Inverell. It is my understanding that the member for Barwon objected to the change on political grounds and, in his position as a Minister and local member, has influenced the Government's decision, contrary to the advice and best interests of the State Emergency Service. Since this Government has made much of its willingness to take objective and independent advice rather than play political games at the expense of the best interests of the community and good governance, I am calling for a prompt response on this issue. The Government would need to make a compelling case for rejecting the advice of the working party.

That advice contained in the report is in accord with the wishes of State Emergency Service personnel in the north-west region and the State Emergency Service senior executive group. The north-west region

headquarters were originally established in Moree by accident. It was the practice to make the town where the State Emergency Service controller lived the headquarters. It bore no relation to efficiency and best use of resources. The working group's job was to address these anomalies and to recommend the most effective modes of operation. The working group recommended the movement of the headquarters of the north-west region from Moree to Inverell on a number of grounds. It stated in its report:

The Northwest Region extends from Mungindi in the west to Tenterfield in the east. Moree is central to the western half of the region, while Inverell is more central for the region as a whole. The largest population centre is at Inverell (50% larger than Moree), with adjacent populations in surrounding areas providing the largest pool of potential SES members.

This was considered as less significant than in other regions considered. The largest unit with greatest operational capability is the Inverell unit. Synergies in training, administration and operations are possible by locating the regional headquarters in the same city as this unit. A number of other New South Wales emergency organisations and branches of the New South Wales Public Service have regional or equivalent offices in Inverell. Sufficient transport linkages exist close to Inverell at Armidale where a regular air service to Sydney is available. While there is an air service available at Moree it is of low frequency.

There is no operational or administrative imperative to retain regional headquarters at Moree. An opportunity currently exists to move the North West Region headquarters from Moree to Inverell due to the requirement to build a new facility. The working group understands that a green field site is available in Inverell.

I also understand there would be considerable savings in time and travel expenses through having the headquarters at the centre of the north-west region in Inverell rather than on its periphery in Moree. Currently the New South Wales State Emergency Service operational and administrative structure is managed centrally by a State headquarters based in Wollongong, and there are 17 regions managing and controlling both operations and administration within their areas of responsibility. Regional boundaries are based on a congregation of local government areas largely aligned on river systems. The current region boundaries are similar in many regards to the original boundaries established in 1957.

In 2010 the acting deputy director general appointed the working group to examine the efficacy and efficiency of the current regional boundaries. The objective of the working group was to examine the break-up of the State into State Emergency Service regions and make recommendations on the optimal number of regions required to efficiently and effectively deliver State Emergency Service functions to the community, with an emphasis on collaboration and consultation with any or all stakeholders. The recommendations to move the north-west State Emergency Service headquarters from Moree to Inverell is clear in the report and is based on the consultations and objective considerations of this working group. The Government must explain the objective reasons it has failed to accept the advice regarding the optimal location of the north-west regional headquarters in Inverell and, if those reasons are purely political, it should come clean about it.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.45 p.m.]: I note the contribution made by the member for Northern Tablelands and I will refer his statement to the Hon. Mike Gallacher, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

CLEMTON PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [1.46 p.m.]: I wish to raise a very important safety matter regarding a primary school in my electorate. I have been approached by the Parents and Citizens Association of Clemton Park Public School regarding the poor condition of asphalt around the entire school. The asphalt is in such disrepair that there have been many trips and accidents by students, teachers, parents and other visitors to the school. The situation is so bad the school has been forced to institute a no running on the asphalt rule. It is hardly fair to ask the young children not to run around and play during breaks yet, despite the rule, accidents continue.

Clemton Park Public School is one of the great local schools in the electorate of Lakemba. It was established in 1929 and currently has just less than 600 students. The schools' motto is Vita Lampada, which I am informed translated means "play the game." As I have outlined, it would seem that children are unable to play the game because of the condition of the asphalt. The principal of Clemton Park Public School, Miss Angelica Lappi, is a committed educationalist who is working to improve the opportunities for young people in my community. The school has a strong and supportive community with an active and committed parents and citizens association. Whenever I visit the school I am impressed by the great school spirit and the sense of community that is on display. The school is committed to the values of respect, inclusion and integrity.

The school has benefited from substantial improvements over the last few years, particularly supported by the State and Federal Labor governments. It has received new school halls, new libraries and a range of other

facilities. It is a rich, culturally diverse school and it embodies the spirit of the broader community. Unfortunately, the condition of the playground requires urgent attention. It is clear to any observer that the current state of the asphalt presents an unacceptable occupational health and safety risk to the school community. As it is a government school, the Department of Education and Communities has a responsibility to the children, the teachers and the parents to ensure that the school environs are safe. I have made strong representations to the Minister for Education on this matter and I had hoped that such an obvious occupational health and safety breach would warrant immediate attention. Unfortunately that is not the case.

I received a very cavalier response from the Minister which stated that the department would not allocate any extra funding to repair the bitumen. The school has already allocated its programmed maintenance works budget to repairing parts of the asphalt but it was not enough to repair it in its entirety. The only advice that the Minister could give was to use next year's budget and apply for additional funding which may or may not be provided. It is clear that it is a Department of Education and Communities responsibility to provide a safe environment for its students, teachers and the wider community. I therefore call on the Government and the Minister for Education to urgently fund the resurfacing project at Clemton Park Public School as a matter of the utmost priority.

PLANNING REFORMS

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.50 p.m.]: I will make a brief statement on behalf of the community I represent at Pittwater and encourage all the people of Pittwater to take the opportunity to have their say as part of the New South Wales planning review that is currently underway chaired by the Senior Commissioner of the Land and Environment Court, Tim Moore, and former Labor Minister, Ron Dyer. The consultations on this once-in-a-generation review of the planning system are coming to the northern beaches for the benefit of the Pittwater community tomorrow between 3.00 p.m. and 5.00 p.m. and from 6.00 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. at the Manly Leagues Club in Brookvale. This is an opportunity for the northern beaches community to have their say on the most important reshaping of the State's planning laws in more than 30 years.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, because of its constant ad hoc and piecemeal amendments over many years, has led to a number of poor planning outcomes in my community of Pittwater that have led to enormous anger and disillusionment, cost, frustration, delay and litigation in the community I am proud to represent. We have seen countless examples. Perhaps the most symbolic is the case of Currawong, that beautiful, historic beach-front bushland on the western foreshores of Pittwater that was almost lost because of the delay and mismanagement under the planning system left to us by the former Labor Government. There are also cases like the proliferation of seniors-living developments and affordable rental housing developments—so-called, I say, because as they have been rolled out across Pittwater they have been little more than a subterfuge for putting residential flat buildings in areas not zoned for that purpose and certainly where the local community has had no anticipation that those sorts of developments will be put in those areas.

We need to make provision for appropriate housing mixes throughout our community but it is also appropriate that the community has a right to be heard in those discussions—to be front and centre in the discussions about what their streetscapes, neighbourhoods and localities are going to look like in five, 10 and 20 years into the future. Obviously we cannot plan for every eventuality but we need a planning system that is robust and open enough to allow genuine dialogue and consultation with the community. Time and time again under the old system we saw a veneer of participation, but it was just a mask for venality and hypocrisy when decisions had already been made and the community was only being brought along as a sort of dressing after the event.

That is why this root and branch reform of the planning system is so important and it is why it is so important that local communities like the community I represent, Pittwater, is involved from the very get-go of this new legislation to ensure that it is designed appropriately to allow the people to have real input into the exciting decisions about what their areas are going to look like. When I look at my community—and I know other members would feel the same—we are characterised as an outer metropolitan area of Sydney but that is not really what we are. Everyone in Pittwater is proud of their little locality—the little villages on the western foreshores of Pittwater or Scotland Island or the string of villages along the coast all have their unique identity. Everyone who lives there, whether they are owners, renters or travelling through, loves the area. They love the weatherboard, the sandstone, the spotted gums and the elements that go together to give it its character and its identity.

The planning system must ensure that local voices are heard. That is why this planning review is so important. I applaud the Minister for taking the step to engage widely on these matters and I encourage everyone in my community of Pittwater to take the opportunity to get along to Manly Leagues Club tomorrow and have their say on the shape of our planning legislation into the future.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.55 p.m.]: I thank the member for Pittwater for bringing this issue to the House's attention. The New South Wales planning review, the 10-week tour undertaken by Tim Moore and Ron Dyer, is nearly over. They should have a green paper prepared in the next couple of months. That will be on the website for everybody to look at and to comment on. Legislation will be prepared from that. Every member of this House, who is as passionate about their electorate as the member for Pittwater obviously is, should keep an eye out for that and participate as much as possible to restore the correct planning procedures in this State.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [1.56 p.m.]: International students bring vitality and diversity to our city. The networks and friendships they form during their time here strengthens bonds between Australia and their homeland—vital for cooperative action to tackle challenges like global warming and poverty as well as establishing future business and government relationships. As Lord Mayor I welcome the international students to Sydney. Last year the international education sector contributed \$6.5 billion to the economy and created 34,000 jobs. It is estimated that every two international students create one job. Nearly 70 per cent are from China, India, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Republic of Korea and Hong Kong. The three major inner-city universities have over 30,000 international students and over 4,000 international students are enrolled in post-secondary colleges and the TAFE Sydney Institute. However, competition is increasing and the latest data shows a drop in new international student numbers. We must address students' needs if we are to continue to be a destination of choice for overseas study.

The Commonwealth Government has made positive changes to international student visas and improved consumer regulation of education providers following the Strategic Review of Student Visa Programs. However, further action is needed. International student representative groups, support services, the Council of Australian Governments International Students Strategy for Australia Report and a review of the Education Services For Overseas Students Act all argue for better services and infrastructure including orientation in Australian culture and education; safety at school, at work and in the community; affordable accommodation with enforced tenancy rights; public transport concessions and access to mental health services. Affordable housing is an increasing concern across Sydney, especially in the inner city, and while Commonwealth funding to build affordable accommodation has helped universities increase options, international students compete in a high-demand and high-price market.

I call upon the New South Wales Government to expand the low-cost housing exemption in the Land Tax Act which I proposed in this place in 1992. The Government could also support initiatives like Homeshare, which operates in Victoria and New Zealand and which provides accommodation at reduced rent to students who live with someone in need of help and companionship for up to 10 hours a week. Both groups benefit, with international students accessing affordable accommodation, language practice and a gateway to local culture. The Residential Tenancies Act leaves people in shared housing and boarders and lodgers vulnerable with no legal protection, and many international students end up in overcrowded conditions paying inflated rents and losing bonds. I have repeatedly called for tenancy rights for marginal renters. International students say they feel like second-class citizens because unlike other students they have to pay full public transport fares.

The Council of International Students of Australia, the Council of Australian Postgraduate Association and Sydney University Postgraduate Student Association all raised this unfair treatment with me, pointing out that international students already pay \$60,000 to \$140,000 for an undergraduate degree. I again call on the transport Minister to follow the lead of all other States and Territories, other than Victoria, and provide travel concessions to all students. Canadian university fees include a \$105 fee which entitles all students to unlimited public transport travel. The New South Wales Government should work with the education providers on similar initiatives to make it easier and cheaper for students to use public transport. The City of Sydney works with the local police to inform international students about safety, housing and how to make the best of their time here. Inner-city police commanders have been proactive and I am thankful there appears to be no pattern of crime targeting international students in Sydney.

Our education system is very different to many Asian countries as we have an emphasis on interaction with teachers and peers and we encourage critical questioning. The Federal Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 report and university support services recognise that international students may need help to adjust to our interactive and analytical learning system and to use academic English. Overseas student health cover does not include access to mental health services even though there could be major stresses for international students like language and cultural barriers, study pressure and distance from family support networks.

The Government should ensure that international students have access to all basic healthcare services. In the past Australia has had a proud history in international education, The Colombo Plan sponsored thousands of Asian students to study in Australian tertiary institutions from the 1950s. We trained students who returned home to build physical, government and social infrastructure, and we should build on this tradition of being good neighbours. I call on the State Government to ensure that international students who come to Australia are safe, learn about Australia and our culture, and finish their studies with a positive experience.

Private members' statements concluded.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Geoff Provest) left the chair at 1.59 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DEATHS OF CAPTAIN BRYCE DUFFY, CORPORAL ASHLEY BIRT AND LANCE CORPORAL LUKE GAVIN

The SPEAKER: It is with deep regret that I speak of the deaths of Captain Bryce Duffy, Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin, who were killed during operations in Afghanistan on 29 October 2011.

Captain Duffy was born in Sydney, New South Wales, in 1984. He was educated in Brisbane. Bryce Duffy joined the Australian Defence Force Academy in January 2003 and completed a Bachelor of Science. He graduated from the Royal Military College in December 2006 and was posted to the 1st Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, based in Brisbane. He served with the 1st Field Regiment between 2007 and 2010 and was transferred to the 4th Field Regiment in Townsville in January 2011 as the assistant operations officer, before his second deployment to Afghanistan in September. Captain Duffy is survived by his partner, parents and family.

Corporal Ashley Birt was born in Nambour, Queensland, in 1989. Ashley Birt enlisted in the Australian Regular Army in June 2007 and was allocated to the Royal Australian Engineers as a geospatial technician. Following his engineer and initial employment training and specialist technical geospatial basic course in December 2008, Ashley Birt was posted to the 1st Topographical Survey Squadron as a geospatial technician. He was promoted to Lance Corporal in February 2011 and to Corporal in April 2011. Corporal Birt was part of the Combined Team Uruzgan and is survived by his parents and brother.

Lance Corporal Luke Gavin was a member of the Mentoring Task Force-Three and was from the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment [2RAR] based in Townsville, North Queensland. Luke Gavin was born in Manly, New South Wales, in 1982. He enlisted in the Army in 2004. On completion of his basic training and initial employment training, he was posted as an infantryman to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, in Townsville in 2005. He was promoted to Lance Corporal in January 2009. Luke Gavin was a highly qualified soldier, having completed specialist training as a combat first aider, Pashto linguist and infantry support weapons operator. Lance Corporal Gavin is survived by his wife and their three children.

I ask all members to stand as a mark of respect and in memory of Captain Bryce Duffy, Corporal Ashley Birt and Lance Corporal Luke Gavin

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

REMEMBRANCE DAY

The SPEAKER: For the information of members I advise that the House will adjourn at 10.30 a.m. on Friday 11 November, in order that all members may attend Remembrance Day services. The House will resume at midday.

DEATH OF JACK FREDERICK RICHARDSON, FORMER MEMBER FOR ASHFIELD

The SPEAKER: It is with regret that I inform the House of the death on 3 June 2011 of Jack Frederick Richardson, a former member of the Legislative Assembly who served as the member for Ashfield from 28 June 1952 to 14 January 1953. On behalf of the House I extend to his family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained.

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills was reported:

Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment (Ethics and Public Service Commissioner) Bill 2011
Local Government Amendment (Roadside Vehicle Sales) Bill 2011
State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2011
Universities Governing Bodies Bill 2011
Home Building Amendment Bill 2011
Technical and Further Education Commission Amendment (Staff Employment) Bill 2011
Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Disability Employment) Bill 2011
National Parks and Wildlife Legislation Amendment (Reservations) Bill 2011

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

MARIE BASHIR
Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 30 October 2011

Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that she re-assumed the administration of the government of the State at 6.10 a.m. on 30 October 2011.

NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (RESERVATIONS) BILL 2011

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

PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE BILL 2011

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with an amendment.

Consideration of Legislative Council's amendment set down as an order of the day for a future day.

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CLARENCE**Issue of Writ**

The SPEAKER: In accordance with section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 I issued a writ on 28 October 2011 for the election of a member to serve in place of Stephen Rhett Cansdell, resigned. The particulars of the writ are:

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Nomination day | 3 November 2011 |
| Polling day | 19 November 2011 |
| Return of Writ | 2 December 2011 |

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.26 p.m.]

POLICE DEATH AND DISABILITY SCHEME

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Why is the Premier proposing cuts to the police death and disability scheme that will leave officers unable to support their own families—officers like Detective Inspector Jason Puxty, who is suffering severe post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of attending a crime scene involving an horrific child homicide?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The short answer to the question is that we want to ensure ongoing support for police officers across this State. It is ironic that on the day after the Auditor-General provided a report on another scheme that was said to cost taxpayers only \$350 million but which it has been said will cost \$1.75 billion—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition asked the question and he should listen to the answer. The Premier has the call. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order.

Mr John Robertson: They are all watching you.

Mr Darren Webber: No-one is watching you.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wyong will come to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: What they are watching is a scheme that was intended to cost \$2.5 million a week when proposed by those opposite but which now costs \$15 million a week. The scheme is absolutely unsustainable, and if it were to persist in the same manner, there is absolutely no guarantee that in 10 years, 15 years or 20 years police who are injured or die on the job will have any benefit. This is not news to those opposite. In 2009 the Auditor-General reported on this scheme making the point that its costs were blowing out. The blow-out was not unknown to those opposite because in July 2010 the Labor-controlled Public Accounts Committee reported on the matter and sought reforms. What did those opposite do? Was there any response to—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I understand the do-nothing Premier is looking for a red herring—

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

Mr Michael Daley: The point of order is relevance. This is about another important aspect of Government policy.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: What did those opposite do when their own committee asked for changes to be made to the Death and Disability Scheme to ensure that it was sustainable? Absolutely zip. The Kim Kardashian of State politics would not even go near the media. We are making absolutely tough decisions. Why? Because if we do not make those tough decisions, this scheme will not be sustainable and it will not provide police across this State with any satisfaction. If we do not make changes, there can be no confidence.

As Mr Gallagher, the person who reviewed this scheme, said, it provides a perverse disincentive for injured police to return to work—and that is bad for the individuals concerned. We should be assisting police who are injured—just as we do for workers injured in other workplaces—to be restored to health and to get back to work particularly in this area, where their experience as police officers can provide so much support for communities across the State. Yet the current lump sum payment system provides a perverse disincentive for that to happen. That is the rationale for the reform. This is a tough decision. Despite what the Police Association said on radio today—and I have had discussions with the Police Association, and have no wish to pick a fight with it—meetings were held between the Police Association and the Government about trying to design a scheme that the Police Association has said to me is unsustainable. It has said to me that reforms were necessary.

But I have to ask about the bona fides of the Police Association given that in its pre-election submission to both sides of politics it accepted that the death and disability scheme should be reformed but now says it will not consider any proposals that reduce the existing benefits or increases the contribution of its members. There is no magic pudding in any area of government. When the Police Association says on one hand that it supports reform and on the other hand says that there cannot be any change to benefits or contributions, what is the Government expected to do? The reforms outlined by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services are about ensuring sustainability in an important scheme. It is about ensuring that police have protection if they are killed or die on duty. It is about ensuring that they have protection and are encouraged back to work if they are injured. It is the responsible thing to do. We are getting on with the job that those opposite ignored.

POLICE DEATH AND DISABILITY SCHEME

Mr TROY GRANT: My question is addressed to the Premier. What action is the Government taking to encourage injured police officers back to their jobs?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I say again that the Police Death and Disability Scheme is an important scheme. It provides support for families and loved ones when a police officer is killed or dies whilst on duty and gives assistance to officers injured in the line of duty while they recuperate and get ready to return to their jobs. But it has been allowed to run out of control to the point where injured officers are actually encouraged to leave the force by taking a large payout, rather than being rehabilitated and returning to work either within the Police Force or outside the Police Force. As a result, we now have a scheme that has let down our injured officers, drained experience from the Police Force and left the taxpayers of this State with another sorry mess.

In 2005, 450 police officers were on long-term sick leave. That figure has now blown out to 1,135. At any time 600 to 800 police across this State are on long-term sick leave—that is the equivalent of three or four large local area commands. The sad fact is that many of those officers not only fail to return to the Police Force but they also never re-enter the workforce. That is the worst possible outcome for those officers, for their families and, frankly, for this State. The reforms outlined by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services aim to change that by providing a renewed focus on helping injured officers to return to work. We are proposing investing an up-front \$15 million in injury management programs to help injured police to return to work.

We will also purchase income protection insurance for police, and that will put them on the same footing as workers in many other industries. I should emphasise that under our changes there will be no change to death benefits for police who are killed or die at work. But with regards to other injuries, officers will have a period within which their full salary will be maintained. It will step down progressively from 75 per cent for eight months and then remain at 65 per cent for a further five years. Totally and permanently incapacitated police will still receive a lump sum payment but at a rate that reflects the new five-year income protection policy. These changes will ensure that there is an incentive for injured police to return to work rather than simply to take a lump sum payment with their experience being lost to the force and forgotten.

Without the reforms the cost of the Death and Disability Scheme would blow out disastrously—just like that other scheme upon which the Auditor General reported yesterday. A death and disability scheme that was meant to cost 2.5 million a week but which now costs \$15 million a week is unsustainable. In fact, Treasury advises that without these reforms the scheme will cost \$2.5 billion over the next four years alone. It is unsustainable and provides absolutely no protection for the State's police men and women. I know of one police officer who, four years into the job, was viciously stabbed and his jaw dislocated. Like many police injured on the job, his recovery was neither simple nor quick. He and his family went through many ups and downs. Throughout the process he was continually offered a lump sum payment to leave the force, and he could have walked away with almost \$1 million—\$700,000 alone from the Death and Disability Scheme. But he resisted.

He wanted to proceed with his original career choice and serve the community as a police officer. He persisted. He fully recovered and he went on and served this State with distinction for another 15 years. But his experience and his service could have been lost because of the lump sum incentives within the current scheme. Our changes to the Police Death and Disability Scheme are desperately needed. They will deliver a better outcome for injured officers and they will be fair for the hundreds of dedicated police who suffer injuries on the job. But we will ensure that New South Wales continues to have the most generous police death and disability scheme in Australia. I thank the member for Dubbo for his question and for those additional 15 years that he put into the police service of this State.

POLITICAL DONATIONS

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister ask her State director to return the almost \$60,000 in donations the Liberal Party received from big tobacco in the final days before political donations from tobacco companies were banned in New South Wales?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I welcome the question from the former Parliamentary Secretary.

Ms Linda Burney: Try answering it.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Yes, I will answer it. I am very pleased to advise the House that I have personally never accepted one cent from any tobacco company. I am the person on this side of politics who is

responsible for Health policy. If the member for Macquarie Fields is suggesting that there has been any influence by tobacco companies on Health policy, he is totally wrong. In relation to donations from tobacco companies, the member for Macquarie Fields knows that changes made last year to legislation meant that no money from tobacco companies can be accepted by any political party. Up until that point the Liberal Party complied completely with all legislative and legal requirements. The Opposition should support our reforms going forward, which will make it much tougher for third parties, including unions, to fund its campaigns.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Keira will come to order. The member and the Minister for Family and Community Services will cease their interjections across the table.

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is directed to the Treasurer. What impact has the former Labor Government's mismanagement of the Solar Bonus Scheme had on the State budget?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question. He has proven himself to be a great community advocate and has demonstrated that he is also interested in financial responsibility in this State, which is very important. Yesterday the curtains came back on a very sorry tale of mismanagement.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: He is trying to pretend he is not listening.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He is definitely listening. As the member for Pittwater stated, the Auditor-General's report revealed the extent of Labor's mismanagement. It states that the Solar Bonus Scheme lacked the most elementary operational controls, that it involved no overall plan and that risks were poorly managed.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Yesterday was not a good day for Captain Solar.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Opposition was happy to support the Solar Bonus Scheme because the estimated cost was \$362 million over seven years. Our biggest mistake was that we trusted members opposite to manage it. The Auditor-General found that without remedial action the scheme would have cost 10 times the original estimate, that is, \$4 billion. The Labor Government followed a clear pattern of creating a mess which this Government is now fixing. That is exactly what happened with the Solar Bonus Scheme. The Auditor-General's latest projection is that the scheme will cost \$1.75 billion, five times the original estimate, and \$1.4 billion more than the Labor Government claimed. Captain Solar told us that he would look after the scheme and he asked us to trust him. When he introduced the enabling legislation he said that the Government would adjust the levers to ensure that excessive costs would not be imposed on energy consumers.

Unfortunately, he neglected to do that. There was one dial on his desk ticking over as each subscriber signed up—one subscriber, two subscribers and so on. He might have done something when it got to 10,000. Who is to blame for this mess? That is an interesting question, because members opposite do not have a consistent answer. The member for Heffron, who has come back into the frame, blames the member for Toongabbie. According to her it is clear that it was his fault. We all know his intentions, and they have something to do with the fourth seat to his right. However, he blamed the advice he received. The former member for Rockdale did a quinella and blamed the member for Toongabbie and Captain Solar. The thing about leadership is that when things go wrong—and this definitely went very wrong—the leader should step up. At his first press conference he said:

... we saw changes in Premiers that led to changes in portfolios, and yes, I did introduce the scheme ... Unfortunately, I wasn't there to monitor it and watch where it was going and deal with it.

So it was the fault of the member for Liverpool. I do not know whose fault it was. We have not heard from the member for Liverpool, but he can tell us now if he wishes. Perhaps he is taking one for the team. We have heard very little about this from the member for middle management. He has skilfully slipped around the corner. What

was he doing in Cabinet? Was he asking questions? We all know that New South Wales Treasury was telling the then Government that the scheme was blowing out. What did members opposite do? They put their hands over their ears. We know that they do not like taking Treasury advice or being fiscally responsible. In contrast, this Government is fixing the mess, it is investing in the State and it is demonstrating responsible fiscal management. What members opposite left behind is a disgrace.

HOSPITAL DATA

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My question is directed to the Minister for Health. Given the statements the Minister made in opposition about the need for greater transparency and accountability in the Health portfolio, why did it take a government information public access application to force her to release the worsening off-stretcher waiting time data?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the shadow Minister for Health for that question because it enables me to read onto the record the first page of the government information public access report, which I am sure he has now seen. It refers to "off stretcher time", which is the percentage of ambulance patients offloaded within 30 minutes. That figure is up 1 per cent from the same period last year, which means that we have improved the situation since the member for Macquarie Fields was the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Health. We have also improved a number of other categories. This is raw data and it is provided in daily reports to NSW Health to help inform those working in hospitals about where they need to direct their effort.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields asked the question and he should listen to the answer.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I have been telling this House for years that the real problem is that members opposite closed hospital beds. The only way to improve the performance of emergency departments is to reopen the beds that they closed. During 15 years in government they closed more than 1,500 hospital beds, and at one point they cheated by including cots, bassinets and everything else. One of the reasons emergency departments are experiencing problems is the legendary number of beds closed by the former Labor Government. That is why the Coalition made a commitment before the election to open 1,390 extra beds, of which 468 have already been delivered. And 219 will be delivered this financial year.

Dr Andrew McDonald: That was before the election.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: That is exactly what has happened. We are well on track to deliver the extra hospital beds. The "Quarterly Hospital Performance Report", which is issued by the Bureau of Health Information, will continue to be published exactly as it was when the member for Macquarie Fields was the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Health. The report due at the end of September will be published by the beginning of December, which is what happened last year when the member for Macquarie Fields was the Parliamentary Secretary.

Dr Andrew McDonald: You haven't released any information since April.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The member has it wrong again. I suggest that he check the NSW Health website and find the Bureau of Health Information data for the end of June. The data for the end of September will be available in December and he knows that.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. I was referring to the emergency department performance data, which the Minister has not released. I ask her to clarify when she will release the performance data for emergency departments.

The SPEAKER: Order! As I have said so many times in this place, the Minister is being entirely relevant to the question asked. I do not have the power to direct her to answer specifically any question that members ask.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I do not know why the member would suggest that there is no performance data when the reports are called "hospital performance reports". The only data that has not been included is triage times. As the shadow Minister knows, because he sought advice from the Bureau of Health Information, that data will be published—

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: —and we can declare that it is accurate. Dr Diane Watson, Chief Executive of the Bureau of Health Information, which I remind the member is an independent body, has advised that once she checks on the quality, honesty and consistency of that data it will again be published. We are waiting on that. I also remind the House of the many, many measures that we are taking to help open more beds and clear emergency departments. I have done radio interviews all morning about that. I will be very happy to continue to do so.

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Mr ROB STOKES: My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy. What are the findings of the Auditor-General's report into Labor's Solar Bonus Scheme, including the role of the then Minister for Energy?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I thank the member for Pittwater for the question, and I commend him for his motion, which I hope the House supports this afternoon. I am not sure sometimes who was the then Minister for Energy to whom the member for Pittwater referred. I hope to elucidate that point to the House this afternoon. I start with what was said by the Auditor-General about the scheme of the former Minister for Energy:

I was very concerned about the lack of governance around the whole scheme. From a governance point of view this scheme was a bit like a runaway train; it went through every red light and stop light, burning up cash.

There is an even more interesting quote, having heard what the Treasurer had to say about the responsibility of various members, none of whom accept any responsibility now. The Auditor-General prefigured that when he wrote his report, because he said about members opposite:

Success has a lot of fathers. This scheme is an orphan.

It is indeed an orphan, because nobody on the opposition side wants to accept responsibility for it. What was said about the role of the then Minister for Energy? The then Minister introduced the scheme. The then Minister for Energy assured the Cabinet and the Premier that it would cost only \$350 million. The then Minister pressed ahead with the changes, sat back and watched the scheme spiral out of control, knowing full well, as I told the House earlier, that the cost blowout would be borne by the 3.2 million electricity customers of New South Wales. As the Auditor-General says, the then Minister for Energy failed to implement any measurable objectives; failed to undertake any cost-benefit analysis; failed to implement risk management plans; failed to budget the scheme properly; and failed to monitor the scheme's performance. Other than that, he did a good job.

The Leader of the Opposition, the former Minister for Energy, is the person who took this scheme to Cabinet. That must be where the ultimate responsibility lies. However much he pretends at his first press conference and subsequently that he had no role in the scheme, he conceived it. He acted against the advice of his own department, as I have previously told the House, failed to monitor the scheme, and allowed its cost to blow out from \$350 million to \$1.75 billion. He is the person who now stands accused by the people of New South Wales every time they get a quarterly electricity bill. Can I tell the House the results of the poll published by the *Daily Telegraph*? The *Daily Telegraph* conducted a poll on the question: Should John Robertson resign? Do members know what the result was? Ninety per cent said yes.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129 and relates to relevance. The Minister is now straying from the question.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Can I ask one thing of the House? When the Leader of the Opposition rises, please acknowledge Mr Ten Per Cent. Even Colonel Gaddafi did better.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Is it the same point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: No, Madam Speaker. Issues of relevance aside, the fact that there is an Auditor-General's report on a matter that concerns the Parliament does not permit the Minister for Energy to transgress Standing Order 73.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I note that the question expressly asked about the role of the then Minister for Energy.

Mr ROB STOKES: I ask the Minister to elucidate his answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! A further two minutes is granted to the Minister to give the House additional information.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: The Auditor-General's report contains what is classified as a shopping list of errors. No cost-benefit analysis was done; the scheme's objectives failed to include measurable targets; no contingency plans were in place to address potential high-risk situations; the scheme lacked overall guidance; there was no initial cap on total capacity and costs; there were significant shortcomings in the information provided to government decision-makers; and there were insufficient opportunities to review the scheme.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: The Auditor-General went on to say this about the Minister for Energy:

In the context of the announcement that a feed-in tariff would be established, the Government sought no additional economic appraisal or cost-benefit analysis.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: This whole fiasco was engineered for one reason only: to win Green votes in the 2011 State election.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: This was a scheme that backfired.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: So much so that the Australian Labor Party lost 32 seats. As Paul Keating said, 32 dead Labor members hang around the neck of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point is taken under Standing Order 73. The Minister can talk about the Auditor-General all he wants, but personal reflections on members of the House may be made only by way of substantive motion. The Minister should be reminded that he is up to his neck in more trouble with Alan Jones.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister had concluded his answer.

LICENSED VENUES THREE-STRIKES LEGISLATION

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism, and Minister for Hospitality. Given the fact that his three-strikes legislation was severely watered down following lobbying from the Australian Hotels Association, what faith can the New South Wales public have that the Minister's decisions are not being influenced by an industry that donated more than \$460,000 to the Coalition before the last election?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I inform the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that I understand from discussions with my shadow Minister that the Labor Party will support the three-strikes legislation in the Legislative Council today. The member asserted that the three-strikes legislation has been watered down. I point out that the first draft of the three-strikes legislation indicated it would take six offences to reach the third strike, but the legislation now in the other place requires only three offences to reach a third strike. I think that is a very substantial stiffening of the legislation, not a watering down of it.

SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT PILOT PROGRAM

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. What successes have been shown from the independent review of the school-based management pilot program, which was undertaken in 47 New South Wales government schools?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for Lismore for his question. For the benefit of the member for Keira, who was interjecting earlier, I place on record the enormous contribution he made to education in New South Wales when he resigned from his position as a schoolteacher.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It was the best thing he ever did for his school.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The principal autonomy pilot, which was begun last year by the previous Government—I give credit to the previous Minister for Education and Training for commencing that pilot—and which is due to end this year, has been an enormous success. In opposition I watched how that 47-school pilot was proceeding and I spoke to some of the principals and stakeholders, the Primary Principals Association, Secondary Principals Council and the Teachers Federation, about how it was progressing and people expressed their concern. When pilot projects are implemented and there are opportunities for change people always have some concerns. Prior to the election we promised that if we were elected we would conduct an independent review into the 47-school pilot, which is exactly what we did. We delivered on our election commitments. We have been criticised for reviews but reviews inform government policy. ARTD Consultants undertook that review, spoke to every principal in those 47 schools and the results are outstanding. Its report states:

Principals reported that they achieved improvements in literacy and numeracy for targeted students, increased school engagement and educational outcomes for students, provided better student welfare support, increased support and opportunities for staff, enhanced quality of teaching and learning, and improved management of the school.

I am sure that all members want to achieve such great outcomes in education policies. That is what an independent reviewer said about the pilot project. Everything we do in education is aimed at improving student performance. One school had a huge improvement in its National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] results, with an increase from 28 per cent to 67 per cent in students achieving at or above grade level in reading and a 58 per cent drop in students 12 months or more below grade level. Castle Hill High School ran a boys mentor program and in only one year tripled the number of boys receiving an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR] score over 90. The principal said, "We could do it because we were not bound by rigid staffing codes." Another example is a primary school in which there were no permanent male teachers. It identified the need for a male role model to support its boys' education strategy. If it needed a male model we could have suggested the member for Ryde, although the member for Upper Hunter looked great in a leather jacket today. The boys needed a role model.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: When are you going to roll it out to the rest?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The identified need for a male role model to support a boys' education strategy, in particular, their declining results in reading, was addressed through the school employing a part-time teacher whose responsibility it is to coordinate playground and socialising activities for boys and to help them improve their reading skills. That school has seen an enormous improvement in the behaviour of boys and there has not been a suspension for two years. That is the great result of having confidence in principals and the school community to make their own decisions about how they manage some of their budget. We are involved in a consultation process which will inform local schools and local decisions.

More than 1,200 principals have already been directly consulted about what they want to see happen in their schools. We are talking to principals, to teachers and to stakeholders about the kinds of things we want to see happen in our local schools to obtain improved results for students—not just in 47 schools but also in 2,200 public schools across New South Wales. The way to achieve good public policy is to go into the community, to talk, to listen, to engage with experts and to use the expertise that is available in the Department of Education and Communities. We will consult also with members of the Opposition. That is good government and that is the way to obtain good policy.

GRAFTON JAIL

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Minister for Justice. Given recent comments by Steve Harrison, general manager at Grafton jail that the prison's minimum security section could close, will the Minister rule out closing or making changes to the minimum security wing at that jail?

Mr GREG SMITH: I note that the Premier ruled out the closing of Grafton jail. I thank the member for his question, which is in response to the imminent Clarence by-election. Labor has already created much mischief around the prison—

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is on three calls to order.

Mr GREG SMITH: The union—the Prison Officers Vocational Branch [POVB]—agreed to the cuts. Thirteen positions have been cut at Grafton, but no-one has lost his or her job. Staff members have either gone voluntarily or obtained another job and that has happened throughout the system. With the cooperation of the unions we have reduced that number. Under the previous Labor Government, Corrective Services NSW was allowed to overspend each year, getting up to \$113 million last year. This State cannot afford to bleed like that every year. We have heard how the bleeding in other areas has increased each year and that is what was happening also in Corrective Services.

Earlier this year the Government commissioned KPMG to conduct an independent review of Corrective Services NSW taking into account historical expenditure and providing funding models. In response, Corrective Services NSW provided advice on factors impacting those expenditures and models, which were further considered by KPMG and included in its review. In order to achieve the efficiency measures that the Government requires, a number of staff positions will be deleted across the whole of Corrective Services—senior management, commissioned officers, correctional officers, industries, offender services and programs, enterprise assets, clerical, administrative and corporate services. Every area of Corrective Services NSW is contributing, including its head office.

In total, some 300 positions will be deleted across Corrective Services NSW, in addition to the positions deleted from the closures of three correctional centres. The 13 positions deleted from Grafton comprise six correctional officers, two senior correctional officers, one assistant superintendent, one senior assistant superintendent—which was a supernumerary position—two overseers and one part-time alcohol and drug position. The total salaries involved in the Grafton deleted positions amount to \$929,959 per annum, although the total savings with superannuation, payroll tax and workers compensation insurance amount to approximately \$1.13 million per annum.

The positions at Grafton are representative of positions being deleted at every correctional centre. Importantly, they will not leave the correctional centre understaffed, and the union agreed with that. All the positions to be deleted in this statewide process were identified in consultation with management and the union. During this consultation process the Commissioner of Corrective Services briefed 130 union representatives prior to those representatives returning to their correctional centres and business units to help identify savings in their own centres.

If Labor Party members want to make mischief prior to a by-election and ignore numbers that have been agreed to by the unions, their electorates will judge them as they judged them at the last election and down them over it. In conjunction with the process of identifying positions for deletion, the commissioner invited expressions of interest for voluntary redundancy and transfer to other locations from all permanent custodial and non-custodial staff in Corrective Services NSW. In the case of Grafton, all 13 people whose positions were deleted took voluntary redundancies instead of transferring to other correctional centres. Anecdotally, I am informed that most of those people are expected to remain in the region.

EMIRATES AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: My question is addressed to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. What are the benefits of the New South Wales Government bringing Tiger Woods to Sydney for the Emirates Australian Open?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I thank the member for his question and for his interest in major events and the general welfare of the visitor economy in New South Wales. To quote Peter Stone in his column in the *Sun-Herald* on Sunday, Golf Australia, in partnership with Destination NSW, has assembled an almost unprecedented and one-off field for our national championship this year. This will be one of the best years ever for Australian golf. The New South Wales Government, through Destination NSW, is indeed a major investor in the Emirates Australian Open—a key international sporting event on the New South Wales events calendar.

Investing in major events like the Emirates Australian Open forms a key part of the New South Wales Government's strategy to strengthen the New South Wales economy. Together with Golf Australia, the strategy is to build the Open as a pre-eminent event on the burgeoning OneAsia tour—we are well on the way to achieving that. Tiger Woods' participation is great news for the Open. It comes as a result of a lot of hard work and negotiation. The Chief Executive Officer of the Professional Golfers Association [PGA] of Australia and the PGA Tour of Australasia, Brian Thorburn, is sure that Tiger Woods will add to the excitement and anticipation already held by Australian sports fans. Mr Thorburn said:

It's wonderful to be able to welcome Tiger Woods to play in the Australian Open. He is always a crowd pleaser and is sure to bring thousands of golf lovers out to The Lakes ...

Sydney is synonymous with the Australian Open: hosting the inaugural championship in 1904, on 35 occasions overall and continuously since 2006. The Open's tradition, heritage and history are reflected in its honour roll of some of the world's greatest players and we know that Australia's leading golfers regard winning the Stonehaven Cup as a career highlight. This year having secured the coveted Presidents Cup lead-in dates for the Open has allowed us to take the tournament to a new level and we are reaping the rewards. Emirates has come on board as a naming rights sponsor, and ticket sales are well up on last year. The promoters have reported making significant increases to catering, grandstand seating and security. The number of marquees is up some 60 per cent on last year's event.

This truly is the best line-up in recent history; we have the majority of the world's best golfers right here. The event will be broadcast to millions throughout Asia, Europe and North America. Visitors and locals, and international television audiences will be able to see the world's best players first in Sydney. The line-up includes previous Stonehaven Cup winners Greg Norman, Robert Allenby, Aaron Baddeley, John Senden, Adam Scott, Jason Day and defending champion Geoff Ogilvy. Other golfing greats include Fred Couples, Presidents Cup Captain for the United States team, 14-time major winner Tiger Woods, David Toms, Kelly Kraft, Matt Kuchar, Nick Watney, Hunter Mahan, Dustin Johnson and Bubba Watson.

There is no doubt this year's Australian Open in Sydney will go down in history as one of the best yet. With such high-quality players coming together in Sydney to play in the Australian Open the eyes of the world will again be on Australia's global city. This international event will allow us to send another Sydney postcard to the world. The Government is firmly focused on having the strongest and most compelling events calendar in the country, and golf obviously plays a key role on that global events calendar. With Tiger Woods in town the eyes of the world will again be on Australia's global city.

Question time concluded at 3.13 p.m.

COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Reports

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 26 of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1988, of the following reports:

Commission for Children and Young People for the year ended 30 June 2011, received 21 October 2011
NSW Child Death Review Team for 2010, dated October 2011, received 26 October 2011

Ordered to be printed.

OMBUDSMAN

Report

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, of the report of the Ombudsman for the year ended 30 June 2011, received 26 October 2011.

Ordered to be printed.

COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**Reports**

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, of the following reports:

Report for the year ended 30 June 2011, received 28 October 2011

Report entitled "Investigation into the misuse of access rights to a Land and Property Management Authority database", dated November 2011, received 3 November 2011

Ordered to be printed.

INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSION**Report**

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 39 of the Government Information (Information Commissioner) Act 2009, of the report of the Information and Privacy Commission for the period ended 30 June 2011, including the report to the Commission of the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, received 28 October 2011.

Ordered to be printed.

POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION**Report**

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 103 of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996, of the report of the Police Integrity Commission for the year ended 30 June 2011, received 31 October 2011.

Ordered to be printed.

CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN**Report**

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 190 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998, of the report of the Children's Guardian for the year ended 30 June 2011, received 31 October 2011.

Ordered to be printed.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 12A of the Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984, of the report of the Audit Office of New South Wales for the year ended 30 June 2011, received 28 October 2011.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the following reports:

Report for 2011, volume three, received 31 October 2011

Report for 2011, volume four, received 2 November 2011

Report on State Finances 2010-2011, received 31 October 2011

Performance Audit Report entitled "Responding to domestic and family violence: Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Attorney General and Justice, Ministry of Health, NSW Police", dated November 2011, received 8 November 2011.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 194 of the Electricity Supply Act 1995, of the Special Report of the Auditor-General entitled "Solar Bonus Scheme", dated November 2011, received 7 November 2011.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Dr Geoff Lee, as Deputy-Chair, tabled Legislation Review Digest No. 7/55, dated 8 November 2011, together with committee minutes regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 6/55, dated 18 October 2011.

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

PETITIONS

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

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Pet Shops

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

Animals Performing in Circuses

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

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

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Greendale Planning—lodged 9 September 2011 (Mrs Tanya Davies)

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli—Confucius Classrooms—lodged 12 September 2011 (Mr Jamie Parker)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Private Members' Statements

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.18 p.m.]: I wish to inform members about the schedule of business this afternoon. On the last occasion the House met certain private members' statements were given up in order to deal with Government business and other matters, including the farewell of the Clerk, Mr Russell Grove. I indicated to the House at that time that if it were possible, with the cooperation of those opposite, I would include further private members' statements today in lieu of Government business. I seek leave of the House for 12 private members' statements to be taken after the conclusion of debate on the motion to be accorded priority. That will be followed by consideration of the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment (Housing) Bill 2011.

Leave granted.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Solar Bonus Scheme

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.20 p.m.]: My motion deserves to be accorded priority because the citizens of New South Wales deserve answers on the Labor Government's

disastrous handling of the Solar Bonus Scheme. The Auditor-General's report on the Solar Bonus Scheme released yesterday found that the scheme would cost taxpayers up to four times as much as we were told by the former Government. How did the former Government get it so wrong and why has the architect of solar bonus and the administrator of solar bonus—now the Leader of the Opposition—been so quiet on the report released just yesterday? This is the first opportunity the Parliament has had to discuss the extraordinary findings in the report. Surely the member for Blacktown must want, as a priority, to explain to this House why and how he got the Solar Bonus Scheme so wrong.

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

Mr ROB STOKES: We support solar power. We do not support bad government. We do not support wasting money. An idea for a feed-in tariff, which could have incubated the sustainable growth of a solar installation industry in this State if properly designed and implemented, was instead mishandled so badly.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will cease their private conversations.

Mr ROB STOKES: The scheme has cost a ridiculous amount of money, demanded from people who cannot afford it, and it has undermined public support for small-scale renewable energy in this State. This motion deserves to be accorded priority because it will give the Leader of the Opposition an opportunity to break his silence and explain his actions. He can tell families why his bungled scheme will add \$50 a year to their electricity bills for the next six years when electricity prices have sky-rocketed 60 per cent over the past five years and when Labor's carbon tax is about to send prices up further. He can tell legitimate solar PV installation businesses across this State why his bungled scheme—which they were never consulted about before it was introduced—has set up an inevitable boom and bust that has attracted unscrupulous operators to the industry and has left the honest solar businesses and electricians of this State riding a regulatory roller-coaster that has denied them the opportunity for sustainable long-term growth.

This motion deserves to be accorded priority because it will give the Leader of the Opposition the chance to explain to those many citizens who want to encourage the move to renewable energy why his bungling has undermined public support for solar photovoltaic by only allowing those fortunate enough to own a roof space to participate in an overgenerous scheme and reap the benefits of that scheme at the cost to the rest of us. This motion deserves to be accorded priority because it will give the Leader of the Opposition the opportunity to explain to his Federal colleagues why his bungling has distorted the market for renewable energy certificates so that the market for small-scale certificates was completely flooded while the scheme has the effect of delaying vital investment in large-scale renewable projects that can be made viable with much less generous support.

This motion deserves to be accorded priority because it will give the Leader of the Opposition the chance to explain to his own colleagues, past and present, why and how he got the figures so badly wrong and why he failed to consult the industry and even sections of his own Government before introducing a scheme without any business case, without any cost-benefit analysis, without any risk management plan, without any overall implementation program, without any regard for the impact of the scheme on the budget and without, frankly, any clue. I know that Frank Sartor would be interested to hear what the Leader of the Opposition has to say on this motion. This motion deserves priority so that the Leader of the Opposition can explain why, once the flaws in the scheme design had clearly emerged, he did not review the scheme when capacity got to 50 megawatts, and why the former Labor Government did not complete the review until the scheme was up to almost over double that, 100 megawatts.

This motion deserves priority because the Leader of the Opposition needs to explain how the other States got it right and other nations, notably Germany, got it right, and how, with all those examples, he got it so wrong. This motion deserves to be accorded priority because it will give the Leader of the Opposition the chance, once and for all time, to stand up and claim responsibility for this multi-billion dollar mess, to explain why he thinks he did get it right or to continue to keep quiet and prove by his silence that he has failed the test to ever again exercise executive responsibility in this State. It is as simple as that and as important as that—accept priority, debate this matter now or forever hold your peace.

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

Bulli Hospital

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [3.24 p.m.]: This matter deserves priority because the people of the Illawarra's northern suburbs deserve a world-class hospital system but, just as importantly, they deserve a Government that is going to be honest with them and maintain the commitments that were made when the Minister for Health was in Opposition. This goes to the heart of what is wrong with this Government. What is wrong with this Government is that it spent a lot of time in Opposition promising everything to everyone. When it comes to government, when it comes to making the decisions that will benefit people such as those in the Illawarra's northern suburbs, it runs away from the tough decisions—Treasury gets to them and before you know it their commitment is no longer there. The long-term plan for Bulli Hospital has taken too long. That is why, from day one, since being preselected, I lobbied the then Government to secure a \$9.4 million commitment to a new integrated primary healthcare centre on the site.

To truly understand why this matter deserves priority one first needs to have a basic understanding of the Illawarra region and its unique health needs. Bulli Hospital is located in a growing area—both for families and for older people looking to retire—of the Illawarra. Secondly, in the past 12 months the hospital has seen around 8,000 people go through its emergency department. Thirdly and finally, this matter deserves priority because the people of the northern suburbs of the Illawarra regretfully voted for those opposite some seven or eight months ago on the basis of a commitment that the former shadow Minister for Health made about bolstering resources for Bulli Hospital. This is what the Minister for Health said when she was in Opposition:

Bulli Hospital deserves the resources it needs to put patients first. The New South Wales Liberals are committed to a functioning health facility at Bulli.

That was Minister Skinner in October 2010. There was no mention of a closure of the emergency department, but what was said during the election campaign a couple of months before March? Surely by this stage the Coalition would have started to think, "We have to be honest to our communities." I will quote what Joe Cool, John Dorahy, said back then:

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: John Dorahy is not in this place to attack or defend himself. The member for Keira is not debating priority; he is debating the motion. I ask you to draw him back to why his motion deserves priority over other business of the House.

The SPEAKER: I draw the member back to establishing why his motion should be accorded priority.

Mr RYAN PARK: John Dorahy said:

In the doorknocking I have done around the northern stretches of the seat of Keira everyone's talking about the issues of health and the lack of services available ... and they are desperately wanting a change of government so we can ... [wait for it] ... bolster Bulli Hospital with what it needs.

That is what John Dorahy said. That was the commitment of the Coalition to the people of the northern Illawarra. The Government has walked away from the people of the northern Illawarra.

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

Mr RYAN PARK: I enjoy the interjection of the member for Kiama, the future Minister for the Illawarra. He had the terrible job the other day—a very awful job that his Premier gave him—and that was to defend the indefensible. He is the Clayton's Minister for the Illawarra, the Minister you have when you are not really having a Minister. He is the only member in the lower House in an Australian Parliament who says the following, "Look, I represent the people of the Illawarra, but there is no need to have an office in the Illawarra."

The SPEAKER: The member will return to giving reasons as to why his motion should be accorded priority.

Mr RYAN PARK: I understand that the Double Bay branch of the Liberal Party would debate Bulli Hospital frequently, but I want the Minister for the Illawarra to once and for all join me and fight for Bulli Hospital to get the resources it needs. [*Time expired.*]

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

SOLAR BONUS SCHEME

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes:

- (1) the Auditor-General's report on the Solar Bonus Scheme administered by the former Minister for Energy and now Leader of the Opposition;
- (2) the Auditor-General's concerns that "The Scheme lacked the most elementary operational controls, had no overall plan and risks were poorly managed"; and
- (3) that New South Wales households will now face a bill of up to \$1.75 billion.

This motion is all about responsibility in government. It is all about being a responsible Government and being held responsible for the consequences of a government's decisions. A report released by the New South Wales Auditor-General, Peter Achterstraat, is based on widespread modelling from institutions such as the University of New South Wales, which has an excellent school of photovoltaics in its engineering department. The report makes very clear that up to \$1.75 billion has been expended on a scheme to encourage people to commit to a financial decision to install solar panels. That is a laudable objective, but at what cost? The real point of the motion is that that policy was grossly expensive, poorly managed and poorly implemented, and now all New South Wales residents, particularly the electricity consumers of the State, have to pick up the tab for an appalling decision.

All the warnings were before the former Labor Government. It was warned that the scheme had the potential to explode, yet it sat idly by. It was so preoccupied at the time with leadership challenges, internal court intrigue within Sussex Street, reshuffles, and constant resignations and scandals that it completely forgot about its responsibilities and duties to the people of New South Wales. The solar industry raised concerns about this hastily put together scheme and the risks it posed. The Coalition and the media also raised concern. All of those indicators should have acted as strong reminders to the former Minister for Energy, now the Leader of the Opposition, not to take his eyes off the scheme even for a moment. Yet, sadly, that is exactly what happened.

While the former Minister for Energy—now the Leader of the Opposition—and other Labor members were busy putting together media releases and headlines, the Coalition was sending up red flags in relation to the legislation and forewarning the previous Government about the dangers that lay ahead. Opposition members like to say that the Coalition supported the legislation. The Coalition supports a viable and sustainable solar industry in New South Wales. We support electricians, we support small businesses, and we support innovation, renewable energy and energy efficiency. The Coalition also supports solar energy and investment in renewable energy sources, but what we do not support is hastily thrown together legislation that has terrible policy consequences that result in a waste of public funds.

I will outline some of the concerns pointed out by the Coalition in November 2009 during debate on the legislation. The member for Goulburn, who is now the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women, said that the Coalition "urges the Government to conduct its review as quickly as possible. It asks the Government to acknowledge that there are inherent flaws in the bill that have inevitably occurred as a result of the indecent and inexplicable haste in drafting the bill". During my contribution to debate on the bill I stated that "the bill is seen as likely to create a boom-and-bust scenario", which is exactly what occurred. I also stated:

... whilst the bill may be appealing at first glance, when one starts to strip it down one sees it is simply a hastily put together policy that aims at quick political pointscoring at the expense of long-term benefits for New South Wales citizens.

I also stated:

What the solar industry in New South Wales wants is long-term, sustainable growth. Yet all the bill provides is something that is best described as temporary growth, which is unsatisfactory for many stakeholders.

My friend and colleague the member for Tweed stated, "I am also concerned that the Government has done little modelling in relation to the cost to it and consumers." That has been proved to be true by the Auditor-General's report on the scheme. The member for Lismore, now Deputy-Speaker, noted during that debate:

The Government should focus on longer-term industry development with larger systems and staggered reductions in tariffs to encourage a long-term, competitive renewable sector.

The captain of the cocky club and former member for Baulkham Hills noted:

The solar energy industry is well structured with experienced operators, people with great traditions and history. The last thing we want is to have cowboys entering the industry in the dying days of this seven-year period causing tragic circumstances for the industry.

While the Labor Government's media releases were effective, well thought out, spell checked, double-checked and triple-checked, its costings of the specifics and the concept of any cost-benefit analysis or a business plan—all the things that matter to the mums, the dads and the State's finances—were clearly put together on the back of an envelope. I note the commencement of the media release by the former Minister for Energy, now the Leader of the Opposition, when the scheme was introduced, which states: "Families and small businesses in New South Wales have had a win today." That win has come home to roost. That win has cost up to \$1.75 billion. That win will cost all the electricity consumers of the State an additional \$50 a year—all for a silly cobbled-together scheme that completely undermines public support for the great idea of feed-in tariffs, which can be used effectively to incubate innovative renewable energy technologies, but only if carefully designed.

The Leader of the Opposition stands condemned for designing a scheme so clumsy that it has damaged the State's finances and the industry. We all know how this scheme and its massive financial blowout are hurting families and hurting the solar industry. The blame rests solely with Labor members. But if the former Minister for Energy and former Government members had taken a deep breath when the scheme was introduced and was being debated in this House, we could all be in a very different position today. We all make mistakes and we all know that; but this mistake cost the people of New South Wales more than \$1.5 billion. For that, the Leader of the Opposition stands condemned.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.37 p.m.]: What a bunch of seething hypocrites! I move:

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

this House notes that the Solar Bonus Scheme, which was the subject of the recent Auditor-General's report, passed through both Houses of the Parliament with the support of all members of the Coalition, Independents and The Greens.

The legislation was passed by the Independents, The Greens and the Coalition in this place and in the other place. The consequence of my amendment is that it invites members to examine why the motion was introduced today. I suggest it is because it is politically opportune for the Government to do so today. As I stated in my opening comments, this motion is grossly hypocritical of the Government. The salesman who marched in to open debate for the Government this afternoon, the member for Pittwater, is as hypocritical as any member of this place on this issue. He had plenty to say today, and had a bit to say in the past. In relation to this issue he stated:

... the bill is yet another chapter in Labor's history of backflipping to support the policies introduced by the Coalition, repackaging them and then trying to sell them as its own.

If he had repeated that mantra since he came into government, as members on the other side have done time and again, we would understand it, but he said that in this place on 26 November 2009. He is claiming credit for the scheme that today he has bagged. He is not on his own. The member for Tweed had plenty to say in support of the Solar Bonus Scheme, so too did the member for Lismore, the member for Manly, the member for Goulburn, the member for Pittwater, about whom I have just spoken, and the Hon. Catherine Cusack in the Legislative Council. In fact, the junior Treasurer—not the Hon. Greg Pearce—who conjured up the concept of a budget black hole and then turned it into reality, a man who inherited a \$713 million surplus and turned it into a \$2 billion deficit, showed his business acumen when he spoke about the scheme. On 26 November 2009 *Hansard* reports that he said:

I reiterate that I support the measures outlined in [the Solar Bonus Bill] to boost the current and future use of solar energy in New South Wales but it is a very small start ... The Government's legislation does not go far enough.

Further, he said:

We are delighted [that] the Government has taken up some good policy but it should acknowledge it was an idea from the Opposition.

The Minister for Family and Community Services, the member for Goulburn, said:

The Coalition would prefer the inclusion of larger businesses and systems within the scheme.

That is, make it bigger—more entrants, bigger entrants, bigger cost to government. That was her idea. The member for Tweed said, "I want the scheme to be extended." Extended to what? More entrants, bigger entrants, more payments? The Coalition is exhibiting seething hypocrisy on this issue. One of the superstars of this whole issue has been the Deputy Premier, Andrew Stoner. On the one hand the Coalition was attacking the Solar Bonus Scheme and on the other hand it was shielding the Deputy Premier, who was up to this neck, drowning, on this issue. I will recap his seething hypocrisy. When the previous Government conducted a review of the Solar Bonus Scheme in September 2010 the member for Oxley not only advocated keeping this scheme following all of his questions from Opposition on it in this place; he wanted to expand it to new technologies. This was at a time when the previous Government was amending the scheme to stop the blowout. In an email submission dated Tuesday 28 September 2010 the member for Oxley wrote:

Dear Solar Bonus Review Team, with reference to the request for submission to the New South Wales Solar Bonus Scheme I request the following:

1. a continuation of the New South Wales Solar Bonus Scheme to encourage uptake of renewable energy in New South Wales; and—

Do not stop it; let us continue it—

2. an amendment to the scheme so that all renewable energy technologies are included equally in the scheme.

Make it bigger, make it cost more. He also argued that the scheme should:

encourage the adoption on an equal basis in the scheme at least the following technologies:

1. micro-hydroelectric,
2. solar photovoltaic,
3. small scale wind,
4. biofuels, including biomass, and
5. solar thermal for electricity generation.

He said let us wind it out to so many technologies and let us not pull it up. That was in September 2010. A month later, at 11.00 a.m. on 27 October 2010, the previous Government did the responsible thing and announced that it would reduce the tariff feed in from 60¢ to 20¢ at midnight that night. What did the member for Oxley do? He bolted off to grab his chance before the clock struck at midnight. One minute he was feigning indignation over the Solar Bonus Scheme in this House and the next minute he was frantically sending an SMS to the installer. Then he sneaked out the back door and made a mad dash to the bank—absolute seething hypocrisy. It has since emerged that he then entered into a deal with an installer who was a donor to The Nationals. Enough of these politically opportune crocodile tears in this place today.

We have members of Parliament under fire, the Tamberlin inquiry—a \$2.5 million omelette all over the Premier's face—the Minister for Resources and Energy being annihilated by Alan Jones, the Minister for the Environment completely and utterly dismantled on every issue she touches, public sector workers in revolt, police king-hit from behind by the Premier, electricity prices and water prices rising and a desalination rip-off in full swing. No wonder they want to debate anything other than Government policy. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [3.44 p.m.]: I too support this motion that condemns the former Labor Government for its bungling of the Solar Bonus Scheme. I feel somewhat sorry for the member for Maroubra for having to defend this scheme, given that it was introduced by the now Leader of the Opposition. I refer to the Government supporting this scheme on 26 November 2009. We made the same mistake as the rest of New South Wales in that we thought that the former Government was competent. Clearly it was absolutely incompetent. The Auditor-General said:

There was no cost-benefit analysis, there was no market research. Little was done early enough to identify and reduce relevant risks. There was no overall implementation plan, there was no clear definition of project roles and responsibilities. The scheme basically lacked the most elementary operational controls.

The Leader of the Opposition has wanted a poll since 26 March about how he is going. Today the *Daily Telegraph* published one. It is headed "Should Opposition leader John Robertson quit over the bungled solar scheme?" There were 3,396 yes votes, 86.77 per cent. The 518 no votes were probably from what is left of the Australian Labor Party membership in New South Wales. It was the Labor Governments own statutory requirement that the scheme be reviewed when 50 megawatts of installed capacity was reached. By the time the Labor Government completed its review installed capacity had reached 100 megawatts, and is now expected to reach up to 364 megawatts. The Government's original estimate of total tariffs to be paid under the scheme was

\$362 million but now the Auditor-General has estimated that total tariffs would be about \$1.75 billion. It would have been upwards of \$4 billion had this Government not intervened and stepped in to fix this scheme. In identifying major deficiencies in the handling of this scheme the Auditor-General also said:

The scheme had three broadly stated objectives with no specific targets to measure progress. These objectives did not include reducing emissions or obtaining value for money.

No cost-benefit analysis was undertaken before the Government's decision to introduce a scheme.

John Robertson's handling of his Solar Bonus Scheme was certainly bungled. It was clumsy, amateurish and incompetent. To further quote the Auditor-General:

This scheme was a bit like a runaway train. It went through every red light and stop light, burning up cash.

The bungling of the scheme was confirmed by the Auditor General's report: no cost-benefit analysis, no measurable targets in the objectives, no contingency plans, not enough overall guidance, no initial cap on costs and capacity, not enough opportunities for reviews. What we now know is that the Leader of the Opposition—who has his ham-fisted trademark all over this colossal policy failure—was aware his scheme was spiralling out of control. He sat on his hands knowing the cost blowout would feed into higher electricity prices for the households of New South Wales. John Robertson sat back and watched his scheme spiral out of control knowing full well the cost blowout would feed into higher electricity prices and the people of New South Wales would have to pay for it.

It was two years ago tomorrow that John Robertson's scheme was taken to the Labor Cabinet by the Leader of the Opposition. It was at that meeting in which John Robertson told Cabinet that no funding would be required because it was proposed that the costs of the scheme would be passed on to all electricity customers through increased electricity bills. The Leader of the Opposition did not care then about how struggling families across New South Wales would pay their increased power bills and he does not care now. All that mattered to the Leader of the Opposition was bringing down his factional enemy Nathan Rees. The switch from net to gross was all in aid of a good headline. Policy on the run, policy by media release with no detail or credible analysis—all confirmed by the Auditor-General.

John Robertson's failure is clearly documented: failure to implement any measureable objectives, failure to undertake any cost-benefit analysis, failure to implement risk management plans, failure to budget his scheme properly and failure to monitor his scheme's performance. John Robertson's Solar Bonus Scheme was bungled and he knew that the cost blowout would be passed on to all electricity consumers. Just as the carbon tax will be Julia Gillard's poisonous legacy to the households of Australia, John Robertson's Solar Bonus Scheme will be his legacy to the households of New South Wales.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [3.49 p.m.]: I support the amendment moved by the member for Maroubra. This debate is interesting because once again the Coalition is using the time of this Parliament to attack the Opposition. I know that members opposite find it difficult to remember that they are now in government and that it is their responsibility to deal with the many challenges that confront our State. Have members opposite used the release of the Auditor-General's report to talk about what they might do about renewable energy, given the closure of the Solar Bonus Scheme? Have they used this opportunity to talk about what they might do to address carbon pollution and climate change? No, they have not.

Have they taken this opportunity to outline what they might do in response to the Auditor-General's recommendations? Do members opposite accept those recommendations? If they do, how will they implement them? We have heard nothing about those issues from the Coalition. Instead, once again, we have seen nothing from this Government, which has a poor environmental record. Government members are doing what they feel most comfortable doing; that is, attacking the Opposition. Yet again members opposite are being negative rather than positive in outlining their vision. They have a responsibility to address the challenges of the future on behalf of the people of New South Wales. Everybody noticed the undue haste with which the Coalition attacked the Leader of the Opposition and the Labor Party after the release of the Auditor-General's report.

Mr Michael Daley: Obscene haste.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: Yes, it was obscene. The Minister for Roads was almost tripping over himself and salivating at the opportunity to denounce the Leader of the Opposition and to politicise the role of the Auditor-General. It is interesting to note that Government members appear to be most happy and

comfortable when they are attacking the Opposition rather than outlining their plans for the future. However, in the Government's undue haste to criticise the Opposition and to attack the Leader of the Opposition a few of the facts have been lost, which often happens. I will remind the House of those facts. First and foremost, this scheme was introduced in 2009 with the support of all parties in the New South Wales Parliament. The member for Maroubra has already related the comments of some members opposite about the Solar Bonus Scheme. However, who can forget what the current Treasurer said about the scheme on 26 November 2009:

We are delighted [that] the Government has taken up some good policy but it should acknowledge it was an idea from the Opposition.

The then shadow Minister for the Environment said during the second reading debate:

As I said when this policy was announced, imitation can be the most sincere form of flattery. This policy is a massive vote of confidence in Barry O'Farrell by the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, and Minister for Energy ...

Members of the Coalition were very willing to claim this as their own policy—although they are certainly not doing so now. The second fact that has been lost in this debate is that action was taken by the Labor Government to address the increasing cost of the scheme. We reduced the tariff to 20¢ a kilowatt hour in October 2010 after a substantial review of the scheme and in January 2011 we also announced that the 300-megawatt cap on applications had been reached and once that capacity had been connected to the scheme it would be closed. The third fact lost in this debate is that the scheme offered many benefits, not the least of which is that it has reduced future need for baseload generation capacity.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.54 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for The Entrance, the member for Maroubra and the member for Marrickville for their contributions to this debate. The Government does not support the amendment because it shows yet again that the Opposition still does not get it. Of course, we proudly support sensible and affordable initiatives—especially market-based initiatives—that are designed to promote renewable technologies and industry development, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. We support good policy. However, we do not support badly managed policy and mismanagement of public funds. When a government knows that a policy decision is going bad and that a scheme is blowing out it should take action. The Auditor-General's report exposed the fact that that is what happened with the Solar Bonus Scheme, but the Opposition still does not understand that.

The Coalition supported a sensible and reasonable approach to the concept of feed-in tariffs to support renewable energy development. That was a very prudent policy response at the time. The then Government responded to the Coalition's ideas for a feed-in tariff by introducing its own. Of course, members opposite wanted theirs to be bigger, more expensive and grander. The Coalition raised concerns that the payment was too generous and that the time frame for the scheme was too short. We pointed out that the scheme would result in a boom and bust scenario. As members opposite have pointed out, we also raised concerns that schools, churches and community halls would be excluded from the scheme. However, what we did not and do not support is the inept administration and incompetence highlighted by the Auditor-General.

Members opposite did not mention the Auditor-General's report in their contributions. They did not want to talk about it because its findings clearly condemn the actions of the Leader of the Opposition. That is the issue. Everyone makes mistakes from time to time, and we understand that; however, when those mistakes cost hundreds of millions or even billions of dollars and hardworking families are left to pick up the tab for bad policy decisions those responsible should be held to account. That is why the Leader of the Opposition should be participating in this debate. The challenge was issued to him to explain himself, to admit that it was a mistake and that it should not have happened or to tell the House why he did what he did. His silence condemns him.

Perhaps the final word in this debate should go to a senior member of the former Government, the Hon. Frank Sartor, who was quoted in the *Australian* today as saying that the scheme "was a flawed policy conceived in haste and with no accountability or proper implementation". That is probably the understatement of the year. The Leader of the Opposition should be condemned for hastily cobbling together a scheme that did not reflect real market conditions and for failing to take action when it became clear that the scheme was blowing out. The member for Marrickville said that the Labor Government did take action, but it was too late. Applications for about \$500 million worth of subsidies were lodged on the day the then Government announced that the tariff would be cut from 60¢ to 20¢. The then Labor Government should have put an immediate end to the scheme. Its failure to do so contributed to the loss being sustained today by the ordinary people of New South Wales.

Question—That the words stand—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment negatived.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Private members' statements, by leave, taken forthwith.

LUCAS GARDENS SCHOOL

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [4.00 p.m.]: I am pleased to report today some very welcome news for Lucas Gardens School, in my electorate of Drummoyne. Lucas Gardens School provides great educational programs for students with intellectual and physical disabilities and has been lobbying the New South Wales Government for funding assistance for the building of a hydrotherapy pool. The estimated cost of constructing the pool is around \$800,000. That dream became a reality yesterday when the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, announced \$300,000 in funding from the State Government for construction of the pool. Various local organisations have worked tirelessly over the past few years to raise money for this worthwhile project, and I congratulate them and commend the generosity of the people of Drummoyne in raising an impressive \$600,000. The fundraising efforts of the Friends of Lucas Gardens organisation meant that the project qualified for joint funding by the New South Wales Government.

Hydrotherapy as a method of treating disease dates back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. Once the \$800,000 pool has been completed the students at Lucas Gardens School will have access to a state-of-the-art facility that will help improve their development and quality of life. The mechanical and thermal effects of the hydrotherapy pool will improve the students' range of movements, thereby boosting mobility. The buoyancy provided by aquatic exercise also reduces the pain of some students' medical conditions. Other specialised facilities for the 34 students at the Lucas Gardens School include a sensory room, fragrant garden, touch screen computers and a purpose-designed play environment.

The school staff do a remarkable job of helping these students achieve individual learning goals and progress towards greater independence. Acknowledgements also need to be made of the various groups that have worked hard with the school on the pool project, including the City of Canada Bay Council and its mayor, Five Dock Rotary, Peru Perumal Architects, Macquarie Foundation, Pemberton Foundation and the Friends of Lucas Committee. Lucas Gardens is a special school indeed, and it is very fortunate to have such tremendous support, reflecting the community's esteem for the important work being done with these special children. Construction of the hydrotherapy pool will further improve the education and physical outcomes for the students. I am so pleased that the Government has been able to deliver this funding for this absolutely fantastic project.

More than 30 students are enrolled at the Lucas Gardens School and they are classified as having moderate to severe intellectual disability, with more than 95 per cent having some communication disability. These are students who were born with a disability and who will always need the help of others and the support of their local community. Once the pool becomes a reality their mobility skills will be enhanced and their general health will be vastly improved. I am proud to stand here today as the member for Drummoyne and the local member of a community whose generosity has made this pool possible. I take the opportunity to thank the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, for matching the local funding to make this dream a reality for those in need.

ARNCLIFFE PUBLIC SCHOOL 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [4.05 p.m.]: I am pleased to inform the House that last Friday, 4 November, I attended Arncliffe Public School's 150th anniversary and unveiled the commemorative plaque. It was pleasing to see so many parents and friends turn out to witness this historic day. The occasion is particularly significant for our local community as very few schools across New South Wales have reached such a momentous milestone. The school has a rich history and this, along with its many achievements, has no doubt contributed to Arncliffe Public School's very high standing in the Rockdale community. It is a very much respected place of primary education.

Arncliffe Public School has a student population of approximately 400 students, from kindergarten to year 6, and a very dedicated and enthusiastic staff. The school is committed to its vision statement, which is reflected in the excellent behaviour of its students. Celebrating 150 years of public education is indeed a great achievement, which is why so many students, parents and friends of the school community came together to celebrate. It is the dedication of the past and present staff, the commitment of the parents and the continuing efforts of the students that have ensured Arncliffe Public School is so highly regarded and well respected within the local community.

The cultural diversity of Arncliffe Public School is valued and celebrated in both the school and in the wider community. An example of this diversity was on display following the ceremony in a multicultural feast put on by the parents and students. Naturally, I stayed on and sampled the first-class cuisine that had been lovingly prepared for all to enjoy. The following day the school held its open day. Crowds of people from across the St George region came to admire the school's achievements and accomplishments over 15 decades of public education. Occasions such as these allow many former students to take a trip down memory lane, with memorabilia exhibits in the library, open classrooms and memory tours of the school. I was particularly pleased to look at the display in the school hall which showed how the school had changed over the years yet still maintained its focus of building first and foremost a strong school community and enriching the lives of its students.

I congratulate all those who worked so hard to make this an educational and exciting experience. All of us in this place who have been teachers would have appreciated how polite and well-behaved the students were on such a big occasion. All of the students, from kindergarten to year 6, played some part in making this day a success. Particularly worth mentioning were the Arncliffe Public School student band and choir: they provided endless entertainment for the special guests and proud parents. Principal Stephen Vrachas deserves special recognition for his service to education in this milestone year.

Kerryn Coldrey, president of the parents and citizens group, has also served the school exceptionally well in a year of ongoing celebrations. I acknowledge the commitment of previous principals, parents and citizens group presidents and former students who have served Arncliffe Public School and who have jointly contributed to the ongoing success of this distinguished place of learning. Once again it is with great pleasure in this place today that I honour Arncliffe Public School in my electorate of Rockdale. I wish staff, students and the local community every success for the future.

GIRRAWEE VEGETATION DAMAGE

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [4.10 p.m.]: I raise an issue of importance and concern to the people of Girraween, a suburb located geographically in the middle of my electorate of Toongabbie. Some months ago residents started contacting me and they expressed concern about the death of trees, shrubs and other plant life in the area. Girraween contains many quiet residential streets and a number of industrial complexes and factories. It has been put to me by a number of residents that the death of these plants, including some very large gum trees, is related to the proximity of those plants to some of the factories in the area.

After having been contacted about this matter local residents and I wrote to the Office of Environment and Heritage and asked it to examine the area. One resident pointed out to me that more than a decade ago—about 15 years ago—a leak from a chemical plant had caused similar problems. Media attention has been focused on a local DuPont factory which manufactures herbicides. Indeed, many residents have indicated to me that they believe this site is causing a significant problem. Norm Shipway has lost of the order of \$40,000 worth of orchids—a lifelong hobby for Norm who has won orchid prizes in New South Wales and who has been recognised as an Australian expert. Peter Herlinger has been an avid gardener for more than half a century and one lady in the area is a qualified horticulturist. All those people who combined have more than 100 years of serious gardening experience told me that they believed herbicide emissions were to blame.

The Office of Environment and Heritage has tried to determine the source of these emissions. The advice I have received is that its final report will be produced by the end of September. Regrettably, today we are no closer to finding the source of those emissions than we were in May, June or July when the issue first came to light. Deeply concerned, when I visited the DuPont site last week I was taken on a thorough tour of the site by Mr Azzopardi, the operations manager. Appropriately, he pointed out to me that all the chemicals that were manufactured there were manufactured indoors under negative air pressure and that fugitive emissions were unlikely. After looking at the site and being thoroughly briefed on its operations, and after speaking to the men and women who are working at that site I am not at all persuaded that DuPont is the source of those emissions. So we are back to square one. Currently I am in the process of writing to the Office of Environment and Heritage to alert it of the possibility of other emission sources in close proximity to the DuPont factory.

The locals are concerned not just about damage to plants; they are concerned also about the 3,000 or more schoolchildren within a 1,000-metre radius of the alleged site. This is a matter of great concern to the people of Girraween, in particular, those who live on or in close proximity to Mandoon, Gilba and Targo roads. This issue has received extensive local media coverage and some metropolitan television coverage. I thank Lee Jeloscek for his attention to this matter, which would not otherwise have received statewide coverage. He has

taken this issue seriously, as have all local residents. I will continue to inspect sites at the suggestion of locals and talk to them about the damage that is occurring to their plants and gardens. I want the Office of Environment and Heritage to take this issue seriously as do all the residents in the area. Until we determine with some certainty the nature and source of these emissions and how to remediate and/or prevent further emissions, concerns will be held by the local community. I will continue to bring their concerns to light in this place or through more public channels.

WARNERVALE WILDCATS

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyong) [4.15 p.m.]: More than four million people participate in organised sport in New South Wales. The benefits of being involved in team sport range from a healthier lifestyle to psychological benefits of mateship, loyalty and self-confidence. Within my electorate of Wyong, as in much of New South Wales, playing team sport is a way of life. The community spirit and friendship that sporting clubs evoke within our society are heartening and are what being Australian is all about. A number of great community-based sporting organisations in Wyong focus on providing a range of quality sports and activities for children and teens in the local area. One such sporting group is the Warnervale Sports Club.

Approximately 10 years ago, a group of mums and dads realised that the planned future influx into the Warnervale area of over 70,000 people could not be sustained with buildings and roads alone. That group set about establishing the Warnervale Sports Club to cater for sport, social and community needs in building a new community. The sports club which is known as the Warnervale Wildcats now has rugby union, cricket, netball, football and rugby league clubs under its banner and mentorship. The club has grown from just a few mums and dads around a kitchen table to one of the largest sporting organisations in my electorate.

The Warnervale Wildcats rugby team has had such considerable success that it has remained undefeated for the past two seasons—that is a staggering 47 games undefeated. In my earlier days I completed a season undefeated with the mighty Terrigal Trojans rugby club, which at the time I thought was an amazing milestone. Forty-seven games in a row however is a staggering number. The Warnervale Wildcats season culminated with winning this year's grand final at the Bluetongue Stadium at Gosford against the strong Entrance Rams side. It should be pointed out that these undefeated seasons include not only local club sides but also stronger junior sides in Sydney, Newcastle and the Blue Mountains. Having been together as a team for several years, these young men have been able to build strong bonds with each other that have resulted in on-field success. The team also had a successful international development tour of Fiji and played against the strongest youth and academy sides in that nation. Again, the team came away undefeated.

A number of players were recognised and rewarded during the 2011 season for their talent, and I would like to recognise them today. Brenton Acreman received the ultimate honour of selection for the New South Wales side. Cameron McNamara was selected for the New South Wales Country side and played with distinction. Eight players were given scholarships to the Central Coast Academy of Sport, while Brenton Cameron, Keanu Ashwell, Ben Butler, Tom Dimech, Sam Heterick, Chris Russell, Jack Stonestreet and Matthew Willmott were selected to represent the Central Coast for Country Week and also at the New South Wales championships. Some members of the team moved to higher levels in the schoolboy rugby tournament with Ben Butler, Luke Burgess, Cameron McNamara, and Matthew Willmott playing in the Association of Co-Educational Independent Schools New South Wales team, and Dylan Thorne playing in the Combined Catholic Colleges New South Wales team.

Community-based clubs do not run by themselves. Without the tireless work of volunteers, these clubs would cease to function and our kids would not have the sporting opportunities currently afforded to them. Therefore, praise must go also to the support team of coach Chris Acreman, co-coach Luther Dyson, manager Peter Sternbeck, trainer Shane Heterick and mentors Warren Butler, Glen Allen, Laurie Ashwell and Nigel Willmott. Jim Bilton, president of the Warnervale rugby club—he is also one of our local police officers—said to me that the nature of sport can give today's youth an outlet for their energy. He said that rugby in particular, with its emphasis on fun, fitness and personal responsibility to the team, is perfect for our youth to enjoy and it enables them to build long-lasting friendships.

Other junior teams at the Warnervale club also had a successful year: the under 11s winning their grand final and the under 12s and under 15s progressing to their semi-finals. The Wildcats are also developing a strong set of senior sides and season 2011 will go down as the most successful year since seniors were formed. Belonging to a family friendly club such as the Warnervale Wildcats gives the youth in the area a sense of

belonging and a sense of responsibility to their teammates, the club and the community. I congratulate the Warnervale Wildcats on its dedication to the youth in the electorate of Wyong and I wish it every success for the coming season.

TRIBUTE TO LAWRENCE HARGRAVE

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [4.20 p.m.]: Today I will give members a brief history lesson whilst informing them about Lawrence Hargrave, a former resident in the Heathcote electorate. Lawrence Hargrave was the aviation pioneer who literally created the modern air foil wing. Lawrence had a full life. He was born on 29 January 1850 at Greenwich, England, and was educated at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Kirkby Lonsdale, within Westmorland. He came to Australia in 1872 in search of gold but, unfortunately, the ship he was sailing on was wrecked off the Queensland coast. Two years earlier he had explored the hinterland of Port Moresby. In June 1877 he decided to settle down and he was elected a member of the Royal Society of New South Wales. In 1878 Lawrence Hargrave was appointed an assistant astronomical observer at Sydney Observatory and he held that post until 1883.

Thanks to the prudent and extensive land purchases of their father, Judge Hargrave, Lawrence and his brothers were provided for. With part of his land at Coalcliff leased for coalmining, he found himself with a comfortable income before he had turned 30. By 1883 his income from land and coal was about £1,000 a year. When he retired to devote his life to research into the problem connected with human flight, he meticulously studied the flight of birds for inspiration and chose to live and experiment in Stanwell Park in my electorate. The sheer cliffs with their magnificent views were the perfect laboratory for him and offered excellent wind and hang conditions. These special characteristics have made Stanwell Park Australia's foremost site for hang-gliding and paragliding and thousands of people visit the area each year.

Lawrence Hargrave invented many contraptions over his many years of research but he never applied for patents on any of them. He was a passionate believer in scientific communication as a key to promoting research and advances. This noble aspiration was rewarded over his research career as he made significant contributions to the leading technology. Among these was the box kite in 1893, which greatly improved the lift to drag ratio of early gliders, work on the rotary engine used in many early aircraft up to 1920, and significant study of curved aerofoils. His countless experiments and models were devoured by the scientific community and many findings were published in a series of papers to the Royal Society of New South Wales. In 1894 his work reached a high point—pardon the pun—when he successfully lifted himself 16 feet above the sands of Stanwell Park beach under a train of four box kites. This impressive feat was widely reported and established the box kite as a stable aerial platform. In his typical selfless manner he said after the experiment:

... a safe means of making an ascent with a flying machine, of trying the same without any risk of accident, and descending, is now at the service of any experimenter who wishes to use it.

This was noted by the meteorological observatory at Harvard University, which promptly constructed a kite from the Hargrave particulars which, after a modification, was adopted by the United States weather bureau. The principles published by Lawrence Hargrave were applied to gliders and in 1906 helped Santos Dumont complete the first officially recorded flight in a box kite aeroplane. In addition to leading advances in constructing flying machinery he made remarkable triumphs in propulsion technology. In fact, his invention of the rotary engine in 1889 was so far ahead of its time that it went largely unnoticed until it was independently rediscovered in 1908. His work inspired countless other pioneers, including Alexander Graham Bell. He has been credited with doing:

... as much to bring about the accomplishment of dynamic flight as any other single individual.

The importance of his life and work was celebrated on the Australian \$20 note from 1966 to 1994. There is a memorial to him on Bald Hill overlooking Stanwell Park where some of his greatest triumphs took flight. His achievements have also been immortalised in the iconic Lawrence Hargrave Drive, which stretches from Helensburgh to Thirroul, the Hargrave-Andrew Library at Monash University and the Lawrence Hargrave Professor of Aeronautical Engineering at Sydney University. My electorate is rightly proud of this great Australian, as all Australians should be.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE OXLEY REGION AWARDS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [4.25 p.m.]: On 29 October I had the pleasure of attending the inaugural State Emergency Service Oxley Region Awards presentation held at Port Macquarie.

The ceremony was attended by Mr Steven Pearce, the New South Wales State Emergency Service Deputy Commissioner, and Mr Peter Floyd, Oxley Regional Controller, and was an opportunity to recognise the diligent service by State Emergency Service volunteers in our local community. The Oxley region is situated on the mid North Coast between Taree in the south and Kempsey in the north, Gloucester in the west and Lord Howe Island to the east. The region has 11 strategically placed State Emergency Service units. Its headquarters, which has a permanent staff of seven as well as region volunteers, is situated halfway between Taree and Wingham.

The Oxley region covers five local government areas, has approximately 420 volunteers, 27 response vehicles and 20 flood boats to respond to the needs of their communities. Four of the Oxley State Emergency Service units are accredited by the State Rescue Board for rescue—Port Macquarie-Hastings State Emergency Service, Kempsey State Emergency Service and Gloucester State Emergency Service—with Camden Haven State Emergency Service accredited for secondary rescue. The Oxley State Emergency Service encompasses three major river systems—the Hastings, Manning and Macleay rivers—all of which have a history of major flooding at various times.

In June this year all three rivers broke their banks and the State Emergency Service volunteers worked tirelessly through extreme conditions to minimise the damage caused by this major flooding. They set up evacuation centres, sandbagged, kept residents regularly informed of the progress of the floods with safety and evacuation warnings, and provided practical instruction to those in the path of the devastating bodies of water. As the waters subsided, the volunteers continued their hard work to tarp roofs and clean up the inevitable debris of such major flooding. I am pleased to have this opportunity to acknowledge these volunteers for their dedication and the selfless giving of their time to help others in real need, especially during these recent floods.

Last Saturday night was about recognising the commitment and hard work of 18 dedicated volunteers, with the presentation of national medals and State Emergency Service long service awards. Between them, these outstanding members of the New South Wales State Emergency Service have contributed 475 years of service to our community and to the State Emergency Service. The 10-year long service award recipients were Michael Burg, William Steggal, Beverley Davy, Allison Richards, Kerry Ann Barry, Allan Faugeras and Phillippe Faugeras. Those recognised for 15 years long service were Ian Tinson, Ted Bowen and Marshall Burtenshaw. Derek Boughton of Wingham received recognition for 20 years of dedicated service. The 25-year award recipients were Sandra Walkden, Don Moy, Barry Heien, James Dowson and Wayne Lambert.

Special recognition must go to Maureen Carsons, who received a 30-year long service award, and to Wayne Carsons, who achieved 35 years of service in the New South Wales State Emergency Service. I was also pleased to recognise May Gill, the unit controller for the Kempsey State Emergency Service unit, and to present her with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. May's name has now been included on the "Hidden Treasures" Honour Roll, which was recently launched by the Department of Primary Industries. It acknowledges the important volunteer roles women play in New South Wales rural communities.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Hear! Hear!

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: I extend my deepest thanks to these volunteers whose accumulated wisdom and experience is irreplaceable. These experienced and devoted members are the backbone of our volunteer emergency services. Their commitment, enthusiasm and dedication are tireless and our community owes them a tremendous debt of gratitude.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.29 p.m.]: I concur with the comments of the member for Port Macquarie. I had the pleasure of launching the honour roll to which she referred which details the many and wonderful stories of women in regional and rural New South Wales who have contributed so much in a voluntary capacity. I congratulate all those valued members of the State Emergency Service to whom the member for Port Macquarie referred and I wish them well in their volunteering efforts in the future.

NEWCASTLE KNIGHTS

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [4.30 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to and thank a number of groups that are operating in the Newcastle community. I commend them for their contribution to our city's rich social tapestry. Recently I attended the Newcastle Knights presentation dinner.

Mr Troy Grant: Hear! Hear!

Mr TIM OWEN: It is a great team. My wife, Charlotte, and I were enthralled by a presentation made by Margaret Kime, General Manager, Castle Personnel Services. Castle Personnel Services, which has been operating in the Hunter region for almost 20 years, provides a range of services to assist people with a disability to achieve their goals. In recent years the organisation has worked in close consultation with the Newcastle Knights, providing its clients with a unique opportunity to assist players with their training sessions and also with their football matches. In her presentation Margaret Kime told the story of how one of Castle's clients, Jason "Houso" Woods, made great progress towards reaching the outside world through his involvement with the club.

Two years ago Geoff Dixon from Castle Personnel Services contacted the Knights and arranged for its clients to assist during training sessions. Tasks have included running water, shifting markers, attaching harnesses to weight sleds, passing footballs, interacting with the players and removing goalpost pads at the completion of practice. Margaret Kime described how the clients involved in these training sessions displayed a great deal of pride in their jobs. Their sense of belonging in our community and their involvement are real and evident from the moment one first sees them working at the training sessions.

Castle Personnel Services staff and management, including Geoff Dixon and Margaret Kime, must be congratulated on their commitment to creating unique opportunities for their clients in the Hunter region and their involvement with the community in which they operate. I commend their work strongly to this House. Additionally, I praise the Newcastle Knights for their continued commitment to our city. The involvement of the Knights with the Hunter community is far and wide reaching, and this is just another example of how successful they are in displaying corporate responsibility in its truest form. I also congratulate the Hunter Sports Group, led by Nathan Tinkler, for the great work it has done in funding the businesses and the community activities in which the Newcastle Knights are involved. I shared Margaret's sentiments when she said to me later:

The Knights certainly supersede community expectations with their support of- charitable work, their work with school students, indigenous youth, infirmed and disabled, the vulnerable and the disadvantaged, most of whom feel a real sense of belonging and involvement with this Novocastrian team.

Congratulations Knights and thank you for taking the time to make many members of our community who often feel invisible, experience a real sense of involvement and belonging, emotions that important to every single one of us.

I extend a note of congratulations to Ben Rogers, the recipient of the 2011 Player of the Year award. It is a pleasure to see his great work on the field, as I have done at many home games this season. It is wonderful to know that his hard work and dedication are appreciated by his club and by the Newcastle community. On behalf of the Newcastle constituency I wish him well in his retirement and on his new role with the Hunter Sports Group. Finally, I take this opportunity to congratulate the team from TAFE NSW, Coffs Harbour, which recently won the Golden Trowel Award in Newcastle. I was fortunate to be invited to attend the presentation awards night, which wrapped up the Tenth Golden Trowel competition. The competition encourages excellence amongst apprentices and recognises the skills of young people in the bricklaying and block laying trades. The work that I saw was outstanding.

I am advised that all the teams competed to a high standard. The teams had a day of competition and produced well-built tasks at the end of their two-day competition time, with a day of competition and a day of build-up. Additionally, I am informed that the Hunter TAFE team performed exceptionally well and it was an honour to meet members of that team at the presentation. I thank the Concrete Masonry Association of Australia and TAFE NSW for inviting me to this event and for their continued sponsorship.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL HERDMAN

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [4.35 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to Michael Herdman, a constituent in my electorate of East Hills, who is a dedicated volunteer and a loyal supporter. Michael lives in Revesby which is close to my electoral office. Since moving into the office in April I do not think a week has gone by without Michael dropping in to say hello and to offer us his tips and suggestions. A visit from Michael is always a welcome distraction from our daily activities. Over the past few months, as I have got to know Michael, I have learnt some interesting things about this man. On Wednesday 9 November 2011 Michael and his lovely wife, Leonie, will be celebrating their thirty-seventh wedding anniversary. I mention that because more often than not we hear about people who are getting divorced, so it is pleasing and encouraging to hear about a couple who have overcome all sorts of difficulties and who have stayed together for well in excess of a quarter of a century. That praiseworthy achievement is one to which all married couples should aspire.

For the past 45 years Michael Herdman has been involved in the disability sector. For more than a decade Michael has been a board member of the New South Wales Council for Intellectual Disability, having joined in 1999. The Council for Intellectual Disability is the peak organisation in New South Wales representing the interests of people with intellectual disability. Michael is also a life member of People with Disability [PWD], a national peak disability rights and support organisation. Michael's involvement spans 32 years. If that is not enough, Michael is a senior soldier with the Panania Branch of the Salvation Army—a position he has proudly held since 1994.

That is not all that I have to say about Michael Herdman. Each year for the past three years Michael has received a participation award from the Council for Intellectual Disability. He received his last award in December 2010 which recognised, among other things, his face-to-face meeting with Patricia Scott, the Productivity Commissioner. At that meeting Michael spoke of the support that was needed by those with a disability and subsequently he was asked to give evidence at a Productivity Commission hearing. Michael Herdman has shown us how to be good citizens and active members of our communities. It is a pleasure to recognise in this Chamber today Michael's dedication to and hard work in the East Hills community.

DEMENTIA

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [4.39 p.m.]: As one of the convenors of the Parliamentary Friends of Dementia, I commend the work of Alzheimer's Australia NSW and the Frank Whiddon Home, which is located in my electorate of Macquarie Fields. "Dementia" is an umbrella term for a number of diseases, the most common of which is Alzheimer's disease. These diseases all cause dementia which is a decline in a variety of cognitive functions such as memory, judgement and communication, and a decline in someone's ability to carry out his or her daily activities.

Like many other members of the House, on 3 August I attended a launch of the discussion paper "Building Dementia and Age-Friendly Neighbourhoods", which was held in the Jubilee Room of Parliament House. The master of ceremonies was the wonderful President of Alzheimers Australia, Ita Buttrose. John Watkins, who is the Chief Executive Officer of Alzheimers New South Wales, also attended. Minister Constance and Professor Henry Brodaty spoke at the launch. The latest document from Dementia New South Wales calls for the built environment to include the needs of the ageing population. For example, more appropriate and comfortable seating in shopping centres, more accessible unisex toilets, non-slip floor surfaces, better public lighting, and travelators rather than escalators are changes that we will all need to examine, given our ageing population. Those simple changes would make a big difference to the daily lives of people who have dementia, their families and their carers.

Kylie Sant, who is a most impressive young woman, spoke of her family's struggle with her father's dementia. Her father was only in his early sixties when he was diagnosed. Like many with dementia at a younger age, his initial symptoms were misdiagnosed as depression. Kylie is one of the most impressive young people who ever has been in this place. As John Watkins and Professor Brodaty said, dementia is now the third leading cause of death after heart disease and stroke. The dementia tsunami that the baby boomers will create is one that every government, regardless of political belief, will have no option but to confront. Both sides of politics support the Dementia New South Wales framework 2010-15.

The number of people in New South Wales with dementia is expected to quadruple from 84,000 in 2009 to 341,000 in 2050. Access Economics estimates that the numbers in Australia will increase from 250,000 in 2011 to one million by 2050. As Professor Brodaty stated, we cannot afford to show the same wilful blindness to the dementia epidemic that we show to other issues, such as global warming. The definition of wilful blindness is: "If there is knowledge that you could have had and should have had, but chose not to have, you are still responsible." The reality is that we are all responsible for dementia. In Australia each week, 1,500 people are being diagnosed with dementia. It is still a devastating diagnosis, and one for which no treatment is available. The family repercussions are permanent. Carers often feel physically and emotionally overwhelmed as well as socially isolated.

There are 26,000 new cases diagnosed annually in New South Wales, but that will increase to 116,000 cases by 2050. With regards to dementia incidence, the Macquarie Fields electorate will move from No. 83 out of 93 to 25 out of 93 by 2050, which is almost a 500 per cent increase in prevalence. Dementia is a challenge for all governments. Even more challenging is that many other problems coincide with dementia, such as psychological and behavioural changes that all need complex assessment and support. Often there is a delay

associated with diagnosis as well as an overwhelming demand on the existing workforce that has dementia expertise. Geographic isolation will be an increasingly important issue, especially in rural areas and when many dementia sufferers move to coastal areas that have limited health resources.

Ageing is core business for health, and dementia is core business for ageing. Patients with dementia have longer stays in hospital, more complications such as falls, and 50 per cent of all hospital beds are occupied by people over the age of 70. In the Macquarie Fields electorate, the wonderful centre of the Frank Whiddon Group at Glenfield had its major awards event on 7 July. The Frank Whiddon home at Glenfield has 441 general beds and 20 dementia-specific beds in a low-care unit. To be admitted to one of the wonderful dementia units, one needs to undergo assessment by an aged care assessment team. There are rarely vacancies and the waiting list for admission is approximately six months. Alzheimers New South Wales and Frank Whiddon are wonderful organisations. I commend all involved in the Frank Whiddon Group, including Lee-ann Irwin, who is its Chief Executive Officer, and John Cooper, who is Chairman of the Board of Directors of Frank Whiddon House.

VISIT NEPAL 2011

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [4.44 p.m.]: I am pleased to inform the House of a wonderful cultural event I attended on the weekend. On 5 November Visit Nepal 2011 was hosted by the Nepalese Community of Western Sydney Inc. at St Mary's Memorial Hall. The Nepalese Community of Western Sydney Inc. was founded in Glenmore Park in 2006. The incorporation was formed to give Nepalese people in western Sydney a collective voice and an organisational structure to achieve unity and strength within our community.

The Nepalese Community of Western Sydney was established with the following objectives: to promote cultural, social and educational activities of the community in the region; to raise awareness and promote Nepalese culture among the younger generation of the community with the aim of becoming model world citizens; to promote Nepalese culture and values in western Sydney, primarily covering Penrith City Council and all adjoining councils, to all interested people; to provide a means of exchange of cultures among other communities in the area and greater Sydney region; to provide a common forum for the pursuit of fulfilment of Nepalese social and cultural needs of people from a Nepalese ethnic background; and to function as a medium between the community and the local State and national governments and other organisations to promote and participate in multicultural activities.

The current president of the incorporation, Dr Ram Neupane, and his executive team are continuing a tradition of strong community participation. The organisation has participated in Clean Up Australia Day and blood donation drives, and has been involved in local sporting competitions. There are 26 families in my electorate who are involved in the incorporation, most of whom live in Glenmore Park and Werrington. A previous Nepalese event that I was delighted to attend earlier this year was the Nepali New Year 2068 Celebration, which was attended by almost 500 people. It was an exciting night, filled with colour, song, dance, wonderful food and celebration. I was pleased to be invited to speak at the Visit Nepal 2011 event on the weekend, which aimed to establish Nepal as a premier holiday destination with a definite brand image in Australia.

The incorporation is also working to improve and extend tourism-related infrastructures and enhance the capacity of service providers in our area. The incorporation is to be congratulated for the practical and pragmatic assistance it is providing to the Nepalese tourism industry. I had a joyful time with the Nepalese community at last weekend's event, which included live performances of Nepalese culture, music and dance. There were food and craft stalls offering samples of traditional cuisine and home wares. Many tourism operators were present. There was also face-painting and a jumping castle for the children. I was impressed by the organisation and promotion of the event. The efforts of the organisers paid off, as more than 400 people attended on the weekend.

I take this opportunity to congratulate the event manager, Kabin Joshi, as well as Dr Ram Neupane and all the other organisers who contributed to the event and to the outstanding presentation of Nepalese culture to our local community. I also thank the Penrith City Council for its contribution to the evening, including waiving of the venue hire fee. Nepal has many claims on the world stage, such as having eight of the world's 14 highest peaks and of course the highest mountain peak in the world, Mount Everest. Who would not wish to visit Nepal, which has natural diversity unlike anything we know in Australia?

The incorporation is doing a fantastic job of continuing the strong relationship between Australia and Nepal. In 2010 Australia and Nepal celebrated 50 years of diplomatic relations. I commented in my speech at

the Visit Nepal 2011 event on the weekend on my personal love and passion for dance and how much I enjoyed watching the Nepalese dance performances throughout the evening. After that disclosure, I was set upon by members of the Nepalese community and enthusiastically informed that I would be participating in a Nepali dance next year at the Nepali New Year 2012 celebration. I think I will be looking forward to attending that event next year. I hope I can learn the complex dance movements and perform most dances to the standard that people of the Nepalese community have worked many hours to perfect. I extend my sincere thanks to the Nepalese Community of Western Sydney Inc. for organising a fantastic event that really showcased how beautiful, rich, exciting and colourful the Nepalese culture is. I look forward to continuing a strong relationship with the Nepalese Community in Western Sydney Inc.

TRIBUTE TO JIM MARSDEN

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [4.49 p.m.]: I speak about a gentleman of whom many members of this place have heard—and some may have had the pleasure to meet. I know that the member for Campbelltown has heard of him. He is a gentleman and a philanthropist in every sense, and I am proud to speak about him. Jim Marsden, together with his late brother John, built a firm from humble beginnings in south-western Sydney that has transformed into the multifaceted organisation now known as Marsden's Law Group. Jim, a savvy businessman and talented solicitor, who has a reputation for fierce professionalism, was recently rewarded for his generosity and pro bono work. At a recent awards dinner Jim received the Law Society's 2011 Justice Award in front of more than 360 people. I congratulate Jim on receiving this award, and on a 30-year career that has always had its foundation rooted firmly in serving the community.

I take this opportunity to inform the House of the many organisations, charities and sporting groups in which Jim has been involved over the years and pay homage to his work in the community. Marsdens, established in 1968, began with Jim's late brother John. Jim has been the senior partner since 2003. The firm, which is based primarily in south-western Sydney, employs approximately 145 people of whom 90 are based at the head office in Campbelltown. For his entire professional life, Jim has been committed to the community. It is said that a man who gives material or monetary possessions is a generous man—but a man who gives freely of his time and talents is a noble one. It is fitting to say that Jim Marsden is in both categories.

Jim is a proud and generous supporter of local charities and continues to sponsor annual events. He has also applied himself to assisting and participating in a number of local organisations over the years including, but not limited to: chair of both Liverpool and Campbelltown chambers of commerce, chair of Casula Power House Art Centre, coordinator of Multiple Sclerosis, founding chairman of Campbelltown Life Education, founding president of the Koshigaya Sister City Committee, director of Odyssey House, director on the Salvation Army Advisory Board, foundation chairman of the Macarthur Club, director of Ingham's Health Research Institute and chair of the Macarthur Economic Development Advisory Board.

Jim Marsden is also heavily involved in Mater Dei, a school established as a special school in 1957, just outside Camden. Mater Dei is now an organisation that provides early intervention services and a residential program, as well as education for babies, children and young people with an intellectual disability or developmental delay. Recently it held its annual fundraiser, which Jim not only supported financially through Marsden's Law Group, but also by judging the children's talent quest on the night, for which he donned his gold sequined jacket. I think Jim thought he was Frank Sinatra or even Elvis Presley, but at the end of the judging, all of the kids came an equal first, which is testament to Jim's compassion. Both the member for Camden and I were inspired by the work of the school and the children, and a few weeks later we were proud to present a cheque for the sum of \$10,000 in support of the school. I place on record that on this occasion it was the children who inspired us and not Jim or his gold jacket.

While this is a lengthy resume of community involvement it does not stop here. Another of Jim's great loves is sport. Local sport in the Macarthur region has been the recipient of Jim's wisdom and generosity for many years. It should be noted that he was the chairman of the Western Suburbs Magpies when it was a member of the Australian Rugby League, which is also noteworthy. It was a turbulent time for the local club—a club I support. I have no reservation in proclaiming my love for the black and orange, or black and white, as it should be. Jim was at the helm during the negotiations with Balmain to produce the joint venture it is today. Jim then accepted a position as deputy chairman of the newly established West's Tigers, before also accepting a posting as a director of the New South Wales Rugby League.

Jim has also been a director of the Greater West Sydney Sports Foundation and director of South West Sydney Olympic Fundraising Committee. He has recently accepted an invitation to join an advisory group for

the Greater Western Sydney Giants Australian Football Leagues club, of which I am a founding member. Born and raised in the local region, Jim has become an advocate for the area. His expertise in legal practice, however, does not extend only to those in a position to hire him. He is a strong supporter of the pro bono scheme and it is for that reason he has been awarded his most recent honour. In presenting the award, President of the Law Society, Stuart Westgarth, said:

Jim is the Senior Partner of Marsden's Law Group and he and his firm have contributed to the legal profession and to the community for more than 30 years. He is supportive of the Law Society's Pro Bono Scheme and has undertaken, through his firm, a large volume of family and criminal matters over the years and, in particular, accepted matters on short notice. Jim is a very worthy recipient of this award.

The electorate I represent and the greater south-western Sydney region is a better place because of people like Jim Marsden. I take this opportunity to commend him on a life of service to the community and congratulate him on his recent award.

BALLINA ELECTORATE POLICING

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [4.54 p.m.]: I raise the important issue of police numbers in the Ballina electorate which falls both within the Richmond and Tweed-Byron local area commands. This is an issue that I and my North Coast colleagues, particularly the member for Lismore, the member for Tweed, the former member for Clarence and the member for Coffs Harbour, raised repeatedly during the time of the former Labor Government, but it took little notice. I am confident that with the current audit of police resources that has been commissioned by our new Liberal-Nationals Government that the actual police numbers will be identified and the severe under-resourcing of our area will be addressed. The audit has been conducted by former Assistant Commissioner Peter Parsons, APM.

I support our police officers 100 per cent. I know that our local police officers are doing the best possible job within the constraints of very limited resources. Police in the Ballina electorate face numerous challenges, but they all come down to one major problem: insufficient police numbers, especially police members available for operational duty. The former Labor Government repeatedly argued that our local area commands were technically over strength compared with authorised strength. This argument was misleading, irrelevant and, frankly, bogus. The fact is that the North Coast has one officer for every 700 people, compared with the statewide ratio of one officer for approximately 500 people. These figures are even worse when one considers that visitor numbers are not taken into consideration and that the Northern Rivers had more than two million overnight visitors and 3.4 million day trip visitors in 2010. These tourists expect a reasonable level of policing and add to the demand for police services. If tourists are added to residential population numbers, we are the worst regional area by far in police numbers.

The strength for the Tweed-Byron command is currently 133 and for the Richmond Local Area Command it is 196. Police numbers have fallen so far in relation to the general population that there is a spiral of decreased effectiveness. In many areas the reported crime figures are lower than the real crime figures because many residents have given up reporting crime—they assume, with some justification, that the police response will be slow, especially when they have more serious crimes to attend to. Insufficient police numbers place undue pressure on serving officers, forcing many to take stress leave, and thus putting additional pressure on the remaining officers. North Coast police have the highest proportion of officers on sick leave and restricted duties. Local police officers report their numbers are too low for any sustained proactivity, when all resources are tied up in reactive police work, leaving little or nothing for preventative policing.

The abnormally high number of non-operational police attests to this fact. I believe that every police command should have some minimum level of acceptable operational strength, so that non-operational officers are taken into consideration when command strength is reported. It is quite unreasonable to expect a local area commander to operate his area effectively when 20 per cent of police officers are not available for operational duty. There are a number of reasons why it is imperative that police numbers are increased in the Ballina electorate. Our area is one of the fastest-growing areas of non-metropolitan New South Wales. The North Coast has the State's highest incidence of mental illness, which is a major drain on police resources. We also have a high incidence of drug-related crime.

There are insufficient resources to deal with this type of crime, which is often the cause of break and enters as people seek to get money to buy drugs. We have a significant problem with youth crime, antisocial behaviour and violent confrontation between various groups. This puts further pressure on police resources. In

addition to the need for more general duties officers, the North Coast urgently needs a major boost to highway patrol numbers. These numbers have barely changed since the early 1990s, despite a massive increase in traffic caused by the upgrade of the Pacific Highway and very significant regional population growth, and an increased tourism trade. Heavy vehicle numbers have doubled in recent years, creating serious issues especially on those sections of the Pacific Highway not yet upgraded.

For all of those reasons I believe we have a very strong case for a significant increase in police resources for the Richmond Local Area Command and the Tweed-Byron Local Area Command. I trust that Peter Parsons' audit will bring to light the dire situation of police resources on the North Coast and that our new Government will take strong corrective action to rectify the lack of police. I am sure that given the comments from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in regard to this issue we can look forward to some supportive comments in relation to the new Government and the new police Minister's actions in this regard.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.59 p.m.]: I thank the member for Ballina and Minister for the North Coast for raising this issue. Police resourcing is an enormous challenge confronting the NSW Police Force and it has been an issue for members from the North Coast for a long time. Finally, after many years of neglect, it is getting the attention that it deserves. This Government will work very closely with the Police Association and other interested parties to ensure that police resourcing in regional areas is addressed so that communities have the services that were not delivered by the former Government.

Ms Linda Burney: You know that is not true.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind members that during private members' statements it is courteous not to interject. The member for Canterbury should fulfil her House duty by listening in silence.

ERARING POWER STATION FIRE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [5.00 p.m.], by leave: I am sure members are aware of the transformer explosion at Eraring Power Station at about 2:30 a.m. on 28 October, and efforts to extinguish the blaze and prevent the escape of hazardous materials into the environment. This event tested the preparedness of the power station personnel and procedures and, of course, the local emergency services. Prompt action was taken in response to the fire emergency and other aspects of the situation. I specifically acknowledge the members of the Rural Fire Service, who were first on the scene, the town fire brigade and the Hazmat team that attended in the early hours and stayed until after the fire was extinguished on 30 October.

This was a serious incident with power supply and environmental implications. Thankfully, there were no fatalities or injuries as a result of this dramatic explosion because few people were in the vicinity at such an early hour. The debris from the explosion indicates that death or serious injury could have resulted if that were not the case. However, there were failings. Aside from technical aspects of the transformer failure, there are concerns about the accuracy and timeliness of the information provided about the emergency. One concern relates to the lack of reports coming directly to me as the local member. That might sound a bit precious, but I am sure any member who had such an incident in his or her electorate would expect timely information. It is not about Greg Piper, member for Lake Macquarie; it is about the fact that I am the local member and people expect me to be informed.

I had received no information 12 hours after the fire started from either Eraring Energy or the Government, so I contacted the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Resources and Energy. I remain disappointed at having to ask, but I was pleased to receive informative responses from both Ministers within an hour. The Government could have done a better job of informing the public of what was occurring. There was no departmental or ministerial media release on the Office of Environment and Heritage website, even though the fire caused a considerable risk of oil leaks, which eventually occurred. Aspects of the fire response also warrant mention. Initial *Newcastle Herald* reports included a statement made by an officer of Fire and Rescue NSW that no oil would escape. In fact, he was quoted as saying:

We have boomed that and there is no chance of oil getting into Lake Macquarie.

Later that day the same officer was quoted as saying:

... crews are on site and have conducted tests to ensure we don't have any oil or any other contaminants entering any of the areas in Lake Macquarie or the wetland.

These reports may have been comforting at the time, but they were not accurate, as demonstrated by the quantities of oil subsequently found at Myuna Bay, Whiteheads Lagoon and Silverwater. The attempt to contain the oil had failed and belied the initial level of confidence expressed in media statements. As the incident progressed, it was the Minister for Resources and Energy and not the Minister for the Environment who commented on environmental matters. Events ultimately proved that his comments were either ill-advised—which I believe they were—or inconsistent with other reports. The regional manager, the only spokesperson for the Office of Environment and Heritage, gave the apparently contradictory advice that people should avoid contact with the oil but that it would not harm marine life. Detailed information on the properties of the transformer oil now shows that environmental impacts will be minimal and temporary. Unfortunately, early reports to the public provided no clarity on that issue.

I was disappointed that Eraring Energy did not inform me soon after the fire started. However, when the executive manager, Jeff Hogan, contacted me the following day he was particularly helpful. I was pleased to attend a site inspection on the Sunday morning with the Minister for the Environment and the regional manager of the Office of Environment and Heritage to witness the clean-up and to receive a report on how oil escaped the site. Downstream environmental impacts were of great concern and I have been advised by Audrey Koosmen of the Native Animal Trust Fund that Eraring Energy was supportive of the group's efforts to respond to impacts on wildlife. Oil ultimately affected significant areas of foreshore, but Eraring Energy appears to have conscientiously responded to residents' concerns.

Obviously, Eraring Energy faces a significant problem in replacing the transformer and resuming production, but a review of its preparedness for such failures should also be a priority. There is also a clear need for Eraring Energy, government agencies and the Government itself to improve on the quality and timeliness of information provided to the public. Given the informative nature of the report I received from the Minister for the Environment, I see this as a missed opportunity to reclaim some of the credibility lost through the recent Orica pollution crisis at Stockton. Understandably members of the public have expressed serious concerns about this matter. I await with interest the reports on the management of the incident and recommendations for dealing with future incidents.

Private members' statements concluded.

TRUTH IN LABELLING (FREE-RANGE EGGS) BILL 2011

Bill received from the Legislative Council and introduced.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I advise the House that the Speaker has received a written authority from Dr John Kaye, MLC, advising that the member for Balmain will have the carriage of the bill in this House.

Agreement in principle set down as an order of the day for a future day.

ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS AMENDMENT (HOUSING) BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [5.06 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

First and foremost, it is appropriate for this legislation, which amends the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983, that I commence by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation and I pay my respects to their Elders both past and present. The object of this bill is to amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 to facilitate entering into and managing of residential tenancy agreements of less than three years, or periodic agreements, by boards of local Aboriginal land councils where other parties to the agreements are natural persons. The bill amends section 42E of the Act to explicitly exempt residential tenancy agreements of less than three years from the operation of a section in the Act, which imposes specific requirements on how local land councils deal with their land and an amendment to section 52G (e) of the Act to ensure that short-term residential tenancy agreements are excluded from the types of land dealings that require approval by resolutions of voting members of a local Aboriginal land council.

The amendments define "short-term residential tenancy agreements" to align the Act with the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. This will greatly assist the administration of residential tenancy matters concerning Aboriginal land councils by the Consumer, Trading and Tenancy Tribunal. An amendment to section 62 of the Act will also confer directly on the board of a local Aboriginal land council the functions of entering into, managing and terminating short-term residential tenancy agreements, in relation to land vested in the council. By adding this specific function, the board becomes empowered to delegate the function to the Chief Executive Officer of the Land Council in accordance with section 72, which provides that boards may delegate their functions.

Additional provisions are an amendment to section 230 of the Act to make it clear that an administrator of a local Aboriginal land council is empowered to exercise this board function in relation to short-term residential tenancy agreements without requiring the consent of the council at a meeting. However, to put the amendment in context I need to provide an overview of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the land council network. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act commenced operation in 1983. The essence and beneficial nature of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act is captured in the preamble, which states:

1. Land in the State of New South Wales was traditionally owned and occupied by Aborigines:
2. Land is of spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance to Aborigines:
3. It is fitting to acknowledge the importance which land has for Aborigines and the need of Aborigines for land:
4. It is accepted that as a result of past Government decisions the amount of land set aside for Aborigines has been progressively reduced without compensation.

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act provides a mechanism for compensating Aboriginal people of New South Wales for the loss of their land. Aboriginal land councils, of which there are 119, can claim Crown land, which if granted is transferred as freehold title. They may also acquire land by any other lawful means. Self-determination is the underlying theme of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and it is unique in that it provides the members of a land council with real power to utilise their land holdings for social, cultural or economic development or any other lawful purpose.

Land councils have statutory functions for the acquisition, management, use, control, disposal or otherwise dealing with their land. Land councils are bodies corporate whose governing boards are elected every two years by the members of the council. Those members are adult Aboriginal persons predominantly residing within the geographical area of the council. An adult Aboriginal person may also be a member of a council if they reside outside the area of the council, provided the members have accepted they have an association with the council's area. The roles and functions of the members in elected governing boards and staff of land councils are set out in the Act. This enshrines a separation of powers, and specifies that certain functions are able to be delegated, which fosters a transparent and effective governance model for land councils.

However, like all governance models, the land council model benefits from reflection and review over time. An issue that required review was the decision making by land councils in relation to "residential tenancy agreements", pursuant to the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. A powerful impetus for reviewing this issue was the Land and Environment Court's decision in *Woods v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council* and *Thatcher v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council* delivered on 23 March 2011, concerning decisions by a local Aboriginal land council about residential tenancy agreements where the council is the landlord. The court relevantly found that decisions about residential tenancy agreements by a land council when it is the landlord are decisions that concern the use, management, control, holding, disposal or otherwise dealing with land.

It was found that such decisions needed to be made by a valid resolution of council members at a meeting, and the decisions were found not to be able to be delegated. Consequently, they are not decisions that can be made by the governing board or the chief executive officer of a local Aboriginal land council. The court's findings identified particularly onerous circumstances for the management by local Aboriginal land councils of the 2,600 residential properties which they own and manage as Aboriginal community housing stock. If all decisions about residential tenancy agreements where a local Aboriginal land council is the landlord must be made by a valid resolution of members the burden on land councils would be significant and a number of serious governance and management problems may emerge.

First, it would greatly increase the possibility of circumstances where conflicts of interest may arise. For example, it would be very difficult for a council member to vote on whether to evict a tenant for a serious breach of their residential tenancy agreement when they are directly related to the tenant. Untangling their

familial obligations from their obligations as members of the council in this circumstance would be very difficult for any person to do. Another example would be when council members are required to vote in relation to rent increases when they are also tenants occupying those same residential properties. It is simply unfair to place the council and its members in these positions of conflict. In addition, given this finding would result in the need for more members meetings, this places an added financial burden on a land council due to the advertising costs associated with notifying members.

The Land and Environment Court's decision in *Woods v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council* and *Thatcher v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council* resulted in strong representations to me from the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, various local Aboriginal land councils, and the Registrar of the Act. May I say that I am grateful to the Land and Environment Court for the clarity of its decision: such clarity meant that the representations made to me were in turn clear and considered. The representations made to me have resulted in the amendment bill that I tabled in this House today.

A significant benefit of the amended bill is that it empowers elected local Aboriginal land council governing boards to administer and manage fair, consistent and financially viable residential housing programs on behalf of their council. As members of this House know well, clear and definitive corporate governance is the foundation of our most valued institutions in our society, both private and public. We all depend on accomplished corporate governance to ensure sound and fair decision-making. Without attention and commitment to good governance we risk disarray and the erosion of what we expect and trust in our institutions, corporations and those that lead and administer them.

The Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment (Housing) Bill 2011 is the O'Farrell-Stoner Government's commitment, made together with Aboriginal stakeholders, to ensure that the governance of local Aboriginal land councils is free of potential conflicts of interest for members, elected officials and staff. As a consequence this will help build and enhance the capacity of land councils to deliver housing outcomes and services to their members, their families and Aboriginal communities across the State. Conflicts of interest will exist if tenants of residential properties owned or managed by a local Aboriginal land council are simultaneously members of the local Aboriginal land council. Managing conflicting interests is often wrought with complexities. However, these amendments go a long way to resolving the conflicts, which, if allowed to continue, would have undermined the functioning of local Aboriginal land councils.

In addition, the amendments will provide greater certainty for all stakeholders involved in the management of land council housing. Aboriginal people from across the land council network have been telling me how the findings in this decision have led to poor compliance with housing policies and residential tenancy agreements. This has frustrated the efforts of land councils and in particular their governing boards to manage housing in a fair, consistent and financially viable way. By ensuring that housing owned and managed by local Aboriginal land councils is supported to become sustainable and financially viable the quality of living conditions of Aboriginal people residing in land council managed housing will be improved. This in turn improves the overall quality of the Aboriginal community housing sector.

Importantly, most of the 119 local Aboriginal land councils manage community housing for their members and their families, making up the 60 per cent of housing stock in the Aboriginal community housing sector, or 2,600 of the total 4,300 dwellings managed by approximately 200 Aboriginal housing providers in New South Wales. The number of dwellings managed by any one local Aboriginal land council can be as little as two or three but ranges up to more than 80. In some remote areas land councils are the largest landowner. Management of their housing by land councils is a key, yet often burdensome, part of land councils' overall administration. However, at the same time, for many members, access to land council housing is the most tangible benefit that membership presently offers. Land councils are thus key players in the delivery and management of housing to many Aboriginal people. Yet the establishment of land councils as housing providers, whilst enacted with good intentions, has nonetheless created an often complex and challenging environment for housing management.

While some land councils have adopted the role of housing provider, unfortunately, some land councils have had to deal with a poor tenancy culture, including low or sporadic rental collection and limited maintenance of stock. This has led to a substantial amount of Aboriginal land council housing stock being substandard, which is why reform in this area is so critical. These matters are of critical concern to Aboriginal land councils, which must balance the rights of tenants with sustainable housing asset management. They are also, for similar reasons, of ongoing chief concern and priority for the New South Wales Aboriginal Land

Council and the New South Wales Aboriginal Housing Office. I acknowledge their present efforts to develop and implement policies to counter the tenancy trends of the past to ensure that the Aboriginal community housing sector of this State is viable and fares well into the future.

The amendments provide greater clarity of Aboriginal land council board functions and roles. They significantly improve the efficiency of land council administration in land and housing asset management by investing boards with the statutory function of managing the residential tenancies of their councils' community housing assets and empowering boards, if they so choose, to delegate performance of that function to their chief executive officer or other appropriate person or body. It is my intention, through the amendments I propose here today, that the housing culture within local Aboriginal land councils be strengthened and refined by empowering governing boards and staff of those councils through a stronger and more appropriate legislative framework.

Apart from those benefits, this improved efficiency will strengthen local Aboriginal land councils' ability to receive benefits under the current process of reform of the Aboriginal community housing sector. The sector reform, known as the Build and Grow Strategy, is partly predicated on ensuring arm's-length management of housing stock by Aboriginal community housing providers as a condition for receiving financial support and subsidies, and having maintenance carried out. That is a condition of the Commonwealth's funding support under the Remote Indigenous Housing national partnership agreement and its implementation by Housing NSW through the Aboriginal Housing Office.

Finally, in relation to the discussion of members' rights, the point must be made that a critical element of tenancy and housing management by local Aboriginal land councils is the ability for both the councils and their tenants to have their rights and duties under residential tenancy agreements properly overseen and enforced by the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal [CTTT]. In turn, this means that it is very important that the tribunal is given clear guidance about the decision-making of local Aboriginal land councils in relation to residential tenancy agreements. This amendment will greatly assist the important work of the tribunal.

It is true that these amendments take decision-making in relation to residential agreements from the members of a local Aboriginal land council, as found in the Land and Environment Court decision, and invest them in the governing boards of those councils. However, I note that land council boards must exercise their functions in accordance with not only the Act and regulations, but with the community, land and business plan of the council. Such plans are compulsory and must be approved by members of the council at a meeting. Such plans may cover a period of up to five years. Residential housing programs are an important part of community, land and business plans, so council members retain the function of approving the planning structure for the council's housing program.

What local Aboriginal land council members are relieved of is the day-to-day management of the council's residential housing program. What they retain is the power to consider the actions and performance of their governing board in managing the residential programs that they have approved. In conclusion, it is well known that improvements in housing have a direct correlation with better outcomes in health, education and employment, as well as reducing crime and family violence. Access to stable and affordable housing can provide a base from which households can access support, develop positive relationships, and participate in the community and economy. In this way improved housing management will make an important contribution to closing the gap and opening up opportunities for Aboriginal people across New South Wales.

I thank and acknowledge the critical role of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council in the development of this bill. It has provided insight into what measures are going to be serviceable and effective for Aboriginal land councils in a complex system, and provided skilled and professional advice about the amendments. I also acknowledge the work and commitment of the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the staff of the office of Aboriginal Affairs NSW in the development of this bill. I also acknowledge the support of this bill by the Aboriginal Housing Office, which has reviewed the bill and confirmed its view that its provisions will assist land councils to meet the tenancy and housing stock management benchmarks, which are conditional to their receiving benefits under the ongoing reform of the Aboriginal community housing sector. The bill is a necessary addition to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [5.25 p.m.]: I will speak to this bill representing the member for Auburn and the shadow Minister in this area, Mrs Barbara Perry, who is very unwell and is unable to be here today. Having regard to the nature of the bill, I recognise traditional country and pay respect to the peoples of this particular piece of Australia. The Opposition will not oppose the bill. The Aboriginal Land Rights Bill commenced in 1983, so it has been around for some time. In fact, I remember being in Macquarie Street when there was a great deal of angst about the bill. I was not on the side of the bill that day, as I recall, but it was a long time ago.

This bill was enacted by the Wran Government. It was a very important and quite far-reaching piece of legislation back in 1983, particularly having regard to the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council being funded by what I recall was 7.3 per cent of New South Wales land tax, which has meant an ongoing sustainable base for the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. I know this legislation extraordinarily well as I had responsibility for the Act when I was Director General of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and I also had responsibility for the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, which was an office co-located within the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. I had line responsibility for not only the Department of Aboriginal Affairs but also the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act here in New South Wales.

The bill is very important because it recognises that land in New South Wales is traditionally owned and occupied by Aboriginal people and is of spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance to Aboriginal people, and it accepts that as a result of past government decisions the amount of land set aside for Aboriginal people has been progressively reduced without compensation. Many in this Chamber may not know that history intimately, but we all understand that the land is a fundamental part of Aboriginal culture. The connection between Aboriginal people and land gives Aboriginal people identity and a sense of place of belonging. It is the foundation of Aboriginal culture.

When the connection to country is broken, as we see with such things as the stolen generation, it can have a devastating personal effect on Aboriginal people, so land is fundamental. The Act provides a mechanism for compensating Aboriginal people for their loss of land. Local Aboriginal land councils can claim Crown land which, if granted, is transferred to freehold title—in the same way as any block of land purchased anywhere in New South Wales is, which is critical to the good workings of this bill. Interestingly, when the land council network was put in place I was involved, through personal connections. I think I am correct in saying that there are 115 local Aboriginal land councils—

Mr Paul Lynch: No, 119.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: The 119 local Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales are elected bodies. With great respect, they are an interesting animal in that sense. As the Minister said earlier, land councils provide a democratically elected organisation in all New South Wales Aboriginal communities and in many cases they are the largest landholders. The land councils also underpin economic development and sustainability in those communities. They also have statutory functions for the acquisition, management, control and disposal of land with freehold title—an incredibly onerous and important responsibility. The objective of the bill is to:

Amend the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983* to facilitate the entering into and management of residential tenancy agreements of less than three years, or periodic agreements, by Boards of Local Aboriginal Councils where the other parties to the agreements are natural persons.

The tenants union has expressed concern about this. The Opposition recognises the important points raised by the tenants union but it will not oppose the bill. The bill is a response to the findings of the Land and Environment Court in *Woods v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council* of 23 March 2011. That case raised concern about local Aboriginal land councils and their administration of residential tenancies. As was said earlier, in many ways this is a difficult one. The cycle of poverty for Aboriginal families and communities centres on housing. Positive outcomes result from good housing but for Aboriginal people in New South Wales the housing situation is dire.

Sadly, throughout the State 15 or more Aboriginal people live in two and three bedroom homes. I have great admiration for the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council, and I know that the member for Liverpool also has a close connection with it. I recently met with the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council to discuss one of the most exciting housing developments ever proposed for New South Wales. Under this revolutionary proposal, which sets world standards, housing will be provided for the general community, not necessarily Aboriginal people, and reserve land will be preserved. A technology park is also to be included. The Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council deserves to be congratulated on its vision.

In summary, the effect of the judgement is that in order to comply with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act local Aboriginal land councils cannot enter into and decide to terminate residential tenancy agreements without a resolution of the members of the local Aboriginal land council. This is unwieldy and often hard to achieve. Such decisions cannot be delegated to chief executive officers or the board of the local Aboriginal land council. The resolutions can only be exercised by resolutions of voting members of the council. Members can imagine some of the complexities that could arise from time to time within that description.

The appeal by the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council has been adjourned awaiting proposed legislation. The Land and Environment Court judgement has raised a number of issues, which this bill seeks to rectify. As a result of the decision the process of terminating tenancy agreements becomes administratively cumbersome. Local Aboriginal land councils suffer the issue of time as well as the expense of having to advertise and hold a meeting if it is necessary to call an extraordinary meeting. The process is also arguably open to family conflicts of interest and other conflicts, which have a terrible effect on local communities.

New section 42E seeks to exempt residential tenancy agreements of less than three years from the operation of the section. An amendment to section 52G (e) of the Act will exclude short-term residential tenancy agreements from the types of "dealing with land" requiring approval by resolutions by voting members of a local Aboriginal land council. Section 62 of the Act is to be amended to give the board of local Aboriginal land councils the functions of entering into, managing and terminating short-term residential tenancies, which is eminently sensible. This will allow boards to delegate to the chief executive officer of the local Aboriginal land council and is in accordance with section 72, which allows boards to delegate their functions.

The bill also seeks to enable elected local Aboriginal land council boards to carry out their functions in an efficient and consistent manner. Some of the issues dealt with in the bill are complex. There is a need to balance the rights of tenants and the good governance and management of Aboriginal housing—I refer to my earlier comments about the tenants union. When the Hon. Greg Pearce introduced the bill in the other place he said that members still set the parameters for a board's management function through their statutory role in developing their community, land and business plan. He believes the amendments will support the reform currently underway in the Aboriginal community housing sector: the build and grow strategy.

I referred earlier to the cycle of poverty and the importance of adequate housing to break that cycle, which will lead to better health outcomes, better educational outcomes, better employment outcomes and so on. A number of groups were closely involved in the development of these amendments, including the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and the Office of the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Mr Geoff Scott, the chief executive officer of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, was once my boss. I leave the House to contemplate his wise comments about the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Rights Act:

This piece of legislation was described as groundbreaking and innovative at its inception ... it stands as the only initiative that has stood the test of time and delivered real assets and independence to our people ... it was conceived and born in controversy and friction; criticised for not going far enough by some; too far by others. The legislation is an evolving mixture of diverse roles and responsibilities, including inherent conflicts and frictions. But it does work.

I am satisfied that these amendments will enhance the land rights legislation. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [5.39 p.m.]: I support the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment (Housing) Bill 2011, which will amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983. The amendments will assist the entering into and management of residential tenancy agreements of less than three years or periodic agreements by boards of local Aboriginal land councils where other parties to the agreements are natural persons. The impetus for this amendment was the decision earlier this year of the Land and Environment Court in *Woods v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council* regarding the land council's management of its housing tenancy leases. The judgement in that case was to the effect that all decisions concerning residential tenancy agreements would, from that point, require the approval of a local Aboriginal land council members' meeting.

Necessitating such approval places significant burdens on the local Aboriginal land councils in their management of Aboriginal community housing stock. Continuing this practice would mean a higher likelihood of complications arising from conflicts of interest and other associated problems that occur from time to time. These concerns have been identified to the Government by those who have already been impacted by the decision. Furthermore, as a consequence of the decision in the Land and Environment Court, local Aboriginal land councils would have to suffer the financial and logistical burdens of organising and advertising meetings if an extraordinary meeting is required to be called. The amendments in this bill aim to prevent these consequences from undermining the capacity for local Aboriginal land councils to govern effectively and fairly.

These concerns were identified to the Government following the decision of the Land and Environment Court. The Government has acknowledged and responded to the concerns which were brought to it by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, a number of other local Aboriginal land councils and the registrar of the Act through this amendment. This bill subsequently will provide certainty for all stakeholders involved in the management of land council housing, including elected land council boards, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and, if relevant, the Aboriginal Housing Office and/or other approved housing

providers. The need for this Government to take action on the burdensome implications of the bill in its existing form is evident as the local Aboriginal land councils manage approximately 2,600 houses as Aboriginal community housing stock.

This amounts to 60 per cent of the total housing stock in the Aboriginal community housing sector. Through the management and delivery of this Aboriginal community housing stock these councils play a significant role in the delivery of social housing to many Aboriginal people in New South Wales. In New South Wales social housing is categorised into three subsectors—public housing, community housing and Aboriginal housing. The sector of Aboriginal housing is particularly pertinent to this State, as in New South Wales Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the homeless population. Furthermore, around 33 per cent of Aboriginal people live in social housing in New South Wales in comparison to approximately 6 per cent of the general population. I am very aware of those percentages in my electorate of Wollondilly.

This bill is an example of how the Government recognises the importance of supporting the Aboriginal housing sector in the face of such statistics. Supporting this sector by helping to strengthen its management means that this Government, in conjunction with Aboriginal land councils, can contribute to meeting the housing needs of the Aboriginal population in New South Wales. This support can contribute to the social, health and economic wellbeing of the Aboriginal community in our great State by providing an environment that is supportive and conducive to positive family and community relationships.

This Government aims to ensure this support through these amendments, as it will enable elected local Aboriginal land council boards to have the capacity to administer fair, dependable and economically sound housing policies. Such governance is a vital feature of an efficient and fair decision-making process within all spheres of society. If amendments were not undertaken, the implications of the decision of the Land and Environment Court would hamper the capacity of Aboriginal land councils to deal with Aboriginal housing stock and it would not promote the principles of good governance.

Strengthening the level of governance requires a series of vital amendments to a number of sections throughout the bill. This includes an amendment to section 42E of the Act which will result in residential tenancy agreements of less than three years being exempt from the operation of the section, and the specific requirements relating to how local Aboriginal land councils manage their land. In addition, section 52G (e) of the Act will be amended to allow short-term residential tenancy agreements to be excluded from the types of "dealings with land" that require approval by a resolution of voting members of a local Aboriginal land council.

Furthermore, an amendment to section 62 will confer directly on the board of a local Aboriginal land council the functions of entering into, managing and terminating short-term residential tenancy agreements in relation to land vested in the council and managing and terminating those agreements. This addition will authorise the board to delegate the function to the chief executive officer of the land council in accordance with section 72, which provides that boards may delegate their functions. Additional provisions include an amendment to section 230 of the Act to make it clear that an administrator of a local Aboriginal land council is empowered to exercise the board function in relation to short-term residential tenancy agreements without requiring the consent of the council at a meeting.

As has already been stated in debate today in the other House, these improvements in management that the bill aims to achieve will constitute just one part of this Government's contribution to closing the gap and increasing opportunities and experiences for Aboriginal people. As a consequence of these amendments there will be an increase in the ability of Aboriginal people to provide important housing outcomes that will assist members, their families and the Aboriginal communities of New South Wales as well as the people of Wollondilly. I take this opportunity to mention the valuable contribution to the local community of the Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council in Wollondilly. The key function and business of Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council is as a land council. Its role includes also the provision of assistance to improve and foster the social, economic, physical and mental wellbeing of its members and all Aboriginal people within the Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council boundaries.

Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council offers a range of services, projects and facilities for utilisation by members of the broader community. These projects and services are targeted to assist Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council members and the Aboriginal community. Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council tries to address unmet needs through an extensive range of projects and ensures access to the available services and programs offered to all Aboriginal people living in the Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council boundaries. Currently, Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council provides extensive support to the community

and is engaged in the following activities: land acquisition and management; identifying Crown land in the Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council boundaries; development and maintenance of housing and accommodation services; Aboriginal culture and heritage protection; undertaking site surveys, site investigations and cultural heritage assessments; undertaking site clearances, protection and preservation of Aboriginal sites; archaeological work; maintaining and updating the sites register and promoting culture and heritage through cultural activities such as NAIDOC Week.

Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council assists in the development of local employment strategies and Aboriginal enterprises and it assists in the development of community facilities and community capacity, including various social and cultural activities. I know that the member for Macquarie Fields is involved also in this area. Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council also assists with fundraising for local community initiatives and non-funded program costs; ongoing local, State and national networking with other Aboriginal mainstream service providers and private enterprise; involvement in community projects and initiatives to provide a focus on community needs, and the strategies required to address them; and providing Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council as a training and meeting venue.

This service and the staff, board and volunteers are to be commended for their dedication. These selfless individuals include, but are not limited to, Greg Bondar, chief executive officer; Yvonne McGregor, office administrator; Dulcine Blair, events coordinator of administration; Kay Bussell, day care respite coordinator; Leeanne Wright, receptionist; and board directors, Ross Evans, the chair, Rebecca Ede, deputy chair, and Eric Stone, Glenda Chalker, Gavin Andrews, Shane Evans, Fran Bodkins, Denise Ezzy and Karen Adams. The good work done by these people has been bolstered by recent funding allocations in the Wollondilly electorate in this year's budget, further increasing the major works funding allocated under the Aboriginal Housing Office—funding that will help to continue to service the Wollondilly region.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the good work done by Minister Dominello and to thank him for his tireless efforts in this important portfolio. I thank him also for his assistance over the past few months and look forward to working with him in the future. Recently, when I attended a local government conference, I met representatives of 27 local Aboriginal land councils. All the representatives of those land councils told me how excited they were to have a Minister who was willing to listen to them, to heed their concerns, to consider most issues, not necessarily agreeing with every one, and to have an open and transparent dialogue. It is important for Minister Dominello to continue that work. I commend the Minister and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.48 p.m.]: In contributing to debate on the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment (Housing) Bill 2011, I support the bill and acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet—the Gadigal people of the Eora nation—and I pay my respects to their elders, past and present. I also pay my respects to the elders of the other first nations of this land. This bill will amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 to facilitate the entering into and management of residential tenancy agreements of less than three years or periodic agreements for local Aboriginal land councils, known as LALCs, through their boards. The object of the bill might sound quite prosaic but it is important to the future of the land council movement and, by extension, for Aboriginal people and communities generally in this State—a matter of considerable concern to the land council movement. A number of people have spoken to me about the consequences of the decision of the Land and Environment Court.

The amendments contained in this bill are necessary because of a recent decision in the Land and Environment Court concerning the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council and two of its tenants. I know Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council well and over the years I have had dealings with a number of local Aboriginal land councils. However, the offices of the Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council are located about 100 metres from my electorate office in Liverpool. I have previously expressed my admiration and support for the activities and directions of the current board. My view of the court decision that has created the need for this legislation is that I would have decided it differently. I am not necessarily being critical of the judge; I am merely reflecting on the fact that intelligent and well-intentioned people can have a difference of opinion over legal matters.

This legislation is important because of what it means for land councils and for what land councils can mean to Aboriginal communities. Any attempt to close the gap and to deal with Aboriginal disadvantage in this State will fail without the active involvement of land councils. Certainly, the capacity for economic development of land councils is extraordinary and includes some matters to which the member for Canterbury referred, such as sand extraction at Worimi, some of the work that the Darkinjung people have done, and the extraordinary work and proposals of Gandangara, which is running a medical centre, has undertaken land

development and has a massive land development proposal in the pipeline. We can tell that we are getting the balance right when Aboriginal land councils are treated just like white developers. That is a good thing in the economic development that Aboriginal land councils are pursuing.

I suspect there is little comprehension among the broader community of just how important and significant Aboriginal land councils are and certainly how significant the 1983 land rights legislation was. In my view, it was one of the great achievements of the Wran, Ferguson and Walker era. In the recent Wagga Wagga High Court case, Justice Kirby, as he then was, described the 1983 Act as "almost revolutionary". It delivered freehold title to land to Aboriginal land councils. In legal terms the benefits it delivered were far in excess of the much later High Court judgements concerning native title. That is a point I have made on previous occasions. It is a point that all of us should keep making until people get just how significant the 1983 Act was.

The desirability and advantages of that Act are such that, while members of the Coalition—who were in opposition in 1983—opposed the legislation, as I understand it they are quite supportive of it; indeed, they are enthusiastically supportive of it, or at least that was certainly the case during the last Parliament. I note in passing it is a pity that the same could not be said of Warwick Watkins. The potential of the legislation was improved by the land dealings amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act that have occurred in recent years. They were designed in conjunction with the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council to allow greater certainty and development proposals and joint ventures by land councils. That was very clearly about allowing, with appropriate regulation, greater economic development by land councils that would lead to very direct economic and other benefits for Aboriginal communities. Using land councils that have attained land through land claims represented a coming together of development and the rights agenda. There was a separation of rights and development in the 1990s.

Frankly I have never seen the logic in that. There is no logic in that separation at all. Those amendments were about the coming together of both of those traditions, with significant potential advantages for Aboriginal communities. However, all of that assumes well organised and functional land councils, which is why the land dealings legislation I have just discussed is so critically central to the legislation that is before the House. There is no doubt that over the years there have been a number of examples of dysfunctional councils. In some cases that led to administrators being appointed. I note the comments made by the member for Wollondilly about the Tharawal Aboriginal Land Council, which not long ago had an administrator. It is also not long ago that the Tharawal Aboriginal Land Council has come back and is now engaged in quite good things with an elected board. In one case, matters were so serious that an Aboriginal land council was dissolved and criminal charges were laid. I notice from the *Government Gazette* that an attempt has been made to reform that land council. I hope that is successful.

Originally part of the problem was that the legislation provided for what was, in essence, a tennis club model of organisation that was quite unsuitable for an organisation that might seriously deal with land and property. It is no great surprise that if the model had flaws, there would be weaknesses in practice. Several years ago that provoked a significant review of the Act and significant changes, such as the introduction of a model involving boards with much clearer divisions of responsibility. Indeed, I recall that the member for Toongabbie, who is present in the Chamber, was involved in part of that process. Certainly I know that the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council [NSWALC] takes the issue of governance extraordinarily seriously. Many of the local Aboriginal land councils I have met place great emphasis on getting the governance correct. That becomes difficult, if not impossible, if the structure is not correct. That is why this legislation is so critical. Without this legislation, a fundamental aspect of proper governance of local Aboriginal land councils and the earlier improvements to the local Aboriginal land council structure I have mentioned will be undermined.

In my view, deciding which tenant goes into land council property or is evicted should not be decided by a meeting of the members of the council. That is clearly an operational matter that should be determined by a group other than a general meeting of the members. This legislation will allow the board to make that decision or, frankly, more appropriately, delegate it to someone else. That delegation is exactly what I have seen happen in many of the most effective Aboriginal housing schemes I have come across. Some years ago a very senior member of the land council network told me that the biggest single threat to the land councils system was housing. Fights over who gets, or does not get, housing had the potential to render land councils dysfunctional. Allowing general meetings of members to determine the priority of housing lists could lead in some circumstances to more chaos or packing of meetings than could possibly be healthy, to say nothing of the potential conflicts of interest.

It seems to me that support for this bill is essential to in turn support the efficient functioning of land councils. The judge involved in the decision was correct when he referred to the beneficial and remedial nature

of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. That is clear from the words of the statute and indeed from previous judgements. However, in my view, the proper interpretation of that provision does not relate just to a benefit to an individual Aboriginal tenant. In my view the real benefit is its flow to collective bodies, land councils, who can provide dramatically greater benefits to dramatically more Aboriginal people. It seems to me that that is the proper way to interpret that case. On that basis, of course, a very different decision from the one that was delivered would result.

I note there was some discussion by the Tenants Union that wants to have greater restrictions on how tenants can be dealt with. The problem with that proposal is that some housing is social housing and some is not in relation to what is owned by the land council. If the intention is to impose an extra set of standards, requirements and conditions on land councils relating to how they deal with their tenants, there may be a danger of imposing greater restrictions and limitations on Aboriginal people than on non-Aboriginal people. That is a consequence that members should not support. The provision of land rights under this legislation is not just a recognition of invasion and dispossession, and it is not just symbolic. Rather, it is a very central component of any attempt to close the gap. That makes land councils critical in closing the gap. For that reason this bill is extraordinarily important.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [5.55 p.m.]: As this bill amends the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983, I commence by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and I pay my respects to their elders past and present. I support the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment (Housing) Bill 2011. The Aboriginal Land Rights Act commenced operation in 1983. The essence of that Act appears in its preamble in four parts. First, land in New South Wales was traditionally owned and occupied by Aborigines. Second, land is of spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance to Aborigines. Third, it is fitting to acknowledge the importance which land has for Aborigines and the need of Aborigines for land. Fourth, it is accepted that as a result of past government decisions the amount of land set aside for Aborigines has been progressively reduced without compensation.

The 1983 Act provides a mechanism for compensating Aboriginal people for loss of their land. The 119 local Aboriginal land councils can claim Crown land which, if granted, is transferred as freehold title. The local Aboriginal land councils have statutory functions for the acquisition, management, control and disposal of land in freehold title. Local land councils are corporate bodies with elected managing boards. The roles and functions of elected boards, staff and members of Aboriginal land councils are set out in the Act to enshrine a separation of powers and to specify certain powers as delegable to foster transparent and effective governance of land councils. This bill aims to address the judgement of the Land and Environment Court on 23 March 2011 in *Woods v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council*. The judgement concerned the land council's management of its housing tenancy leases and has meant that all decisions concerning residential tenancy agreements would require the approval of a member's meeting.

The decision has some adverse implications for the management by local Aboriginal land councils of approximately 2,600 houses that they manage as Aboriginal community housing stock. First, the decision increases the chances of a conflict of interest arising—for example, in the circumstance in which family members vote on whether to increase the rent, or to evict a tenant who is a family member. Second, the decision means that local Aboriginal land councils suffer the imposition of time and expense of advertising and convening meetings if an extraordinary meeting is required to be called. This bill comes after representations to the Government by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, various local Aboriginal land councils and the registrar of the Act. The bill amends the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 to facilitate entering into and the management of residential tenancy agreements of less than three years, or periodic agreements by boards of local Aboriginal land councils when other parties to the agreements are natural persons.

This bill will confer five interrelated benefits. First, it will empower local Aboriginal land council boards to administer fair, consistent and financially viable housing policies. Clear and definitive corporate governance is the foundation of the most valued institutions in our society, private and public. The bill aims to improve corporate governance in this context by ensuring that governance is free of potential conflicts of interest for members, elected officials and staff. The conflict of interest exists in the fact that a rent-paying tenant can simultaneously be a member of a land council. Balancing conflicting interests is often wrought with complexities. However, the amendment goes some way towards resolving this issue, which would have undermined the functioning of local Aboriginal land councils. Aboriginal people have told the Government that the decision has led to poor compliance with housing policies and agreements. This has resulted in frustrating and contradicting the elected board members' efforts to manage housing in a fair, consistent and financially viable manner.

I said that this bill will confer five interrelated benefits. The second benefit is that the bill will provide certainty for all stakeholders involved in the management of land council housing, including elected land council boards, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and, if relevant, the Aboriginal Housing Office and/or other approved housing providers. The amendment provides greater clarity of board functions and roles and adds significant efficiency to land council administration in land and housing asset management. It does this by assigning boards the statutory function of managing the residential tenancy aspects of their council's community housing assets by empowering boards, if they so choose, to delegate performance of that function to their chief executive officer or other appropriate agents.

The third benefit is that the bill thereby ensures that housing owned and managed by the Aboriginal community housing sector is supported to become sustainable and financially viable. As a result, the quality of living conditions of Aboriginal people residing in land council-managed housing hopefully will be improved. The fourth interrelated benefit is that this improved efficiency will strengthen the ability of local Aboriginal land councils to receive benefits under the current process of reform of the Aboriginal community housing sector. The sector reform, known as the Build and Grow Strategy, is partly predicated on ensuring arms-length management of housing stock by Aboriginal community housing providers as a condition for receiving financial support and subsidies and having maintenance carried out. That is a condition of the Commonwealth's funding support under the Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership and its implementation by Housing NSW through the Aboriginal Housing Office.

The fifth interrelated benefit is that improvements in housing are correlated with better outcomes in health, education and employment, and a reduction in crime and family violence. In this way, improved housing management should make an important contribution to closing the gap and opening up opportunities for Aboriginal people across New South Wales. The statutory amendments will be as follows. First, section 42E of the 1983 Act will be amended to exempt residential tenancy agreements of less than three years from the operation of the section, which is located in that part of the Land Rights Act that imposes specific requirements on how local land councils deal with their land. Second, section 52G (e) of the 1983 Act will be amended to ensure that short-term residential tenancy agreements are excluded from the types of "dealing with land" that require approval by resolutions of voting members of a local Aboriginal land council.

Third, section 62 of the 1983 Act will be amended to confer directly on the board of a local Aboriginal land council the functions of entering into, managing and terminating short-term residential tenancy agreements in relation to land vested in the council and managing and terminating those agreements. By adding this specific function to the other board functions set out in section 62, the board becomes empowered to delegate the function to the chief executive officer of the land council in accordance with section 72, which provides that boards may delegate their functions. Fourth, section 230 of the Act will be amended to make it clear that an administrator of a local Aboriginal land council is empowered to exercise the board function in relation to short-term residential tenancy agreements without requiring the consent of the council at a meeting. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [6.03 p.m.]: I am delighted to be given an opportunity to speak in debate on the Aboriginal Land Rights (Housing) Amendment Bill 2011. I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and I pay my respects to their elders, past and present. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition noted, the object of this bill is to amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, first introduced into Parliament on 24 March 1983 by Mr Frank Walker on behalf of the Wran Labor Government. On that day Mr Walker described the reformist legislation as "the first step in this State towards redressing the injustice and neglect of real Aboriginal needs since Captain Phillip stepped upon the shores of Port Jackson in 1788".

As I understand it, these amendments are in direct response to difficulties local Aboriginal land councils could face after the recent findings of the Land and Environment Court in *Woods v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council*. In that case the Land and Environment Court found that all decisions concerning residential tenancy agreements would now require the approval of a members' meeting. This has a number of ramifications that this bill seeks to remedy. Firstly, there is the burden of time and expense to organise and convene meetings if an extraordinary meeting is required. Secondly, there is the possibility of a conflict of interest arising where family members are voting on rent increases or eviction of tenants who are family members. The bill seeks to remedy those issues by giving boards the statutory function of managing the residential tenancy aspects of their council's housing assets by enabling boards to delegate this function to their chief executive officer or other agents.

Thus an amendment of section 52G will ensure that short-term residential tenancy agreements are excluded from the types of "dealing with land" that require approval of voting members of a local Aboriginal land council. An amendment to section 62 of the Act will give local Aboriginal land council boards that ability to enter, manage and terminate short-term residential tenancy agreements in relation to land vested in the council. The board will thus be able to delegate the function to the chief executive officer of the land council in line with section 72 which provides that boards may delegate their functions. The bill seeks to uphold transparency and efficiency in governance for local Aboriginal land councils. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition noted, the Opposition is satisfied that these amendments are in line with the original intentions of the land rights legislation. In his second reading of the original Land Rights Bill, Mr Walker noted that land rights have a dual purpose—cultural and economic. Mr Walker said:

Not only does land rights legislation recognise the spiritual attachment to the land by Aboriginal people, it also recognises that land rights has the potential to improve Aboriginal self sufficiency and economic wellbeing—achieved by the provision of funds for open market purchases of economically viable properties.

This bill seeks to uphold in particular those economic aims of the land rights legislation. It seeks to uphold the transparency and efficiency of local Aboriginal land councils. I therefore commend the bill to the House.

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [6.08 p.m.]: I lend my support to the Aboriginal Land Rights (Housing) Amendment Bill 2011, which will allow for better management of Aboriginal housing by amending the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 to bring it more into line with the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. In March 2011 the Land and Environment Court handed down a decision that jeopardised the economic viability and good governance of Indigenous housing in New South Wales. That decision had the unintended consequence of requiring all residential tenancy agreements to be approved by a member's meeting. The court's decision created an impossible situation for the management of almost 3,000 houses by local Aboriginal land councils—houses that are managed as Aboriginal community housing stock.

This bill provides certainty for all stakeholders involved in the management of land council housing, including elected land council boards, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and, where relevant, the Aboriginal Housing Office. The amendment provides greater clarity for the function and roles of the boards and adds effectiveness to land council administrations in their management of land and housing stock. The bill ensures that housing owned and managed by the Aboriginal community is properly supported to become sustainable and financially viable. By doing this, the quality of living conditions for Aboriginal people residing in land council managed houses hopefully will be improved.

Local land councils are key players in the delivery and management of housing for many Aboriginal people. Unfortunately, some land councils have had to deal with a poor tenancy culture, including low and infrequent rent collection and poor maintenance of housing stock. That poor tenancy culture has led to a substantial amount of housing being unavailable for Aboriginal people. That is why this bill is vital. The proposed amendments will support a stronger housing culture by empowering board members and staff of the land councils. It should be supported by all members of both Houses because it will not only assist the Aboriginal community but also improve housing and help to create better outcomes in health, education and employment while reducing crime and family violence. This bill makes an important contribution to Aboriginal people across New South Wales and for that reason I commend it to the House.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [6.11 p.m.]: It is my great pleasure to support the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment (Housing) Bill 2011. The object of the bill is to amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 to make it easier for boards of local Aboriginal land councils to enter into and manage residential tenancy agreements. An amendment to section 42E will exempt residential tenancy agreements of less than three years from the operations of this section, which will bring the legislation into line with the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. An amendment to section 52G will ensure that short-term tenancies are excluded from the types of dealing with land that requires approval by resolution of voting members of a local Aboriginal land council. An amendment to section 62 will confer directly on the board of an Aboriginal land council the functions of entering into, managing and terminating short-term residential tenancy agreements. This will enable the board to delegate responsibility to the chief executive officer of the authority to deal with these agreements.

The roles and functions of the elected boards, staff and members of the Aboriginal land councils are set out in the Act to enshrine a separation of powers and to specify certain powers as delegatable to foster transparent and effective governance of land councils. These changes are necessitated by the decision of the Land and Environment Court in *Woods v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council*. That ruling requires the

management of residential tenancy agreements to be approved by a full members' meeting, which has created several potential problems. First, the process is now more bureaucratic and therefore slower. Secondly, it has increased the possibility of conflict of interest. For instance, family members could be required to vote on rent increases or the eviction of a family member. In response to the ruling, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council made strong representations to the Government requesting that the Act be amended. This legislation therefore reduces the risk of conflict of interest and should result in smoother decision-making by Aboriginal land councils in the management of their housing stock.

The legislation also provides greater clarity about Aboriginal land council board functions, roles and responsibilities, which should also improve their efficiency. The 119 Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales manage 60 per cent of the Aboriginal housing stock; that is, 2,600 of the 4,300 properties. The long-term goal of these amendments is to improve the quality and availability of housing for Aboriginal people in New South Wales. It is appropriate to identify the role that proper housing plays in the health of a community. I recently attended a talk by a professor in Newcastle who referred to the quality of the built environment and specifically its impact on children and rates of accidents, respiratory disease and a raft of morbidities and mortalities. Legislation like this can make incremental improvements in the lives of Aboriginal people, and this Government and previous governments have been committed to that goal.

It is appropriate to acknowledge the work of two Aboriginal land councils in the Hunter. The Awabakal Land Council provides great advocacy for its people. The Awabakal Nature Reserve, which encompasses a pristine coastal environment, was established by a predecessor of mine, the Hon. Richard Face. Many people wanted the reserve to have an Anglo-Saxon name, but he fought hard to have the original owners of the land acknowledged. That was a wise move and it has ensured that the Awabakal are permanently enshrined in our local community, and that is very important. The Worimi Land Council also provides terrific advocacy for its people. It is my great pleasure to commend the bill to the House and to thank the Minister for his hard work.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [6.18 p.m.]: I support the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment (Housing) Bill 2011. Members on both sides of the House have referred to the specific elements of the legislation, but I will take a different approach. I draw members' attention to the preamble to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983, which states:

... land in New South Wales was traditionally owned and occupied by Aboriginal people, and is of spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance to Aborigines.

Self-determination is the underlying theme of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and it is unique in that it provides members of local Aboriginal land councils with real power to utilise their landholdings for the purpose of economic development. Aboriginal land councils have statutory functions with regard to the acquisition, management, control and disposal of land with freehold title. The roles and functions of the elected boards, staff and members of the Aboriginal land councils are set out in the Act to enshrine a separation of powers to specify certain powers as delegatable to foster transparent and effective governance of land councils.

The rationale for this amendment bill was born of the March 2011 decision by the Land and Environment Court in *Woods v Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council* and the council's management of its housing tenancy leases. That ruling meant that all decisions concerning residential tenancy agreements required the approval of a members' meeting, which increased the possibility of conflicts of interest. For example, family members might be required to vote on whether to increase rents or to evict a family member. Local Aboriginal land councils are now faced with the effort and expense of advertising, and convening extraordinary meetings. If this anomaly is not corrected, the economic viability and good governance of land councils would be jeopardised.

The decision resulted in strong representations to the Government by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, various local Aboriginal land councils and the Registrar of the Act, and those representations have resulted in this amendment. The benefits of implementing the amendment include empowering local Aboriginal land council boards to administer fair, consistent and financially viable housing policies. Clear and definitive corporate governance is the foundation of the most valued institutions in our society, both private and public. We all depend upon accomplished corporate governance to ensure sound and fair decision-making. Without attention and commitment to good governance we risk disarray and the erosion of expectations, and trust in our institutions and corporations and those who lead and administer them. This would also impact upon the credibility of our local land councils, and that would be eroded.

The Government has made a commitment jointly with stakeholders to ensure that the governance of Aboriginal land councils is free of potential conflict of interest for members and elected officials and staff. As a

consequence this will build the capacity to deliver housing outcomes and services to members, their families and Aboriginal communities across the State. The conflict of interest exists in the fact that a rent-paying tenant can simultaneously be a member of a land council. Aboriginal people from across the network have told the Government that the decision has led to poor compliance with housing policies and agreements. This has frustrated and contradicted elected boards' efforts to manage housing in a fair, consistent and financially viable manner. The bill will provide certainty for all stakeholders involved in the management of land council housing, the Aboriginal Land Council, approved housing providers and the Aboriginal Housing Office.

The amendment provides greater clarity of boards' functions and roles, and makes significant efficiencies in land council administration in land and housing asset management. It also ensures that housing owned and managed by the Aboriginal community housing sector is supported to become sustainable and financially viable. Thus the quality of living conditions of Aboriginal people residing in land council managed housing hopefully will be improved. I am told there are 119 land councils across the State and that about 60 per cent of housing stock in the Aboriginal community housing sector, about 2,600 houses, is managed through Aboriginal land councils. Management of their housing by local land councils is a key yet often burdensome part of the overall administration of land councils.

In my local area is an example. Whilst the Bungree Aboriginal Association does a lot to improve Aboriginal housing, a land council that I hold in high regard, the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, has only a small number of properties. When asked why it does not have more of these properties, the land council makes it clear it does not want to be further involved in housing because it causes difficulties and because housing is hard to manage. The Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council is totally supportive of this amendment because it opens up other opportunities for the council; it will encourage the council to have greater involvement in housing and investment by the land council in possible purchase or even construction of housing.

The Darkinjung land council has a model that seeks to achieve house ownership for its membership, a goal we all try to reach. But the council understands that housing is a transitional area that it needs to expand. Until a change like this comes through, the local Aboriginal land council will not consider other opportunities for social housing transition. The proposed amendment will support and refine a stronger housing culture within local land councils by empowering elected board members and strengthening corporate governance. Minister Pearce in the other place commented:

It is well known that improvements in housing have a direct correlation to better outcomes in health, education and employment, as well as a reduction in crime and family violence. Access to stable and affordable housing can also provide a base from which households can access support, develop positive relationships and participate in the community and economy. In this way, improved housing management will make an important contribution to closing the gap and opening up opportunities for Aboriginal people across New South Wales.

This amendment removes the conflict of interest and impediments on land councils by removing burdensome arrangements. More importantly, it assists economic empowerment of our land councils. This is why the bill is a necessity, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [6.25 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for Canterbury, Wollondilly, Liverpool, Cronulla, Wallsend, East Hills, Charlestown and Gosford for their contributions to this debate. I will address a concern raised by the member for Canterbury, who carefully articulated the concerns of the Tenancy Union. I also met with the Tenancy Union and heard those concerns. Essentially, the concerns are the possible erosion of members' rights through the mandatory termination of tenancies without the protection of procedural fairness. The amendments, as I have stated, align the Aboriginal Land Rights Act with the Residential Tenancies Act. Therefore both members and local Aboriginal land councils are entitled to have their rights and duties under the residential tenancy agreements properly overseen and enforced by the Consumer, Trading and Tenancy Tribunal.

I am comforted that the amendment properly addresses the concerns given that the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council supports the amendments, and that a number of local Aboriginal land councils that I have spoken with are very passionate supporters of the amendments and that the registrar also is supportive of the amendments. Notwithstanding the concerns raised, we believe there are embedded protections in that the Aboriginal Land Rights Act is now aligned with the Residential Tenancies Act and with the standard protections afforded by the Consumer, Trading and Tenancy Tribunal. The bill empowers elected local Aboriginal land council governing boards to administer and manage fair, consistent and financially viable residential housing

programs on behalf of their councils. This is a very important bill, as all speakers have identified. This is an important bill for local Aboriginal land councils and their empowerment as we move forward in this great State of ours. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

Bill declared passed and returned to the Legislative Council without amendment.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery of Ms Virginia Judge, the former member for Strathfield and former Minister for Fair Trading and former Minister for the Arts.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2011-12

Debate resumed from 19 October 2011.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.28 p.m.]: I continue my speech on the 2011-2012 budget handed down by our great Treasurer, Mike Baird. I am not alone in my praise for this budget. I mentioned earlier some of the positive headlines in local newspapers that are not partisan in their approach but have seen the benefits of this budget to the area. I have an article by which I am slightly embarrassed but very proud to feature in, because it highlights how significant this budget is for my area. I quote from the *Wollondilly Advertiser* article by the talented Michael Cox titled "Our first time MP raises hopes":

After deciphering the NSW Government's budget papers last week my first impression was that the state government had shown some guts; it opted to go into deficit to deliver infrastructure across the state. Wollondilly MP Jai Rowell, on paper, looks like a super hero ...

Furthermore, at the local Michel's Patisserie run by the lovely Golding family, two customers were overheard discussing the latest edition of the paper. They were overjoyed at the funding allocations for Wollondilly and praised the O'Farrell Government's proactive approach to rebuilding our State, saying, "They really are making a difference. I am glad I voted for him." We have not stopped there. Outside of the budget, our Government has shown that it is more than happy to support local initiatives that benefit our area. I thank the Premier for the recent funding given to the Goulburn to City Classic, an event older than the Tour De France, which travelled through Wollondilly recently. When approached by race organisers Paul Hillbrick and David Macefield I took the time to listen to their proposal. Not only would this event encourage healthy lifestyles, it would also promote tourism in my electorate and provide a weekend of entertainment for residents looking to take part in the festivities. It was with great pleasure that I secured \$20,000 funding to assist with the organisation of the event and I thank the Premier for his support.

I take the opportunity, while on the topic of tourism, to mention the upgrade to Warragamba Dam to the tune of close to \$900,000. Tourism in Warragamba is vital to the local economy, and improvements to the dam have direct benefits to its primary purpose and indirect benefits to the surrounding towns and suburbs. It is for this reason that I applaud this Government's decision to establish Destination NSW with a budget of more than \$400 million for the next four years to support the State's tourism industry—and I note that the Minister for Tourism is in the House as I speak. Tourism is an important economic contributor to the Wollondilly region, delivering an estimated 51,400 domestic overnight visitors and 292,000 day visitors annually.

More recently, the Government contributed \$10,000 in support of the Picton Music and Harvest Festival to help promote the event, which draws more than 5,000 people to the country town each year. The Minister for Tourism saw the benefit of this to my local economy and was more than happy to assist. It was a fantastic couple of days. I really enjoyed listening to the local talent. Thousands upon thousands of people attended the event. Of

course, you cannot have a successful tourism industry without a reliable and effective public transport system. In this budget, hundreds of millions of dollars have been allocated to rebuilding and refurbishing transport systems around New South Wales, including Wollondilly—improvements such as resurfacing, steel resleepering and electronic ticketing systems. Furthermore, money has been allocated to the South West Community Transport Program for people disadvantaged by physical, social or geographical factors.

The budget has demonstrated also our ability to work with local and Federal entities to achieve for our State. In Wollondilly, we have allocated money to work with the council to maintain local traffic facilities together with jointly funded road safety officers to deliver projects aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of road safety issues. Resurfacing of rural roads, such as the Hume Highway, Appin Road and Picton Road, is part of this budget. Installation of curve alignment markers at Remembrance Drive, Mount Hercules Road and Finns Road has also been included. More than \$60,000 has been allocated to school crossing supervisors to assist our children to cross roads each morning and afternoon, a service that is vital to ensuring that we protect the future leaders of our State.

I have spoken at great length about the finer details of this budget in relation to the great electorate of Wollondilly—the funding that we have received, the hard work that has gone into securing funding, the appreciation of a proud local member and the praise of local media outlets—but Wollondilly is part of a bigger picture. In a sense, its success as an electorate is linked to the success of New South Wales. When New South Wales prospers, Wollondilly prospers. When New South Wales falters, so too do its electorates. With this in mind, it is important to mention some of the broader inclusions of this budget and the strategic plan that has been formulated to guide New South Wales through the next decade. This is a bold plan by the Premier of this State, a premier who is demonstrating his leadership by creating NSW 2021—a strategic plan setting immediate priorities for action and guiding resource allocation within the New South Wales budget. This plan will target \$650 billion in new investments and the creation of 475,000 more jobs over the next 10 years.

The plan contains 32 goals and 180 targets to drive action based around five key strategies: rebuilding the economy, restoring economic growth and establishing New South Wales as the first place in Australia to do business; returning quality services, that is, providing the best transport, health, education, police, justice and family services with a focus on customer needs; renovating infrastructure, that is, building infrastructure that drives our economy and improves people's lives; strengthening our local environment and communities, improving people's lives by protecting natural environments and building a strong sense of community; and restoring accountability to government, that is, strengthening trust in public institutions, returning planning powers to the community and giving people a say on decisions that affect them.

In my opinion, this proactive approach to governance is the only way we can effectively and efficiently equip ourselves for the future. Consultation with industry, communities and other levels of government are equally as important. For this reason, over the next year we will be doing just that to identify actions that can be taken, and examine progress and new initiatives that can be implemented. I am proud to stand before you today as the member for Wollondilly and as a member of the O'Farrell Government. The 2011-12 budget has been an important yet exciting time. As a new member of this House, as many members are, it is good to see the promises we made prior to the election beginning to come to fruition. A document that I had during the election campaign, which I have spoken about previously, sets out the following:

\$15.4 million to widen Narellan Road

\$12 million for safety upgrades to Picton Road

\$40 million to upgrade and expand the emergency department at Campbelltown Hospital

That is what we said prior to the election and we have actually now increased that to \$139 million—a significant increase. The document continues:

100 additional beds and 25 more nurses for our local health district to help cut waiting times at Campbelltown Hospital

Fast tracking the delivery of sewerage services to more than 2,000 homes in Douglas Park, Wilton, Yanderra, Bargo and Buxton

16 extra peak hour train services per day from Macarthur to the city

Fast tracking the widening of the M5 from Camden Valley Way to King Georges Road

This budget delivers on much-needed vital infrastructure—infrastructure that those opposite failed to deliver for 16 years. Those opposite failed, but we are getting on with the job, and I commend the Treasurer on an excellent job with the budget.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.36 p.m.]: I congratulate the Treasurer on a very sensible budget that addresses the issues left over or not delivered by those opposite. It is a budget that has taken the politics out of the process and that looks at the overall good of the State. It is a budget that brings back economic responsibility and reinforces this Government's honesty and integrity in delivering its election commitments. It is a budget that has addressed the infrastructure needs of western Sydney—something that those opposite were unable to begin in 16 years of toxic government. It is a budget that has delivered on the Liberal-Nationals election promises. It is a budget that will begin to fix the mess left by the incompetence of the previous 16 years of hard Labor. It is a budget that serves the people of the Blue Mountains well.

The Blue Mountains electorate, as I have reminded members on many occasions, is a linear city that stretches along the mountain ridge from Blaxland to Mount Tomah. The backbone of this area is the road and rail line that also stretch through the middle of my electorate. These two pieces of infrastructure are vital to the wellbeing of the mountains from an economic and a community social perspective. The Great Western Highway has been in the process of being built for more than 40 years. The former Labor Government promised that it would be a dual carriageway before the Olympics—I am not sure which Olympics it was referring to, but it certainly did not appear before the Sydney Olympics.

Roadwork on the Great Western Highway has had a major negative impact on the tourism industry and the many small businesses that are reliant on the tourism dollar. After all, tourism is the single-largest industry in the Blue Mountains, the lifeblood of our economy. I have many stories from small businesses that the weekend day-trippers who would visit every month or so are not visiting due to roadwork. On a weekend, it can take two hours to traverse the Great Western Highway, when in light traffic it would take 45 minutes. This Government is fixing that mess and has committed to completing the upgrade, so that by 2014 there should be a dual carriageway from Lapstone to Katoomba. Historically, the highway was delivered piecemeal as Federal Government funding became available. Indeed, the sections being constructed at the moment at Lawson, Wentworth Falls and Woodford are under joint Federal and State funding. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has seen the value in finishing this upgrade with funding to the Bullaburra west and east stretches, the last links to the project—all new State funding.

The Government is getting on with the job. Not only is funding being allocated; the work is being done. On 1 September the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, announced that Daracon had been awarded the \$85 million contract for the upgrade between Bullaburra and Wentworth Falls. I can inform the House that the signs for the contractor and the heavy earthmoving machinery are already on site ready to begin—yet another project delivered by the Government. Part of the Bullaburra west project will see a median safety barrier and a fauna underpass installed near Boddington Hill. Work on the upgrade is expected to start later this year, depending on the weather, and the entire project, including the Bullaburra east portion, and should be finished in 2014. The long-suffering people of the Blue Mountains are unanimous about the need to complete the Great Western Highway. For far too long this project has been delayed. This will be a godsend not only to Blue Mountain residents but also to those in the Central West who rely on the Great Western Highway.

It has cost our small businesses dearly. Many businesses have closed due to the length of time it is taking to build the road and the problems being encountered. This is most evident in the township of Hazelbrook, where it has taken over five years to construct the road because of one problem after another. That township has endured telephone lines being cut, the breach of the gas line and the interruption of the electricity supply on multiple occasions. It has put a dampener on our tourism industry, which has suffered greatly. Accommodation providers also are suffering. The people of the Blue Mountains want the job done. They want to see the completion of the highway upgrade.

Importantly, the Government is doing it. In the 2011-12 budget \$160.7 million has been allocated to the Blue Mountains. As well as funding to complete the four-lane upgrade from Lapstone to Katoomba, \$22 million has been jointly funded for safety improvements between Mount Victoria and Lithgow—the scene of many truck accidents. In the past few weeks three truck accidents—one fatal—have occurred on Mount Victoria's bends. An additional \$1.3 million has been provided for pavement widening of the Bells Line of Road, as well as \$1 million in joint funding to complete a long-term strategy plan for the Bells Line of Road corridor—long overdue.

The people of the Blue Mountains also welcome the commitment by the O'Farrell-Stoner Government to improve public transport services, particularly rail services. As part of the \$102 million rail services allocation, the amendments to the timetabling of Blue Mountains trains has delivered a greater seating capacity and eight new services on weekends. Currently there are large gaps with trains running only hourly on the

weekends. More frequent services will be very helpful for weekend shoppers and for those workers who leave work late. The new timetable—which was only tweaked—came into effect on 23 October. It delivers 600 additional seats in peak periods and more carriages. The Government has listened to the community. I had received many complaints about overcrowding on Blue Mountains trains, especially in the afternoon peak with trains stopping at Parramatta. The extra carriages have helped to alleviate this situation. I now receive a lot of feedback applauding the initiative. What a great start to the improvement of our passenger rail network.

I look forward to the new timetable that will deliver on the Government's commitment to improve services with express trains on the Blue Mountains rail line—this should happen within the next 18 months to two years. I travel by train regularly to and from Sydney. I have noticed, and commuters have also commented to me, that more information is now being given, for example, when trains are delayed. This puts passengers' minds at rest. The Government has listened to the long-suffering commuters of the Blue Mountains who were so let down by the Labor Government. It slashed services and had trains slower than in the steam train era. What an absolute disgrace! Disability access to train stations is another major issue in my electorate, which has 17 railway stations and a large commuter population. A difficult geographic layout—the ribbon development along the Blue Mountains ridge line—and an ageing population make access to public transport a critical issue.

At the rate the previous Government had committed to providing disability upgrades it would have taken 90 years to complete. The Government is committed to taking the politics out of the selection criteria. There will be selection criteria: there will not be the ad hoc selection that took place under the previous transport Minister, the now Leader of the Opposition. I will continue to advocate for my community to receive a fair share of the \$60 million allocated to disability access. On the whistlestop tour of New South Wales electorates by the Leader of the Opposition during the winter recess he and his posse found their way to the Blue Mountains—perhaps they used one of our new tourism drive applications. As usual he and the Labor Party did not do their homework on the Blue Mountains electorate, and confused Labor's promises on transport issues as being Liberal policy. They messed the nest and then moved on to the next electorate.

The budget includes a five-year \$2 billion program for disability services—an enormous boost for this very important sector. The Blue Mountains will receive \$300,000 in capital works to build a new villa-style disability group home—a very welcome and much needed addition to disability delivery in the Blue Mountains. The Minister for Disability Services recently visited the Blue Mountains to present Greystanes Disability Services with a cheque for \$485,000. This will provide seed funding for its new positioning service. As I said earlier, the Blue Mountains is a major tourism destination. I applaud the initiatives of the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts and the Government for regional tourism.

I inform the House that the \$5 million commitment given prior to the election for these improvements has been delivered. Blue Mountains, Lithgow and Oberon Tourism was delighted to receive \$250,000 in funding, as did other regional tourism organisations. New tourist products are being funded. For example, I recently had the pleasure of launching the Mittaggar Indigenous tours developed by the Gundagurra Tribal Council, which showcase Aboriginal culture. The tours deliver an Indigenous experience, which is not very evident in the Sydney area, and the guides are trained at the local TAFE college. The Government is doing more than delivering on its election commitments; it is bettering them. I commend the budget to the House.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [6.49 p.m.]: I speak in relation to the budget and its impact upon Campbelltown. It could well have been written that "there was movement at the station for the word had passed around" that Campbelltown had been forgotten—to paraphrase *The Man from Snowy River* by Banjo Paterson. This budget could well be described in such historic terms as to its impact upon Campbelltown. I am very glad that the member for Wollondilly and the member for Macquarie Fields are in the Chamber. I know that the member for Macquarie Fields shares some of the joy of the greatness that has been bestowed on Campbelltown by a great budget by our Treasurer, Mike Baird.

As the member for Campbelltown I extend appreciation from the people of Campbelltown who have placed their trust in the Liberal-Nationals Government and in me to represent them as their member in Parliament. I am pleased to speak on the first budget of the Liberal-Nationals which demonstrates this Government's commitment to the people of Campbelltown and the greater Macarthur. The Macarthur Liberals—myself, Jai Rowell, the member for Wollondilly, and Chris Patterson, the member for Camden—have all presented a compelling call on behalf of the people of the Macarthur and we have been heard.

As I told the people of Campbelltown during the last election, it was all about leadership. For far too long they had been taken for granted and the term "south-west Sydney" had been generally used as a byword for

neglect. However, that has come to an end. The south west has been recognised in a budget that lays the foundation for regional city status for Campbelltown, the hub of the Macarthur. As I told the House in my maiden speech, Campbelltown knew full well the silence of the infrastructure projects that were delayed or never happened. Shane, the famous butcher from Ruse, gave our Premier, Barry O'Farrell, the advice during the campaign to "get on with the job" and that is what we have done. It was no mistake that the very first community Cabinet of this Government was held at Campbelltown. It was a clear recognition of the importance of Campbelltown, and it began laying down the important work for the budget strategy to support the growing needs of our regional city.

Perhaps the greatest treasure of the budget was the announcement of the extension and upgrade of Campbelltown Hospital to bring it up to level 5 status. Health is important—both healthy lifestyles and hospitals. During our election campaign we promised \$40 million to upgrade the emergency department and surgical wards for Campbelltown Hospital—we could have fulfilled our election promise with just that. However, the Macarthur Liberals knew that Campbelltown and the Macarthur needed more. I consulted our local health clinicians and the community. I met with the general manager of Campbelltown Hospital, Lisa Rathborn, Professor Neil Merritt, and the other clinicians at Campbelltown Hospital. I listened to their views and inspected the hospital. I told them that I would be a fearless advocate on their behalf.

My fellow Macarthur Liberals, the member for Wollondilly and the member for Camden, and I took the matter up with the health Minister. As the united Macarthur Liberals we met and stated our case to a very good health Minister, Jillian Skinner. The Minister listened and agreed—so much so that in a tight budget the Government increased its Campbelltown commitment from \$40 million to \$139 million for a full upgrade of the Campbelltown Hospital. This is a legacy that will last long into the future—it was the Liberal-Nationals who delivered the hospital upgrade for Campbelltown. I know the member for Macquarie Fields, as far as bipartisanship would allow, is a very happy man: the people for Macarthur all share the same resources.

All our medical staff, our clinicians, are overjoyed, which has raised their morale. In fact it was a pleasure to host the Treasurer, Mike Baird, at the Campbelltown Hospital because it was important for the man who played so much of a role in providing the finances for this hospital upgrade to come out and touch the ground where this hospital will be built, to see the faces of the clinicians and the doctors—people such as Professor Neil Merritt, a big, tall, imposing leading surgeon with a smile as broad as the country. It was important that the Treasurer, the man who signs the cheques, should share in the joy of Campbelltown.

They may draw maps for electorates in far distant cities but my love for Campbelltown has no boundaries. History will record that it was the Liberals, as part of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government—the Macarthur Liberals—who delivered Campbelltown its long-awaited hospital upgrade. I am so pleased that we have been able to deliver this long-overdue and much-needed upgrade. I am sure that all our doctors will enjoy it greatly. I look forward to the turning of the first soil in February 2012. This is a story that will just keep delivering for the people of Campbelltown.

The budget had a number of impacts in relation to roads. History will show that all roads lead to Campbelltown. This budget has allocated \$5.2 million to reduce congestion on Campbelltown Road. There is funding of \$25 million for the F5 widening between Brooks Road and Narellan Road. Planning is in place for the upgrade of the M5 between the Camden Valley Way and King Georges Road and the construction of a four-lane upgrade of the Camden Valley Way between Cobbitty Road and Narellan Road. All those roads interlink through the electorates of Campbelltown and Wollondilly and Camden into that hub of the south west, Campbelltown.

Rail is very important to the people of Campbelltown. The South West Rail Link, with \$292 million allocated, has tracks being laid as we speak. The necessary army land at Ingleburn has been purchased and in real terms there has a reduction in the periodic rail fares—money that is back in the pockets of the people of Campbelltown. It should be noted that was more than what was promised in the election. It is designed to reward regular commuters. There are more express train services to come. I am also very pleased that the Ingleburn commuter lifts that have been forgotten for so long are now on top of the priority list. I look forward to delivering those as well.

Some of the most significant benefits that will be delivered to the people of Campbelltown relate to the environment. The Liberal-Nationals are firmly committed to providing the best that our environment has to offer to local communities. Perhaps in the future the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan will emulate in south-western Sydney the significance of Centennial Park to the people of Sydney's inner suburbs. The

Government removed admission fees to assist ordinary Campbelltown people to enjoy this beautiful botanical garden. The community's response is reflected in an increase in attendances from 5,000 to 25,000 a month. It is a delight to see people enjoying the Australian Botanic Garden at Mount Annan.

Another significant environmental decision in the great opal of the south west has been creation of the iconic Dharawal National Park. The park was first promised in 1993 but over time became an increasingly distant aspiration. In spite of that and with thanks to the current Government, it has become a reality. The great impact upon the Campbelltown community of the Government creating the Dharawal National Park was captured by a headline in the *Macarthur Advertiser* that simply stated, "The Promised Land". I was privileged to represent the community's pride in a newspaper photograph depicting the park's magnificent flora.

The budget also provides for renewal of housing estates in Airds, Bradbury, Minto and Campbelltown. There has been movement at the station, so to speak—an awakening of Campbelltown, that great opal of the south west—as improvements in infrastructure such as roads, rail and hospitals, community services and protection of the environment are implemented and carry my electorate towards achieving its destiny of becoming the Macarthur's region's principal city. I thank the people of Campbelltown for entrusting me with serving them as their local member of Parliament.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

MOVEMBER

Matter of Public Importance

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [7.12 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about Movember, the international fundraiser for prostate cancer and men's mental health. Created in Melbourne over a few beers with friends, it was the brainchild of Adam Garone, whose initial idea was simply to bring back the "mo" as a fashion statement. When Adam and his 30 mates started the campaign he was shocked by the number of conversations that were created and questions about why they were growing moustaches. That raised some controversy among girlfriends and bosses who, at the time, would not even let them see clients. And that is the whole point—it started a conversation. It raised awareness and it had an impact. On the back of that Adam decided to add a cause—changing the face of men's health. The best descriptor of the challenge is changing one's appearance and then changing men's attitudes and understanding about their health.

What started as a bit of fun has now become one of Australia's largest fundraising and awareness campaigns. Last year more than 130,000 Australians got involved, raising \$24.7 million. Globally, more than 450,000 participants raised more than \$72 million. It just goes to show how a spark can create a fire. Movember is an important initiative; it is a game changer for creating awareness and putting the spotlight on men's health. It creates the platform for discussions that we need to have on mental health and prostate cancer, and it plays a pivotal role in reducing stigmatisation in men's health. This year 20,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer, with one man every three hours sadly losing his fight with the disease. Research from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has shown that prostate cancer is the most common type of cancer to be diagnosed in Australia, and it is the second greatest cause of cancer deaths in men. Funds raised from Movember will enable the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia to conduct necessary research on reducing the risks and spread of the disease.

This year more than one million people in New South Wales will have experienced a mental illness. As many as one in eight men will experience serious depression in their lifetimes, and we know that the suicide rate is four times higher for men than it is for women. As many as four young men aged between 15 and 24 will take their lives each week. I think members would agree with me that that figure needs to be reduced. Beyondblue, the national depression initiative, will also receive funds raised from Movember to enable the organisation to continue to carry out its important work. The success of prior Movember campaigns has resulted in the establishment of a 24-hour telephone service that provides information on depression and anxiety, and acts as a referral service.

The contribution that beyondblue makes to the mental health sector is invaluable. I spoke in my inaugural speech about how important it is to create an awareness of mental health, suicide prevention and early intervention. This work can be supported through organisations such as beyondblue. With suicide being the leading cause of death in New South Wales for those aged between 15 and 44 years, we must put our front foot forward in bringing about change in the area of mental health. I am proud to be part of a Government that is pioneering such efforts. Through a record investment of \$1.34 billion in mental health announced in the 2011-12 budget, the O'Farrell Government is taking its first steps in what ultimately will lead to significant mental health reform.

We must all play a role in ensuring that our mental health system is as strong as it possibly can be. In my electorate I regularly engage with residents, businesses and organisations about the importance of reducing the stigmatisation around mental health and ensuring that services are readily available so that no person should ever be unsure of who or where he or she can talk to someone. Being able to have that conversation and knowing where it is that one can turn to get help literally can save lives. I would like to see people throughout New South Wales use Movember as an opportunity to step up the fight against the stigma and discrimination that surrounds mental health.

Big steps have been taken towards changing attitudes and habits relating to the health of men around the world, but there is still much to be done. I am proud to be an ambassador for the Movember cause and I encourage my colleagues and the New South Wales community as a whole to support this initiative. It is my hope that any of my constituents who see me wearing a moustache will immediately recognise that it is to make a difference on this important health issue. We must start the conversation, we must fund the research and we must collectively change the face of men's health.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [7.17 p.m.]: I thank the member for Hornsby for raising this important initiative and I thank the member for Camden who will speak in debate on this issue. Movember, a wonderful initiative, is like many great ideas—it was thought of when a bunch of men had a chance to reflect on their lives. Unfortunately, this is something that men do far too infrequently which is one of the reasons why their death rate remains higher than that of women. A child born today in New South Wales will have the second-longest life expectancy in the world. However, Movember is vital for improving the health of older men.

Prostate cancer is the subject of much debate at the moment. The reality in relation to prostate cancer is that there is much that we do not know. Prostate cancer is common. There is a fierce debate about the pros and cons of prostate specific antigen [PSA] screening, which is why initiatives such as Movember are vital to ensure that men are given accurate advice as to their own risk of contracting prostate cancer. Unfortunately at the moment we know so little that men frequently are not given the advice that they need to make choices that ultimately will affect not only their lives but the lives of family members.

Depression is the disease of the twenty-first century. The incidence of depression has never been higher, and unfortunately it will blight the lives of many men. One of the highest risk groups is older men, who frequently lack the social support that the workplace provides, especially when they retire. Their lack of meaningful engagement in the community is a leading cause of isolation, which predisposes them to depression that far too often goes unrecognised. Today I noticed in this place that many of my colleagues and opponents are sprouting moustaches. It reminds me of the halcyon days of the 1970s when we all had moustaches and the world was a better place. We can never return to the 1970s, but at least many of us can look as though we have. Some of my colleagues have more hair on their face than on their head, which is not always a good look.

As a result of cancer research, a diagnosis of prostate cancer is no longer a death sentence. However, as is true of all cancers, progress in its treatment has been patchy. That is yet another reason that Movember is vital. Every man who participates in Movember is a walking billboard, which is important because raising awareness of prostate cancer and depression does not come easily. Although they should be discussed more freely, they rarely are. To date, Movember has raised \$24.7 million for research. That is an extraordinary achievement because prior to its commencement prostate cancer was one of the forgotten cancers and far too little money was spent on research. Each year 20,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer, which is why the research is so vital.

In contrast, one million men will develop a mental illness. For far too many that readily treatable condition becomes the cause of much unrecognised sorrow; for far too many the first sign of depression is suicide; for far too many, that is prior to seeking medical help but frequently after they have indicated their unhappiness to

a family member who has been unable to encourage them to seek the medical help that may save their life. Depression is not confined to old men. This year's child death review report indicates that 14 young people committed suicide, of whom two-thirds were male. Of them, nine had confided in a family member. Even though older men are over-represented in suicide statistics, younger people also will be greatly helped by Movember. In these days of record mental health budgets—and I note the comments of the member for Hornsby with regard to mental health—the reality is that until it is everybody's problem the professionals can only do so much. That is because frequently the first, and sometimes the last, person to know is a trusted family member or friend.

I commend the courage of politicians and community leaders who have led the State in the discussion of mental health. I refer specifically Geoff Kennett and John Brogden, whom I spoke about in this place last year. John gave a most inspiring speech to community leaders in Macarthur about his mental illness and the wonderful work he does with Lifeline. He has shown what a great community leader he is. He is also a wonderful advocate for making the world a better place. I commend him for his work on depression and his leadership on this issue. The worldwide Movember movement is all about education and the engagement of the 1.3 million Mo Bros and their female supporters, the Mo Sistas. Men must change their established habit of keeping their concerns to themselves and they must support their colleagues. As of last year, more than 100,000 Mo Bros and Mo Sistas had come on board and raised an extraordinary amount of money. However, more importantly, they have increased community awareness of these two difficult issues, and for that they deserve our never-ending thanks.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [7.25 p.m.]: This is a matter of public importance because of men's reluctance to talk with their family, friends, partners and doctors about health issues. It is well known that awareness, understanding and support of men's health issues lag significantly behind that of women's health issues. Movember works to change the established habits and attitudes that men have with regard to their health and to educate men about the health risks they face and to get them to use that knowledge to increase their chance of early detection, diagnosis and effective treatment. Movember raises awareness and funds for men's health issues, specifically prostate cancer and male depression. Men will grow a moustache for 30 days and in that time raise funds by registering on the Movember website and encouraging friends, family and anyone else to donate.

Growing a moustache is a significant tool in raising awareness and gaining support for this great cause. The moustache is an easy conversation starter and it encourages people to approach a man would not normally grow one in a fun and lighthearted way. Already I have been asked whether my moustache is modelled after a 1980s television star or is a tribute to Freddie Mercury. I wish everyone who has asked whether I am participating in Movember would donate to the cause because I have been amazed by the number of people who have responded. That is clearly a credit to the organisers for the public awareness campaign they are running. These conversations are important in getting people to think about this issue and also in allowing them to raise much-needed funds for this well-deserving cause at <http://au.movember.com>.

Every moustache seen this November will be a walking advertisement for Movember and men's health. Funds raised will equally support Movember's men's health partners, the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia and beyondblue, the national depression initiative. Since Movember started in 2003 in Melbourne, more than 1.1 million people worldwide have participated and they have raised more than \$178 million, with \$25 million raised last year in Australia alone. Movember has official campaigns in 10 countries. Women are huge supporters and can get involved in a number of ways. Without their support Movember would not be as successful as it is.

With the event's continued growth, Movember will continue to meet strategic goals to fund survivorship initiatives that provide information and support for men and their families affected by prostate cancer and depression. It will significantly increase the understanding of the health risks that men face and encourage men to act on that knowledge, increase the understanding of depression and anxiety in men, and reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. It will fund research and trials for prostate cancer and research that informs health policy and knowledge translation that accelerates improved health outcomes for men.

On average, men die five to six years younger than women, the suicide rate for men is four times higher than that of women, more than five men die prematurely each hour from potentially preventable illnesses and one-third of men have not seen a doctor in the past year. My motivation to support this cause is that sadly my best man committed suicide in 2001 and a very close friend and council colleague, David Funnell, thankfully beat prostate cancer in 2002. I am very proud to be an ambassador for Movember with my good mate Matt Kean, the member for Hornsby. We have a challenge to see which electorate can raise the most money for this great cause.

I have also seen Tim Owen, the member for Newcastle, and Darren Webber, the member for Wyong, sporting very stylish moustaches. I commend them for their efforts. The member for Newcastle, having had a distinguished career in the Royal Australian Air Force, is starting to look like he could be very at home in the Navy. I commend two extremely hardworking parliamentary staffers, Nick Tyrell and John McCormack, who have both taken the Movember challenge. Well done, fellows, on a great effort. Men need Movember and Movember needs our support. I urge members to support this matter of public importance.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [7.30 p.m.], in reply, by leave: I take this opportunity to thank the members of this body for their support for and interest in this important matter. In particular, I note the contributions of the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Camden, both of whom have longstanding commitments to making a difference in this place. We have come to this place to leave our State and our communities in a better state than we found them. We came here to build a future. So tonight I am delighted to have an opportunity to talk about an issue central to that future—that is, the issue of improving men's health. I am not the first member of this place to take up the issue, and I am certainly determined not to be the last.

As I said earlier, the aim of the campaign is not just to raise money for vital research into men's health issues: The most powerful and important aspect of the campaign is to raise awareness. When Adam Garone and his 30 mates started the campaign, he was shocked by the number of conversations that were created, asking why they were growing a moustache. And that is the point: it started a conversation, it raised awareness, and it is now achieving its ultimate goal—to reduce the rate of death through prostate cancer and to destigmatise issues about men's mental health. I take this opportunity to recognise the organisations that are supporting this important initiative—NIB, Schick, Cool Ridge and Call of Duty. It is pleasing to see the private sector also supporting this important campaign. The organisers claim that the event is the laziest charity event in the world. I guess that is true: one does not have to run, swim, ride or even shave for that matter—as my upper lip would attest. At its heart Movember is fun and irreverent. It is an opportunity once a year for those of us who want to do our bit to improve men's health.

As the member for Macquarie Fields mentioned, for too long we have accepted the stereotypical view of what it was to be an Australian male: one who is rough and tough and is not concerned about his health or lifestyle. In the past it has been a badge of honour for men to ignore the health warnings. It has not been a macho thing to get help when it is needed. This campaign aims to end that—to destigmatise the issues of mental health and prostate cancer and to encourage help-seeking behaviour. These issues should be above politics, and I am delighted to see people from across the political spectrum here tonight in support of the cause. Concern for the issues of prostate cancer and mental health are not a Liberal feeling or a National feeling, nor are they a Greens feeling or a Labor feeling. It is something that will take our collective resolve and determination if we are truly committed to winning the battle.

I understand that the challenge is great. I understand that the road ahead has much uncertainty and that the resources of government are constrained. The safe option of course is to do nothing, to put it in the too-hard basket and to leave it for someone else to solve. But that is not what this time calls for. That is certainly not what we came here to do. We did not come here to fear challenges; we came here to beat them. I believe we can all make a difference even when it is hard. Adam Garone was one Aussie bloke who made a difference. Let us combine our collective determination and resources to beat these challenges once and for all.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.34 p.m. until
Wednesday 9 November 2011 at 10.00 a.m.**
