

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 9 November 2011

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the report of the Auditor-General for 2011, volume five, received 9 November 2011.

SPORTING VENUES AUTHORITIES AMENDMENT (VENUES NSW) BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 19 October 2011.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [10.02 a.m.]: I support the Sporting Venues Authorities (Venues NSW) Amendment Bill 2011, which was introduced by the great Minister for Sport and Recreation, who is seated at the table. The bill delivers key elements of the Government's policy agenda for building stronger, healthier and more engaged communities. Quite simply, the bill makes sense. Sport and entertainment are at the forefront of bringing regional communities together in good times and in bad. Sporting and entertainment venues—at which one cheers on the local under sevens, has the chance to see a major international performer without having to travel to Sydney, or watches the local footy team beat the opposing side—are the lifeblood of regional communities. The government-owned venues in my electorate that will come under Venues NSW include Ausgrid Stadium, the Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Newcastle Showground, as well as a number of other venues currently managed by the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. The bill is focused on achieving the best performance of these venues for the people of Newcastle.

The Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 combined the Newcastle International Sports Centre Trust and the Newcastle Showground and Exhibition Centre Trust. That was the first step in this process. From the owner's perspective it is illogical to have many different trusts not only operating independently of each other but also competing with each other while trying to serve the public. The bill will ensure that existing authorities no longer compete with one another but rather complete one another. The new structure will better allocate government resources. As the central booking agency, Venues NSW will be able to structure pricing and marketing campaigns to attract sporting and cultural events to regional venues, such as those in my electorate. Until now it has been up to the local authority to undercut other authorities to attract events while trying to maintain the delicate balance of breaking even. Clearly it has not worked well. Increasing the commercial utilisation of venues will provide additional revenue to further subsidise community events, and that will provide a great win to Newcastle.

For the first time it will be possible for Venues NSW to structure an offer to hirers that will encourage events to be staged in all three venues. Hirer's will only have to speak to one agency to negotiate a deal for all three venues. The bill is another example of the Government getting on with the job of making New South Wales number one again: the number one place to do business in Australia. Gone will be yet another headache for business that was created by 16 wasted years under Labor, particularly in the sporting portfolio. The creation of local venues councils in place of the existing authorities will ensure that venues will still meet the needs of local communities. To explain that a little further, I advise that the councils will help Venues NSW consult and engage with local communities. That did not work well in the past. The councils will create and review future plans for improvements to venues. A lot of work has already begun to get that process rolling in Newcastle. It makes sense to improve venues in a collective and cohesive way rather than in the singular and desperate ways that happened in the past. Finally, councils will work with Venues NSW on strategies to increase local participation in sport and recreation, boost venue utilisation and increase events and tourism—another key set of principles for Newcastle.

The chairs of the local venues councils will also sit on the new Venues NSW Board. I acknowledge the good work that Glenn Turner, Keith Lynch and Kathy Tate have done over the past few months at Newcastle to restore accountability and engage with the community at Hunter venues following the debacle of the construction and pricing overrun of Ausgrid Stadium. I hope they continue their involvement through the new local venues council. I have engaged each of them in that context and they will continue to provide strong representation for Newcastle on the Venues NSW Board. The new structure will increase accountability to government so that the old days of stacking mates on boards to allow them to run their own show independent of government will be over.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr TIM OWEN: Jodie McKay's previous stacking of this venue has come to an end, thank God. Venues NSW will enshrine accountability and good stewardship of publicly owned assets—a novel concept to those who sit opposite—so that we do not have a repeat of what happened at Hunter Venues over the past few years.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury also will have an opportunity to contribute to the debate. The member for Newcastle has the call.

Mr TIM OWEN: The bill will be good for Newcastle. It will work toward the goal of building stronger, healthier and more engaged regional communities. It also will ensure that local communities will continue to be closely involved in decisions affecting their local sporting and entertainment venues. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [10.09 a.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Labor Opposition on the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill 2011, which, as the Minister will be aware, the Opposition does not support. Our opposition comes from a very deep philosophical base, to which I will refer shortly. Like other members who have spoken I have great admiration for the Minister; however, we cannot support this bill, and I will explain why. The rhetoric of the O'Farrell Government since coming to office has been about giving back control to local communities. Government members have made great play of this in the House on a whole range of issues in relation to which the O'Farrell Government believes it should not be part. It is interesting that the member for Newcastle has just spoken; the issue surrounding the Laman Street fig trees in his electorate is a particularly good example of the Government's rhetoric.

The O'Farrell Government has talked about giving control to local communities but the moment a local community could not sort out an issue in the electorate of Newcastle relating to the removal of iconic fig trees, the Government appeared to want to have things both ways. At one point the Premier said that he would not get involved as it was a local council issue, but then in a recent estimates hearing he flippantly said that he would get involved. That sent two different messages to the public, and that in essence is also what the bill does. The first message relates to the rhetoric of keeping control in local communities, whereas in the Opposition's view the bill does something quite different. It takes away control of local decisions in the Newcastle and Wollongong areas and centralises decision-making. It is on that basis—which I trust I have explained clearly—that the New South Wales Opposition does not support the bill.

The bill amends the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008, repeals the Parramatta Stadium Trust Act 1988 and constitutes Venues NSW. Existing regional sporting venues authorities and the Parramatta Stadium Trust will be abolished and the assets and liabilities of those bodies, as well as decisions relating to those bodies, will be transferred to Venues NSW. That epitomises the explanation I have just given about the Government saying one thing about control at the local community level and doing something quite different. That is what the bill does. According to the Government, the object of the bill is to establish Venues NSW, to replace the Parramatta Stadium Trust and existing regional sporting venues authorities, and to transfer the assets, rights and liabilities of those bodies to Venues NSW. That supports the argument I have just advanced on behalf of the Opposition.

Power is being taken away from local communities and is being given to bureaucrats in Sydney. That is a long way from the Government's election commitment of giving power to local communities. Being shadow Minister for the Hunter, I know the Newcastle region very well. The Newcastle community is probably one of the most proudly parochial communities across New South Wales. I say "proudly parochial" because of the nature of the area and the fact that Newcastle and the Hunter Valley have had to reinvent themselves,

particularly after the closure of the steelworks and the great tensions in the Hunter relating to land use agreement. The Illawarra and the Hunter are monitoring this bill very closely. It may seem to some that winding up a couple of trusts and centralising them is not a big issue, but I can assure members that in communities like the Illawarra and the Hunter it is seen as taking away their capacity to make decisions for themselves.

Our position is quite simple: local sporting venues should be controlled by local communities and this bill removes power from local communities. The bill disbands the Illawarra Venues Authority, the Hunter Venues Trust and the Parramatta Stadium Trust and transfers the assets and liabilities of those bodies to Venues NSW, which I understand will be established under the responsibility of the Minister for Sport and Recreation. The bill proposes a new structure with three regional advisory councils—Hunter, Illawarra and Western Sydney—consisting of between three and seven members and reporting to a central board, Venues NSW, which will comprise no less than seven and no more than 11 members. I have some empathy for the numbers but I refer to my earlier comments: these regional local authorities will no longer have control of the assets and liabilities or the decisions taken by Venues NSW. It seems to me to add another unnecessary layer of bureaucracy to the good management of sporting venues for which councils currently have responsibility.

The bill provides states that everyone involved, both the Venues NSW board and members of the advisory council, will be eligible for remuneration. That suggests to me that the proposed structure will be a more expensive exercise than the current arrangement. As I understand it, and the Minister can correct me if I am wrong, the existing bodies in the regions and in Parramatta are voluntary bodies, so providing remuneration for members of the board and the advisory council will make it a more expensive exercise. I am interested to hear how the new arrangement will work. Members of the existing Illawarra Venues Authority volunteered their time for the good of the local community, and that ensured that no government subsidies were required to manage the venues for the past five years. While this might seem to the Government to be an efficiency measure, I note that the Minister has said previously that it will give more capacity to Venues NSW, so I am not sure how that argument stacks up, given that decision-making is being taken away at the regional level. I look forward to being provided with more information from the Minister about the points I have raised.

Appointments to the board and regional advisory councils will be at the discretion of the Minister, with no approval by the Executive Council as was previously the case. That is an interesting move in centralising the workings of Venues NSW. It seems to me that appointments to Venues NSW should be a decision of Executive Council particularly if remuneration is involved. I understand very well how government works, as members would expect, and it seems to me that taking away the responsibility of the Executive Council for the centralised body also takes away its accountability for appointments to the board. With respect to the present Minister, I do not think it is healthy for the Minister to have such a responsibility. It is probably a responsibility that is best shared, particularly if something were to go wrong with appointments to Venues NSW. No indication is given about the process for appointments: whether there will be a merit-based selection process or who is eligible to apply and what skills need applicants possess.

Most pieces of legislation providing for appointments to particular authorities make reference to the required experience of those seeking appointment to an organisation such as the board of Venues NSW. The bill is lacking in that regard. It would be sensible—and would give the Opposition more comfort—if the appointment processes were clearly laid out in the proposed legislation. We will raise that concern with the Minister. Appointments to the board are to be at the discretion of the Minister. Board members will be making all the decisions that relate to the regional sporting grounds covered by the bill. There will be no say for local communities, only a say for the board in Sydney. In fact, as their name suggests, regional advisory councils will have absolutely no authority and will only provide advice and consult with local communities and other stakeholders on behalf of Venues NSW.

The other issue that the Government appears not to have considered with the new structure is that a number of venues to be administered by the new board of Venues NSW compete with each other to hold events. I note that the Minister has said that that could be considered an advantage—that it would enable venues to attract more events. In our view it would make it much more difficult for venues if they had to compete with one another. Local communities would be competing for events with no decision-making power left in the hands of the locals—powers that will ensure a level playing field for anyone in western Sydney, the Hunter and the Illawarra. The bill provides that the board of Venues NSW must include the three chairs of the regional advisory councils and a staff member from the Department of Education and Communities. However, that leaves more than half the committee who may not have any experience in the local community or even any understanding of areas like the Hunter, the Illawarra and western Sydney.

Local knowledge is important in regard to events that matter to local people. I was in Newcastle recently on a day when a rugby league test match was being played at Ausgrid Stadium and while I did not attend the event—I was there for some other reason—I was struck by how important these venues are to the local community. I am sure that members on this side of the House who represent electorates in the Illawarra will talk about WIN Stadium—I know that venue is very important to them. Local communities and regions like the Hunter, the Illawarra and western Sydney jealously guard their capacity to have a say about what happens in their local areas because that in fact reflects those local areas. I fear that this particular piece of legislation will water down the capacity for local communities to have a say in what events take place in their areas.

All regional members of the Government should think twice about supporting this bill. The Government promised to allow local communities to make decisions for themselves, but this bill will do the exact opposite. The New South Wales Opposition does not support the bill—it will take away local decision-making, it will add another level of bureaucracy, it will make the process more expensive, it will remove the accountability of the Executive Council with regards the making of appointments, and it does not state what qualifications prospective board members of Venues NSW need to possess. In addition, it will take away local knowledge in terms of the conduct of events in the Hunter, the Illawarra and western Sydney.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [10.25 a.m.]: Today I am pleased to support the Sporting Venues Authorities (Venues NSW) Amendment Bill 2011, which, as other members have said, relates to Parramatta Stadium, WIN Stadium and Entertainment Centre, Ausgrid Stadium in Newcastle, Newcastle Entertainment Centre, and other venues currently managed by Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. We all agree that sporting and entertainment venues are vitally important community assets. We owe it to the taxpayers of New South Wales to manage these public assets as efficiently as possible and to remove duplication where we can.

These reforms are long overdue, and the Government is determined to rectify and improve taxpayer-funded State-owned facilities that will help build stronger, healthier and more engaged communities. This will be achieved through the establishment of local venues councils, which will see Venues NSW consult and engage with their local communities. Restoring the community's faith in Government by involving them in the decisions that affect them is a key priority for this Government, and local venues councils will be a great example of this in action.

Despite some of the comments we have heard from members of the Opposition—and it is a little disappointing to hear their stance on the local input that this bill provides—the Government supports community empowerment and community ownership and control of boards. The representatives on these local venues councils will be regular everyday people who are passionate about the area in which they live and the role their local sport and entertainment venues have in making their community a great place to visit and in which to live and work. These councils will review future plans for improvements to the venues to ensure that they will meet the community's needs both now and in the future and will work with Venues NSW on strategies to increase local participation in sport and recreation to build stronger, healthier and more active communities. They will work with Venues NSW to develop new ideas about ways to boost the use of these venues and increase local events and regional tourism.

The bill does not preclude the continuation of existing contracts with local suppliers, sporting organisations or sponsors. It makes good commercial sense that the management of these important public assets be consolidated. In making the case for change, an independent review was conducted by KPMG for the Department of Premier and Cabinet in 2010 under the former Government. It is worth noting that that is where the impetus for change comes from—not just from the current Government—as this information was placed before the previous Government. In making the case for consolidating these venues, KPMG noted that:

The similarities involved in managing the venues would allow benefits to be gained from sharing experience and combining resources.

It noted further:

Consolidation would provide the most effective way for the venues to work together to source and promote events.

And further:

Sharing opportunities could improve commercial performance, community participation, utilisation and revenues.

The reforms in the bill will support cost savings that are expected to flow from sharing procurement, merging contracts that are common across the venues, and sharing staff who have expertise important to all venues, such as financial services and asset management. These particular back-office services will not need to be duplicated. I also note that implementing the reforms contained in this bill will not require any additional resources, as the new management structure can be funded from existing resources. The bill will permit the venues to secure added-value contracts that will benefit the profitability of all venues and generate additional money into each of the regions. Currently there is no capacity to deliver back to the community by using the combined purchasing power of all three venues.

The bill creates the opportunity to establish a centralised expenditure and revenue structure in key areas such as marketing, security and ticket booking. The Government is about protecting and supporting small business, and the bill is just one way in which we will help deliver economic benefits for the regions of western Sydney, the Illawarra and the Hunter. As previously mentioned these reforms will improve community access to and participation in sporting and cultural events. They will increase tourism and events in regional communities, deliver better access for disadvantaged and under-represented groups and, by delivering more efficient services, provide better value for public investment. The bill is excellent news for the people of New South Wales and that is why I wholeheartedly support it.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [10.30 a.m.]: I obviously oppose the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill 2011. The member for Newcastle suggested that the bill removes jobs for the boys by taking away local input and centralising decision-making with people basically connected to and appointed by the Minister. That is a joke and it is quite insulting to other members in this place to hear that kind of statement. On 11 October of this year I condemned the Government's decision to disband the Illawarra Venues Authority—along with the Parramatta and Hunter authorities—and to replace it with one central venues authority which would be made up of 11 members, including the three current chairs of the authorities to be replaced. The Minister clearly outlined the program to give the State Government absolute control of the Illawarra venue: eight extra appointments will be made but it was claimed that the present chair of the Illawarra Venues Authority would provide the local input in the case of Wollongong.

This is coming from a Government that prior to the election made very much of the fact that it would be better at organising local input, giving locals the say, giving locals the decision-making. Yet quickly after forming government there was an absolute move away from those statements and promises. In just over six months, with such decisions, the Government has shown an absolute disregard for the community of the Illawarra. This is just a further display of the contempt with which the people of the Illawarra are being treated by the O'Farrell Government. The number of games played—I have raised that with the Minister in the past—is crucial to WIN Stadium. I am quite happy to accept the Minister's assurances that the Illawarra will not be disadvantaged in terms of the number of games. However, it is a concern to me that the local input is to be so dramatically reduced. Unlike the member for Riverstone, I am concerned about local services such as those of security providers and caterers. Centralised decision-making could cause them to lose out following the disbandment of the local venues authorities.

The push to reduce the local input is an absolute slap in the face considering that prior to the election numbers of shadow Ministers arrived in the Illawarra promising people that they would do better and they would show how much more they cared about the Illawarra. As I said, since the Coalition formed government the Illawarra has been subjected to a whole host of negative changes. When it suits the Government it treats the Illawarra as regional in some cases and as metropolitan in others. It seems to be determined according to the least amount of investment required by the Government. I found the contribution of the member for Riverstone very interesting. I am astonished that he would claim that centralised decision-making delivers better outcomes for the local community. I can only assume that the member for Newcastle and the member for Riverstone are so new in this place that they do not understand that they are actually here to represent the people that elected them.

Did they make the following statements to their constituents prior to the election? Elect me and I will make sure you have little or no input in any decision-making that happens around your venues authority. Elect me and I will make sure that your teachers are disadvantaged. Elect me and I will make sure that your police are attacked in regard to their protections in case of serious disabilities and disablement. No, of course they did not. They made the absolute opposite in promises. Yet these are the things that have happened in the first few months of this Government, things that Coalition members did not tell the community. In fact, I recall statements made by both Barry O'Farrell and other shadow Ministers to the people of the Illawarra that unions—the word that they seem to hate so much—members of unions and workers had nothing to fear from Barry O'Farrell's group being elected to government.

Dr Geoff Lee: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 76. We are discussing sporting venues and the member is talking about Barry O'Farrell and unions.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! I do not uphold the point of order.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The point of order proves what I have said all along. Member opposite need some time. I have nothing against any of them; they just need some time to learn how things work. They need to understand that they should represent their electorate in this place. People in my electorate of Wollongong, where WIN Stadium stands, expect me to do the best for them.

Mr John Barilaro: It is a shame they are not getting it.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I am here defending them and their local input and you are there trying to stop the local input. Now you tell me who is being represented.

Mr John Barilaro: I am a Manly supporter.

Ms NOREEN HAY: That explains it all. If you are a Manly supporter it explains the problems you have. Try supporting the Dragons and then you will know what a good team is.

Mr John Barilaro: We know what heartbreak is all about.

Ms NOREEN HAY: If you could get a team like the Dragons you would be a happy man today. Reducing local input to decision-making is an absolute no-no. It is something you should regret. I am sure that your constituents regret it. I mentioned the number of games at WIN Stadium. At least 50 per cent of Dragons games should be retained at WIN stadium. As I said, in response to a question that I asked in this place the Minister gave assurances that Wollongong and the Illawarra would not be disadvantaged by the amalgamation in terms of the number of games at WIN Stadium. But I am extremely concerned about the removal of local input into decision-making. As I said a few moments ago, this Government has at every turn let the people of Wollongong and the Illawarra down. Promises prior to the election have not been kept. We are deemed metropolitan or regional depending on whether Government investment spending is available.

The process for appointments is of concern, as outlined by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition just a few moments ago. Former Premier Nick Greiner was appointed to Planning NSW. This strikes me—it has been put by others more eloquently—as being like putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank. Such examples do not build confidence that the appointees will be looking after the best interests of the community which I serve. The member for Riverstone claimed that the interests of Wollongong and the Illawarra will be better served by the new arrangement. I would be very interested to know where he did his research. That is not the case, according to the people to whom I speak and represent.

Mr Lee Evans: People in Sussex Street?

Ms NOREEN HAY: Such flippant remarks are a joke coming from Liberal members who do not understand party politics. People in my electorate do not believe Government members.

Mr John Barilaro: Ha, ha. I think they would understand the backstabbing.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Monaro is a oncer anyway, so I will not have to worry about him for long. How do members of Parliament ensure that their local community is looked after? They do that by taking decisions that are in the best interests of their community. I believe Opposition members, by opposing this bill, are doing exactly that in relation to the electorates they represent. The regions do not believe that decisions should be taken away from people who know best, and who have the skills and experience to know best.

Mr John Barilaro: You did that with councils and planning.

Ms NOREEN HAY: But the Government has given it to Nick Greiner. He has no experience.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! I call the member for Monaro to order.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Throw him out. The facts and research do not bear out what Government members are saying. We must be sure. Government members cannot say that a person, for example, in Wollongong can decide what is in the best interests of Newcastle. Although I have colleagues who could do that—and I believe that Wollongong is better than Newcastle anyway—Government members cannot expect somebody living in Newcastle to say what is in the best interests of people living in western Sydney. After all, that is why each electorate votes for its own representative. That is an important lesson that many Government members must learn. The test is what is in the best interests of a specific community, but this bill will result in decisions affecting venues in the Illawarra, such as games played by the Dragons at WIN Stadium, being made by a central authority and will involve one area competing with another.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! The member for Oatley will remain silent when he enters the Chamber.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Oatley speaks wherever he is, but actually says very little. Labor members insist that local communities should benefit from the services, experience and knowledge provided through the venues authority so that local interests will be preserved, but this bill does not do that. Rather, it diminishes local community involvement and treats local people as the poor relations or second-class citizens. That is not good enough. The Government should hang its head in shame for breaking so many of its pre-election commitments and for totally dishonouring pledges that were given repeatedly to the people of the Illawarra on television, on radio, at local meetings and at the local council chambers.

The Government committed to ensuring there would be no negative impact upon the people of the Illawarra resulting from the election of the O'Farrell Government. That commitment clearly has proved to be an absolute myth and my community is feeling the pain. This is at a time when the Illawarra has lost more than 1,000 jobs from BlueScope Steel and approximately 200 jobs from Port Kembla, resulting in myriad pressures burdening my electorate. I have been calling on the Government to increase investment or perhaps transfer a government department to the Illawarra to produce additional jobs and assist our community, but every decision that comes along further diminishes the Illawarra or places my communities in competition with areas in Sydney. We all know where that will lead.

Dr Geoff Lee: Point of order: Standing Order 76 relates to relevance. I ask you to direct the member to confine her remarks to the bill before the House instead of debating BlueScope Steel and employment issues.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! The member for Wollongong will confine her remarks to the leave of the bill.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Thank you, Madam Acting-Speaker. Government members do not like what they are hearing, so they take spurious points of order. The member for Parramatta did not even get the point of order right. Standing Order 129 relates to relevance. It is an absolute farce.

Dr Geoff Lee: Point of order: The member for Wollongong is incorrect. The correct standing order is Standing Order 76, not Standing Order 129.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! I thank the member for Parramatta for bringing that to my attention.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [10.45 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wollongong for her—

Dr Geoff Lee: Diatribe.

Mr LEE EVANS: I thank the member for Parramatta—her diatribe.

Ms Noreen Hay: Shame on the member for Parramatta. And I was so nice to him.

Mr LEE EVANS: Shame, shame, shame. I support the Sporting Venues Authorities (Venues NSW) Amendment Bill 2011. This bill will establish a new authority known as Venues NSW—Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong—and will consolidate New South Wales taxpayer-owned venues in the Illawarra, the Hunter and western Sydney. The venues near my area that will come under Venues NSW include the WIN Stadium and the WIN Entertainment Centre in Wollongong. The recent weather damage to WIN Stadium's western grandstand, which is currently under construction, clearly demonstrates that these venues are important regional community assets. It is absolutely essential that local communities continue to be involved in managing them.

I note that the bill sets up formal arrangements to ensure that sporting and entertainment venues continue to serve the needs of people in the Illawarra. The reforms will establish a local venues council in the Illawarra and the chairperson of that advisory body will also sit on the Venues NSW board. The councils will assist Venues NSW to consult and engage with the South Coast and Illawarra communities. They will be responsible for reviewing future plans for the venues and will work with Venues NSW to increase local tourism and events. While tourism numbers vary from event to event, I am informed that at the WIN Sports and Entertainment Centre in Wollongong the out-of-town attendance at major sporting and entertainment events can be as high as 40 per cent.

Ms Linda Burney: You should have practised this beforehand.

Mr LEE EVANS: The member for Canterbury should not tempt me to start on her.

Ms Linda Burney: I am terrified!

Mr LEE EVANS: The member had better be. This year the WIN Sports and Entertainment Centre hosted 11 family shows including Disney on Ice and the Wiggles. The Irish National Dance Championships also were recently held at the Wollongong Entertainment Centre.

Ms Noreen Hay: It was a great night.

Mr LEE EVANS: This was a five-day event attended by more than 1,000 people who travelled to Wollongong specifically to attend this event. The member for Wollongong was among those who attended. It is estimated that attendees at this event injected more than \$1 million directly into the region by spending on average \$200 a day on accommodation, meals, transport and other local services. In 2008 the independent research company Illawarra Regional Information Service conducted an economic impact statement of the WIN Sports and Entertainment centres and found that the regional economic benefit to Wollongong was \$28.6 million a year and that it generated local employment of 265 full time equivalent positions. The study was updated in 2009 to assess the economic impact of the completion of the WIN Stadium's western grandstand. When this project is completed the estimated regional economic benefit will be \$37.1 million a year with a flow-on increase in local employment to 346 full-time-equivalent jobs.

Like the people of western Sydney and the Hunter, my constituents are frustrated by having to travel long distances to access sporting and cultural events. This bill will allow government-owned venues to work together to source and promote bigger and better events. As a previous supply and purchasing manager of the Sydney Olympics, I assure the House that sporting and entertainment venues are a great asset to the State. It is not beneficial for these venues to be unused for 98 per cent of the time. The Wollongong entertainment centre is a great venue but, unfortunately, is not utilised to its capacity. We propose that input from local people interested in attracting more events to local venues be taken to a centralised committee in Sydney for a team to bring things together to encourage the holding of more events in those local areas. Instead of WIN Stadium attempting to secure, say, a Brian Eno concert for a one-off performance—

Ms Noreen Hay: What have you got against him?

Mr LEE EVANS: I have nothing against him. Filling WIN Stadium with 25,000 people wanting to see Brian Eno could be organised centrally from one venue operator to contract performances in Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong without any dramas. Basically, we are making it easier for performers such as Brian Eno to fill a venue with a capacity audience. We are embracing the people of the Illawarra and enabling them to have a say about what happens in their area. We will talk with the local community to find out what entertainment they want in WIN Stadium and other local venues so that those fantastic assets are utilised to their fullest potential rather than left sitting idle for long periods. The member for Wollongong spoke about employing local people. The Government has talked about having central contracts for all event venues. For example, it is much better to have one company doing all catering for all venues.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! The member for Keira and the member for Wollongong will remain silent.

Mr LEE EVANS: As I was previously the Supply Purchasing Manager for the Sydney Olympics I easily understand—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! Opposition members will remain silent. I do not need any help from Government members.

Mr LEE EVANS: Although it is a foreign concept to Opposition members, cost savings can be achieved by having centralised contracts. Centralised government is a concept that Opposition members love to talk about in respect of other issues. The Government wants to make it easier for the Illawarra to attract better, high-profile entertainment. The member for Wollongong will be able to see some of the bands that will be attracted to various local venues. Providing the Illawarra and Newcastle with the opportunity to hold those high-end events will be a great advantage to all of New South Wales. I support the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill because it will ensure that constituents will continue to be closely involved in the management of WIN Stadium and the WIN Sports and Entertainment Centres, it will help to increase local tourism and it will ensure that the people of the Illawarra will not need to travel long distances to enjoy these types of entertainment and events that Sydneysiders take for granted. Local people may be able to attend more events at venues closer to home. That is the nub of the problem that this bill addresses. I support the bill.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [10.53 a.m.]: I oppose the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill 2011 and expect the same opposition from any member representing a Hunter electorate who cares about their community. This bill removes the decision-making process from local people who understand the needs, wishes and wants of the local community and sends it to Sydney—because it always has demonstrated enormous care about what happens in the Hunter! The Sporting Venues Authorities Bill was introduced in 2008 and received bipartisan support.

Mr Mark Coure: Why are you opposing it this time?

Mr CLAYTON BARR: The member for Oatley should listen carefully. The strength of support from the then Opposition member for Upper Hunter and the member for Wagga Wagga was that local decision-making would be retained. Indeed, the member for Wagga Wagga wanted an authority set up in his electorate. I applaud him for that request.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! The member for Wollondilly will remain silent.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Local decision-making was retained under the Sporting Venues Authorities Bill 2008. Under the bill before the House local decision-making is not retained. To answer the member for Oatley, that is why we oppose the bill, as all members should. I welcome every member representing a Hunter electorate to speak on this bill—the member for Newcastle was in the Chamber earlier—because I want to hear their position on this issue. The member for Newcastle said it was good for Sydney to make decisions regarding Hunter sporting venues. He believes it is good to ignore local voices and hand control of Hunter venues to Sydney. The member for Newcastle was not alone in that belief. The Minister for the Hunter in the other place was equally adamant that this bill is a good deal. The Minister was so impressed with this particular piece of legislation and that local councils would have one delegate on the 11-person board or committee that he said:

A key objective of the bill is to maintain a high level of regional engagement to ensure local communities continue to have a say in how their venues are managed.

If the Minister for the Hunter truly believes that he should rescind this amending bill, because that will not happen. The member for Newcastle and the Minister for the Hunter are happy for the decision-making process to be handed to Sydney. Only the member for Cessnock says that that is the wrong procedure. I ask the member for Charlestown, the member for Swansea, the member for Lake Macquarie, the member for Maitland, the member for Upper Hunter and the member for Port Stephens to contribute to this debate and tell the House where they stand on this proposal. I ask them to stand beside me and say they want decision-making to remain in the Hunter and that they want Hunter sporting venues to be controlled from the Hunter region, not from Sydney. The Hunter region always gets the raw end of the deal when Sydney makes the decisions.

Let me now address the facts and figures about this proposal. The board will comprise 11 members made up of one representative from the Hunter, who will be the local council chairperson, one representative from the Illawarra and nine others. Will that one voice be so powerful, authoritative and persuasive that it will be able to override the other 10 votes? I think not. This is just a political process because we want to keep a whole bunch of western Sydney seats. Therefore, when decisions are made will the board give a Jatz cracker about the Illawarra or the Hunter? No, it will not. The Government cares about western Sydney and it will make sure that those areas get the cream of the crop and the Hunter can have what is left over.

Mr Paul Lynch: They want to dump radioactive waste at Kemps Creek.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Yes. I oppose this bill. Let me refer again to the fact that the Sporting Venues Authorities Bill 2008 received bipartisan support because local decisions would be made by local authorities. Under this bill that will no longer be the case.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Oatley will keep his mouth closed.

Ms Linda Burney: He doesn't know how to keep his mouth closed.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Canterbury will control herself.

Ms Linda Burney: I don't mind him opening his mouth as long as something decent comes out of it.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I acknowledge the interjections of the member for Canterbury because there is some truth in them. What are the views of the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, Minister for the Arts and member for the Upper Hunter in relation to this bill? Part of the concept of the Hunter's sporting venues is that they will host events. One of the Hunter's sporting venues is a harness track. What are the views of the Minister in relation to this issue as he has spoken with considerable vigour about the importance of local decision-making? The Minister went further and all but promised \$20 million to the Newcastle Show Society for improvements to its facilities. Now that the Minister controls the cheque book what are his views about allocating \$20 million for those improvements?

The Minister has already failed the Hunter in so many ways. The Hunter hosts a successful surf competition called Surfest, yet the Minister glowingly welcomed the introduction of a new surf carnival to be held in Sydney. Newcastle has a brand new regional art gallery and Maitland, Cessnock and the Upper Hunter have multiple regional art galleries, yet the Minister watches over a budget of which every cent is spent in Sydney. The Minister wants to build a convention centre in Sydney when every man and his dog would rather travel to the beautiful Pokolbin vineyards in the Hunter Valley to attend events. The Minister said a convention centre should be built only in Sydney and has paid no regard to regional inclusion. The Minister is failing the Hunter Valley community.

Dr Geoff Lee: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 76. The member for Cessnock should be asked to return to the leave of the bill, which is about sporting venues in New South Wales rather than other matters.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Cessnock will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: When this bill was introduced in the Legislative Council the Minister for Police and Emergency Services said:

A key objective of the bill is to maintain a high level of regional engagement to ensure local communities continue to have a say ...

I am talking about decision-making in local communities. Schools will be able to make decisions locally but decisions relating to sporting venues will be made in Sydney. Hospitals will also be able to make decisions locally.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Oatley will cease interjecting.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Those involved in sporting venues want to have a say in how their local facilities are managed. As I said earlier, hospitals will be able to make decisions locally but decisions relating to sporting venues will be made in Sydney, which does not equate. If Government members are saying that it is important for communities to make decisions locally because they know what local people want they should vote against this legislation. Government members will not do that because they do not have the intestinal fortitude to stand up for their communities and speak out against the Premier, who is determined to ensure that decisions relating to sporting venues are made in Sydney. In that way he will better service western Sydney and remove services from the Hunter.

This atrocious and appalling legislation has previously received bipartisan support. When speaking in debate on the earlier bill the member for Wagga Wagga was adamant that local decision-making was fantastic. His only lament about that bill was that his region did not manage to secure its own local venues authority. What has happened over the past few years? Eighteen months ago a senior bureaucrat suggested that these decisions should be made in Sydney. The former Labor Government refuted that suggestion and said it was important for decisions to be made locally. We have since had a change of government. The new Ministers and the bureaucrats rolled out their old ideas and said that these decisions were best made in Sydney. Labor stood up for our local communities but this Coalition Government will not do so.

Mr John Barilaro: You can't rewrite history, mate.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Significant changes will be made to the decision-making process in Sydney and local people will no longer be able to make decisions, which is against their wishes. The Minister for the Hunter and the member for Newcastle bad-mouthed the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority and said that its performance had been disgraceful. Hardworking people in the local community, who gave everything they could to ensure the authority was the best that it could be, were sacked by the Minister for Sport and Recreation because of a \$3 million budget overrun. Treasury oversaw that authority, sat in at meetings, talked about the budget and identified the budget overruns, but nobody mentioned that when those hardworking people were sacked. I do not refute that the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority had a \$3 million blowout, but it was being supervised along the way.

Mr Andrew Gee: Who supervised it?

Mr CLAYTON BARR: That authority was supervised by Treasury, an important arm of government. With the change of government all those hardworking people were sacked and the Coalition Government appointed its own employees. That might have been this Government's preference, but it is not always the best thing to do. In addition, there was no need for the Minister for the Hunter or the member for Newcastle to denigrate the hard work of the volunteers who contributed to that authority. This is bad legislation for the people of the Illawarra and the Hunter. I think the people of western Sydney will be the big winners because they will have a strong voice, they will have the numbers and they will benefit from all the opportunities that come their way. No-one other than me is standing up for people in the Hunter. I ask all members representing electorates in the Hunter to vote against this flawed legislation.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [11.07 a.m.]: I support the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill 2011. We have heard a great deal of negativity from Opposition members in debate on this legislation, whereas members of the Liberal-Nationals Government are moving forward with a positive plan to make this State number one again after years of incompetence by the former Labor Government.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! The member for Canterbury and the member for Cessnock will remain silent.

Dr GEOFF LEE: The establishment of a new authority to be called Venues NSW is another excellent example of the O'Farrell Government getting on with the job of making New South Wales number one again. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the excellent Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Hon. Graham Annesley, and I note his commitment. The Minister has visited Parramatta on a number of occasions, looked at the stadium and met with people from the stadium, the leagues club and the community. The Minister fully understands the implications of this bill and how best to move forward in this State. The consolidation of venues, which includes Parramatta Stadium in western Sydney and venues in the Illawarra and Hunter, is a triumph for commonsense and provides a clear and ethical framework that will ensure those venues reap the benefits of working under one authority.

From the perspective of the people of Parramatta this is a huge opportunity. As members know, Parramatta is the capital of western Sydney. This bill provides the opportunity for us to reinvigorate the local economy and to realise Parramatta's potential. Members should be aware that Parramatta is the geographic, commercial and cultural capital of western Sydney. It is the second largest central business district in Sydney and the sixth largest in the country. I reiterate the Premier's comment that western Sydney is the engine room of New South Wales. One in 11 people in Australia live in the area and, as such, we will play a significant role in getting New South Wales back to its rightful position as the number one State in the country.

The importance of sport cannot be underrated. Parramatta has many schools involved in sporting activities that provide students with the opportunity not only to exercise but also to play team sports, to learn

discipline, to understand what it means to follow the rules and to value striving for success. Sport is a fantastic thing for local communities, schools and clubs. Sporting events held at the Parramatta Stadium have many benefits. Although the mighty Parramatta Eels had a few issues this year, we are rebuilding for the future. One of the benefits of sport is that it provides the community with heroes. Bruce, the son of a good friend of mine from the University of Western Sydney, is a big fan of Fuifui Moimoi. As members know, Parramatta Stadium is home to the mighty Eels. Fuifui Moimoi is a great healthy lifestyle and achievement role model and he is a sporting hero. In fact, the Parramatta Eels players are significant role models for the community.

Ms Linda Burney: Is that relevant to this legislation?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Mr Mark Coure: Put her on a call.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! I do not need the assistance of the member for Oatley. I can make up my own mind.

Dr GEOFF LEE: Parramatta Stadium is not simply a sporting venue; it is also used for prestigious functions. Over the years I have attended many concerts and community events there. It is ideal for those events because it can cater for 20,000 patrons and it has ample parking facilities. Like other members on this side of the House—the positive side—I understand that the stadium provides economic benefits. The relationship between sporting events and economic benefits such as increased spending, tourism and visitation cannot be underrated. Attracting people from around western Sydney and the entire State will only benefit the people of Parramatta. Parramatta is important because it is the capital of western Sydney and because it is critical to the progress of western Sydney and it has some fantastic facilities.

Parramatta stadium complements other venues such as Rosehill racecourse, which is another excellent facility. It is also adjacent to Parramatta Park, a wonderful park that also includes sporting fields, and Kings Oval, which is a popular cricket venue. These venues are in areas that are part of the history of our nation and they provide facilities at which people can enjoy themselves while exercising. The Sporting Venues Authorities (Venues NSW) Bill provides for the expanded use of the stadium. That is particularly important for the community because not many venues can hold so many people. I will be speaking to the Minister and I will canvass the Venues NSW board about holding more events at the stadium, not only local events but also State and international events. As I have said repeatedly, this is the positive side of the House and the other side is the negative side.

Ms Linda Burney: That is such an old line.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Dr GEOFF LEE: It is sad that the Opposition continues to be negative about the State and that it does not want to get it moving. An article at *TrueLocal.com.au* under the heading "Parramatta trumps Manly again in tourism" states:

PARRAMATTA is better known by potential tourists than Manly and The Rocks, a study by Tourism NSW shows.

Parramatta ranked number one alongside Bondi as the Sydney suburb potential visitors could name unprompted.

Again we see the close nexus between sporting venues, tourism and economic benefits. I commend the people of Parramatta and the Parramatta City Council for their efforts. As I said, I have watched the Parramatta Eels play many games. I must admit that the results at some have not been the best, but a couple of years ago we reached the finals. I also attended a fantastic Motocross event a couple of years ago that involved the organisers trucking in a huge amount of soil. The aim is to open up the facility to the many communities in western Sydney. This Government's goal is to provide a venue that people can access easily and to discourage people from driving past Parramatta to attend social or cultural events. Parramatta has it all. Last weekend we celebrated Deepavali, the Australian-Indian community's celebration of the triumph of light over darkness. That all-day event attracted between 18,000 and 20,000 people to the stadium. It is also used for corporate functions and was the venue for the launch Alive 90.5 FM, a community radio station dedicated to the Hills, Holroyd and Parramatta area.

I thank the stadium trust for its stewardship of the facility over many years. The trustees are: Craig Gallagher, the chair; Pam Smith, the deputy chair; Alan Overton AM; Denise Fitzgerald AM; John Brown AO;

Dorris Drewery; and Patrick Smith. Alan Overton has always been most helpful in assisting people to appreciate the value of the venue. He has done a huge amount of work and has been fully committed to the community over his 76 years of life. He is a great ambassador for and champion of Parramatta. I look forward to seeing the expansion plans for the Parramatta Stadium. I know that our excellent Minister has some wonderful ideas.

The times are changing and we must move with them, and this bill will allow us to do so. We must adapt to the different economic climate and the venue must be able to cater for corporate functions. Redevelopment could include providing for corporate groups to use the function rooms, watch the pre-game warm up and meet the players. That would be a fantastic opportunity for business people and members of the local community to meet the players and to be involved in the club. I will be talking to the Minister and to Venues NSW about promoting those opportunities not only for Parramatta, which is the capital of western Sydney, but also for the entire area.

The creation of Venues NSW will see all facilities under its control become more effective and commercially productive in securing additional events for New South Wales. No longer will venues be competing with each other for the leisure and entertainment dollar. They will no longer be forced to devalue their product to attract interested parties and people will no longer miss out because of a dated management structure. Instead, Venues NSW heralds a new era of competition, where jamming a round peg into a square hole is no longer the answer to every issue, as it was for the past 16 years. Venues NSW creates a competitive edge in marketing. In looking to attract major events it can now sit at a negotiating table offering multiple venues to prospective promoters. We can offer one, two or three venues. One authority means multiple venues, which equals good business.

Facilities such as Parramatta Stadium are vital community assets. They are expensive to build and maintain, and as such we need to be fiscally responsible in maximising revenue opportunities. Venues NSW will generate numerous cost savings as a result of its increased purchasing capacity. We are expecting savings in key areas such as marketing, planning and security, to name but a few. Just as important will be the sharing of knowledge and experience by staff in all venues in the key areas of financial services and asset management. An advantage of that management structure will be the leveraging achieved through economies of scale. I have learnt from my business background, from working for myself and from working at the universities, that economies of scale are important not only in purchasing power but also in strategic planning and seizing opportunities as they occur. The bill will address the race to the lowest price in order to maximise the best use of fantastic assets not only in Parramatta but right around the State.

These reforms will increase tourism and attract bigger and better events to Sydney, highlighting that the New South Wales Government is delivering on its commitment to the people of western Sydney and New South Wales, but especially the people of Parramatta. The era of people in western Sydney being taken for granted is well and truly over. I am proud to say that Venues NSW will look to establish greater access to a much wider and more diverse range of sporting and cultural events. This initiative is about putting the interests of the people of New South Wales first. It will effectively see western Sydney, and particularly Parramatta, placed on the global map as vibrant regions of opportunity. As we know, Parramatta is the capital of western Sydney, and it will continue to develop as the service centre for the whole of western Sydney. I commend the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Hon. Graham Annesley, for his work on this bill, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [11.22 a.m.]: I start by apologising to the Minister's staff at the back of the Chamber, because those four people have spent all day and night over some weeks writing speeches for Government members. Boy oh boy, they must be extremely disappointed with the way in which Government members have delivered them. I know that Government members do not have a lot of resources, but as a former staffer I know there is nothing more frustrating than to put all that work into preparing speeches only to hear them delivered in the way they were by this lot opposite. I have seen some crazy things, but I doubt whether I will see too many people from Newcastle—

Mr Jai Rowell: Point of order: In the 45 seconds that the member has been speaking he has not addressed the leave of the bill.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! I note the contribution of the member for Canterbury.

Mr John Sidoti: A bit more drivell.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Drummoyne and the member for Canterbury will come to order. I ask the member for Keira to return to the leave of the bill.

Mr RYAN PARK: The bill is important, but after the effort that staffers put into it and writing away for hours, they must be disappointed to hear the delivery by the member for Parramatta. For the member for Newcastle to come into this place and defend this bill—

Mr Jai Rowell: Point of order—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Jai Rowell: My point of order relates to relevance. The member, who is now two minutes into his speech, is clearly not following your ruling.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Keira may continue his speech.

Mr RYAN PARK: After the effort that staffers have put into the bill, to hear the speeches delivered by the member for Newcastle and the member for Parramatta must be very disappointing.

Mr John Barilaro: I would not like to be the writer of your speeches, given the way you are going on.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Monaro will cease interjecting.

Mr RYAN PARK: Boy oh boy, I feel for the writers. No-one else does in this place, but I want it recorded in *Hansard* that the member for Keira feels sorry for the Minister's staff, given the way the speeches were delivered.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! The member for Monaro will refrain from making inappropriate and unparliamentary comments.

Mr RYAN PARK: It hurt me greatly. Let me go to the Government's policies relating to this bill. Local schools will make local decisions. We have local health boards because this Government believes all decisions are best made locally. We now have local government deciding on major State infrastructure projects. We will see how long that policy lasts; there was a good report in the newspapers the other day about how well planning systems are currently going. Anyway, that is about local government. The bill we are now considering is not about local decision-making at all. I know Government members like catch-phrases, so I have come up with one for this bill: local venues, Sydney controls.

I have heard nothing more stupid than the member for Newcastle and the member for Heathcote saying, "It is a good decision that our local venue authorities will lose control." I struggle with that. Most people are a little parochial about their local communities; they like to think that they do things better and in a way that the local community supports. But, boy oh boy, the member for Newcastle and the member for Heathcote will have some explaining to do when we have finished with them. I can see the headlines now: We don't want a local decision here; we want a Sydney board deciding for us. Wow, that will go down well in the *Newcastle Herald*. I am sure the *Illawarra Mercury*, that fine paper down my way, would love to hear that its local member, the member for Heathcote, has gone in very hard today defending the Illawarra venues authority by saying, "You're not bad, but really you're not good enough and we'll give control to a Sydney board."

Their speeches were embarrassing. Do not accept things from a Minister's office without reading them first. Lesson one for Government members is: When a Minister's office does a very good speech—and they were very good speeches, but poorly delivered—please check how it will go down in the local area. There is nothing more embarrassing than a local member getting up in this Chamber, particularly a member representing parochial areas like Newcastle and the Illawarra, and saying, "I think Sydney does it better." That does not go down well in the Illawarra, and it will not go down well when reported in the *Newcastle Herald*. Boy oh boy, we will be letting those papers know what those members said in this place. I know my very good friend the member for Cessnock will be letting them know that they are not bad up in the Hunter but they are not quite as good as a Sydney board.

I will certainly be letting locals know that the member for Heathcote does not think we in the Illawarra are too bad, but we need a Sydney board to make sure we are doing it all right. What a load of rubbish. Let us

talk about the track records of local Illawarra venues authorities. What government delivered the \$30 million upgrade to WIN Stadium? The member for Wollongong worked hand in hand with local government to get \$30 million allocated to ensure that venue could cater for large-scale events. It was a Labor Government and a local Labor member who was parochial about her area who delivered that funding. She fought for her local area and ensured she got the funds to upgrade that stadium. Government members should look at this and see how it works. That was funding provided by a Labor Government. It was a Labor Government.

What is this Government's track record when it comes to venues authorities? Last year those opposite promised—with this side—\$2.5 million for Lysaght Oval. I understand that when in government one might say, "We might allocate that money elsewhere in the Illawarra", but those opposite promised \$2.5 million for a home for football on the South Coast. I watched the budget come and go this year, but there was no money for Lysaght Oval. An inquiry has begun into Lysaght Oval, which is fantastic. I have asked for the terms of reference, but I have received nothing. I have asked who will be involved in the inquiry and who will be looking at the matter, but I have heard nothing. It is a bit like the daylight saving inquiry. One does not announce an inquiry and then say, "We'll hide it away. We'll just send it to the media. We won't actually do anything, but it sounded good to get us out of the 24-hour news cycle." That is not the way it works.

We understand that those in the Tweed want to be on a separate time line. We understand that those in the Murrumbidgee want to be on a separate time line—as they are at the moment. I am interested in those inquiries. I am particularly interested in the Lysaght Oval inquiry because it concerns a major facility in the Illawarra that the Liberal Party and the Labor Party committed \$2.5 million towards in the lead-up to the last election. Both parties went to the community with that commitment, but yet again the Government is walking away from a key commitment. If the Government does not want to allocate the \$2.5 million to Lysaght Oval, that is fine, but put it to use somewhere else. That is the Government's real track record when it comes to major venues.

Local procurement is important because in areas like the Illawarra, large-scale events bring with them large-scale economic benefits to the catering industry and the security industry, as well as to event staff and those who help people move around venues, et cetera. I cannot see one benefit from those decisions being made by a Sydney-based board that will try to get some form of economy of scale. It sounds fantastic if you are a Sydney-based member of Parliament because it largely means that Sydney providers get contracts, but it is concerning if you are a regional member of Parliament because it means that your local community, local businesses and local suppliers, are likely to miss out. That is one major concern about this bill. I put on the record that if one business in my region loses out because of this bill, because they are exempt or their price is not right or something like that, there will be hell to pay.

I am from a community that is doing it tough. It sounds all right to come in here and say, "We will get economies of scale, we will get a Sydney board to determine it—one size fits all." But it does not, folks: One size does not fit all. In other debates those opposite have said that decisions are better made locally. They should start applying that philosophy in this bill. If they think local decision-making is good enough for schools and health, and the other stupid slang they use for part 3A or part 15A, or whatever it is now, then it is good enough for sporting authorities. If it is good enough for those policies, let us get it into this bill. Let us keep decisions about major events and venues at a local level.

The member for Cessnock referred to advisory boards. We understand that they exist for regional members for Parliament. If those opposite think we will be fooled by that, they are wrong. Those advisory boards will essentially report to one central board. Wow, that is surprising. The crumbs will be given to the regions, but when it comes to big decisions they will be made by a Sydney-based board. That is not reasonable, that is not fair, and that is not the way in which one attracts investment to regional areas. The Government's record on this is probably pretty good, because it went down this path with its \$240 million regional relocation grants program. I think that 34 people have taken up the grant and 33 people have given back the money. It is so hard to qualify for the grant, it is not funny.

The basis of the regional relocation grants policy is very similar to this stupid bill because it states that the Illawarra and the Hunter should be part of Sydney. We should not be part of Sydney as we have different concerns and different challenges. It is very important for members of Parliament to recognise that. It is particularly important for those opposite from the Hunter and the Illawarra to recognise that. When members get their fine written speeches from Ministers' offices, I urge them to check the fine print, because saying things like, "Sydney does it better", when one is from the Illawarra or the Hunter does not really cut it. I urge

Government members from regional areas to rethink this policy. They got it wrong with regional relocation grants. All bar 30-odd people have taken up those grants, but no-one from regional areas, particularly the Illawarra and the Hunter, have benefited from that policy. The same will occur with this bill.

Local communities will not thank their parliamentary representatives for falling into line with their Sydney colleagues. Those members should stand up for their communities, not fall in line with their central business district [CBD] mates. It is important that they recognise that as local members of Parliament. I urge them to take the time to speak to the Minister—who is a very fine touch football referee—about their concerns, to be brave enough to stick up for their community and to tell him that this is not right. Those in the Hunter will not benefit from the bill; we in the Illawarra will not benefit from the bill. Only Sydney-based members of Parliament will benefit from the bill, and I know that that is Mr Sidoti, who would be very supportive of this bill. But those in Heathcote, the Hunter and Kiama should not support a bill that strikes at the heart of regional communities and regional prosperity in their local communities.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [11.37 a.m.]: We have just heard 15 minutes of absolute waffle from the member for Keira. I do not think he had even read the legislation because he had a tiny piece of paper with a couple of notes—

Ms Linda Burney: That is how good he is.

Mr JAI ROWELL: I commend and have respect for the member for Keira because he is an articulate type of guy, but he underwent Labor media training 101—if you have nothing important to say, walk around the Chamber, bang, point, repeat yourself time and again, and hopefully you will knock out your 15 minutes.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. There is a long line before the member for Wollondilly gets there—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. If members are going to take points of order, they should be relevant. I remind members of Standing Order 52, which states that a member has the right to be heard in silence. I am happy to call members from both sides to order if they ignore that standing order.

Mr JAI ROWELL: I did digress, and the only advice I have for the member for Canterbury is that she watches out for the member for Keira, who has his eye on her job when he becomes the leader. I support the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill because it will deliver a practical and vibrant future for our local stadiums. Local communities will benefit from increased regional events and tourism opportunities, sport and recreation development, and improved community participation. The bill amends the Sporting Venues Act 2008 and repeals the Parramatta Stadium Trust Act 1988. This bill will establish a new authority known as Venues NSW. The Illawarra Venues Authority, Parramatta Stadium Trust and the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority will be dissolved and their assets, rights and liabilities will be transferred to Venues NSW, which will be governed by one board.

The Government currently operates venues that will now fall under the management of Venues NSW including the Parramatta Stadium, WIN Stadium, WIN Entertainment Centre, Ausgrid Stadium, Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Newcastle Showground, as well as other venues managed by the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. The O'Farrell Government is committed to providing sporting and entertainment venues to the community for a range of social and economic reasons. A key objective of the bill is to maintain a high level of community engagement to ensure that communities continue to have a say in how venues are managed through local venues councils. The councils will provide our local stadiums with the strategic direction and leadership needed to utilise resources and personnel. The councils will focus on the region's needs and facilitate consultation with stakeholders to ensure that venue operations meet those needs.

The local venues councils will also work with Venues NSW to engage with community about regional initiatives and to develop venue master plans with strong grassroots involvement from community. The councils will liaise with communities to develop strategies to meet government priorities linked to increasing regional events and tourism, sport and recreation development, and community participation. The consolidated nature of Venues NSW will give our regional stadiums and entertainment centres an opportunity for cost savings from fiscally responsible measures. These will include shared procurement, consolidated service delivery contracts and staff being shared in areas such as finance and asset management. No additional resources will be required as the new management structure will be funded from existing resources.

Under the proposed new structure the Venues NSW management team will be supported by a venues manager and staff located in the Illawarra, Hunter and western Sydney regions—despite the scaremongering of those opposite. This will mean that local venues will continue to provide local jobs in the Illawarra, western Sydney and Hunter areas—a very important change. A strong case exists in support of making these changes. A 2010 independent review conducted by KPMG for the Department of Premier and Cabinet investigated governance and structure arrangements for New South Wales government operated venues.

The KPMG report recommended that regional sporting venue responsibilities and operations should be combined. However, the Labor Government failed to act on any of the recommendations—yet another example of all talk and no action from those opposite. A separate independent review by Ernst and Young came to a similar conclusion. It recommended consolidation as a way of increasing the revenue of regional venues. The review also proposed the establishment of a central events and marketing role to improve venue use. The Government recognises the need for combining these responsibilities. The similarities involved in managing the venues would enable benefits to be gained from sharing experiences and combining resources. Consolidation will provide the most effective way for the venues to work together to source and promote events, share opportunities and improve commercial performance, community participation, utilisation and increased revenue.

In the Wollondilly and Macarthur regions sporting venues and stadiums are second to none. The Campbelltown stadium—home to the Wests Tigers—is owned and operated by Campbelltown City Council. I know that the member for Camden often attends a local game there. The council does a fantastic job of attracting major events to boost tourism in the Wollondilly and Campbelltown areas. In fact, last weekend—after a mammoth effort of 900 crew hours and more than 6,000 tonnes of dirt—Campbelltown stadium was transformed from a premier footy pitch into a world-class motocross track, which brought thousands from out of the area to the region. Wollondilly will benefit from tourism opportunities created by taking a holistic approach to regional events and venues. Through measures such as those proposed in the bill, larger events and greater numbers of tourists will be attracted to the region.

Through the innovative measures proposed by the O'Farrell Government, government venues will deliver efficient and sensible commercial outcomes for both regional areas and New South Wales as a whole. The community-focused structure of Venues NSW will ensure that a high level of regional engagement and community involvement remains central to the management of these iconic sporting and entertainment venues. I thank the Minister for Sport and Recreation for his hard work and dedication to the sporting portfolio. It is great to see a Minister working so hard. I know that the people of Wollondilly and Campbelltown will benefit from his efforts. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [11.44 a.m.]: The object of the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill 2011 is to establish Venues NSW to replace the Parramatta Stadium Trust and existing regional sporting venues authorities and to transfer the assets, rights and liabilities of those bodies to Venues NSW. As my colleagues stated earlier, the Opposition does not support the bill because it will take power away from local communities and sporting groups, and concentrate that power in the hands of a select few bureaucrats in Sydney. The bill amends the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008 and repeals the Parramatta Stadium Trust Act 1988 to constitute Venues NSW. It abolishes already existing regional sporting venues authorities and the Parramatta Stadium Trust, transferring the assets and liabilities of these existing venues to the centrally controlled Venues NSW.

The Government came in on a promise to give power to local communities, but it is taking it away. The Opposition holds the clear view that local sporting venues should be controlled by local communities. It is a no-brainer. We need locals who know the area, who understand the needs of the local community and who have local expertise in running local sports venues. The bill disbands the Parramatta Stadium Trust, the Illawarra Venues Authority and the Hunter Venues Trust, transferring the assets and liabilities of those bodies to Venues NSW. I do not know how those members sitting opposite representing electorates from the Illawarra and the Hunter for the first time can support this bill. It takes power away from the communities that voted for them. If those members had any brains they would take a comfort stop when the bill is being voted on. Perhaps they should not hear the bells and stay in their rooms. But if they vote in favour of the bill the Opposition will whack them in their electorates. I leave that up to them to decide.

The proposed new structure is as follows: three regional advisory councils—Hunter, Illawarra and Western Sydney—consisting of between three and seven members reporting to a central Venues NSW board, which will consist of no fewer than seven and no more than 11 members. All are eligible for remuneration. That could result in a maximum of 32 members being paid to do a job that for the past five years existing board

members have done for nothing. Interestingly, good community advocates for the Illawarra, such as the member for Keira and the member for Wollongong, will confirm that the Illawarra Venues Authority consisted of volunteer members who sacrificed their time for the local community. They required no government subsidies or remuneration for the past five years. The Government now sees fit to change something that works well. Thus far the appointment process for board members has not been mentioned. We do not know whether it will be a merit-based selection process or a bunch of the Premier's cronies.

Mr Chris Patterson: Nick Greiner.

Mr NICK LALICH: I was going to say that. Perhaps this is yet another board for Nick Greiner. I would love to know how many boards he is on and how much remuneration he receives each year. I am sure he gets far more than the Premier. We have had no indication of who is eligible to apply to be a board member or what skills are required. Perhaps one only needs to be a member of the Liberal Party to become a board member. We will wait to see what Premier O'Farrell does. He has done sillier things than that; nothing would surprise me. The Opposition cannot support a bill so important to local communities yet so light on important detail.

Sporting venues play such an important role in our community. Management should be well qualified and dedicated to the local area. So far, all we know is that board appointments are at the discretion of the Minister. The board in Sydney will make decisions on sporting venues located outside Sydney—again, no say for local communities. The regional advisory councils will only provide advice and consultation. We should have local communities run local venues. The Opposition opposes this bill. I hope the new members for the Hunter and Illawarra will also oppose this bill.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.50 a.m.]: I welcome this opportunity to speak in debate on the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill 2011 which, as previous speakers have said, focuses on the importance of managing our sporting venues in Wollongong, the Hunter region and Parramatta. This bill continues the O'Farrell Government's commitment to really important principles—efficiency, empowering communities, restoring integrity and accountability—the things that the New South Wales public voted very strongly in support of when they elected the Coalition with a massive majority on 26 March this year because of Labor's sad, sorry and sloppy approach to the oversight of our State. Those opposite would not know a strategy if they fell over one. This bill provides a strategy to manage certain sporting venues, yet preserves what is really important to this side of the House, for example, community input. It is questionable whether the member for Cabramatta and particularly the member for Keira have read the bill.

The local advisory committees will include local people, so they will have an input into the management of sporting venues in those important areas of New South Wales. The Government is committed to identifying areas in every part of its legislative framework and the administration of this State that require further transparency and further efficiency—it is an ongoing process. We began this process back in March and we have already seen the consolidation of a number of bodies, such as NSW Maritime and the Roads and Transport Authority [RTA] into Transport for NSW. This bill adopts a similar approach, by focusing on how to make the systems in New South Wales work for the people. That is why we are here. The Government has identified the management of sporting venues as one area requiring reform to ensure the alignment of our interests as a State with the operation of the venues to ensure they are in the best interests of the local community.

Previous speakers referred to the two reviews that recommended changes in governance and structural arrangements supporting regional venues that we see in this bill. KPMG did an independent review in 2010, which found that efficiency gains could be made from the consolidation of the responsibilities of a number of regional venue management authorities and that is what we see in this bill. The findings of the KPMG review indicated that a combined authority, which this bill establishes, would provide the most effective way for sourcing and promoting events and sharing commercial performance, as well as community participation. In 2010 Ernst & Young conducted a separate review for Treasury and it found again that a consolidated body would increase revenue, as it provided more scope for identifying efficiencies and commercial opportunities. These reviews were ignored by the former Labor Government, which refused to consider reforming the ways in which our regional sporting venues could be managed for the betterment of our regions and to make our assets work harder for the State.

I commend Minister Annesley for taking up that initiative and that challenge and for bringing this bill before the House. The Liberal-Nationals Government believes that a consolidated authority for managing

sporting events in Wollongong, the Hunter and Parramatta is an opportunity to provide more transparency and enable us to deliver for the communities who so strongly supported us in the election this year. As the Hon. Michael Gallacher, Minister for the Hunter, pointed out in his second reading speech, the administration of sporting venues under the previous Labor Government was divisive and political. He used the example of the Ausgrid stadium in the Hunter: the Labor Party made appointments to the management board of the stadium on a political basis, which disregarded community interest in the operation of the stadium. What a sad and sorry story that was.

At the heart of this bill is the establishment of a new authority, Venues NSW, which will assume the current responsibilities of the Illawarra Venues Authority, Parramatta Stadium Trust and the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority—there will be a single asset portfolio for these important entertainment venues. When this bill is proclaimed all sporting venues previously managed by those three authorities will be consolidated under Venues NSW. This new authority will provide economies of scale in its operation. Something we have to do in the State is to make what we have work smarter, and that is what this side of politics is good at doing.

The Government will be able to entrust Venues NSW with the alignment and integration of the venues under its oversight, which will then be aligned with the strategic priorities of our State. What a novel notion, to have a strategy, a management plan, a bill that gives effect to the mandate we have so strongly from our election in March. Following these priorities, the new authority will seek opportunities to boost tourism to our regional areas, and that is a great thing. We have so many things to offer in our regional areas to bring new people to these venues, such as sporting events and entertainment events. The bill provides for community access and participation, which those on the other side ignored. Major venues that Venues NSW will manage are the Parramatta stadium, the WIN stadium, the WIN entertainment stadium in Wollongong, Ausgrid stadium, Newcastle Entertainment Centre and showground and all the other venues currently managed by the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority.

This Government wants each of these venues utilised to reach its full potential—that is what we are about on this side of the House. For so many local communities in New South Wales sporting and other events provide opportunities for tourism, and for the entire community and for people outside regional areas to come together to enjoy the atmosphere and the events. Not only will better management of these venues provide better opportunities for community involvement, but their management will be better aligned with the economic goals of this State. We have five very clear goals that are reflected in our State Plan, which we adopted at the time of the budget. Venues NSW will provide more opportunities for better managed events. It will not only boost tourism to our regions but also provide important additional employment opportunities for stadium workers.

The new authority will provide a boost to local economies in Wollongong, the Hunter and Parramatta, which are important areas that this Government seeks to represent strongly in this House. There is a potential influx of tourists, sporting teams and entertainers. By aligning community interests with this Government's objectives for the State, Venues NSW will provide a higher level of community engagement than what is possible under the current arrangements put in place by the former Government. As I said before—and the member for Keira seeks to ignore it—this bill will establish local community advisory committees that will provide advice to Venues NSW on the needs of each region. There will be three advisory committees: the Hunter Local Venues Council, the Illawarra Local Venues Council and the Western Sydney Local Venues Council.

Mr Ryan Park: All reporting to Sydney.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: I repeat: Three local advisory committees will be established. These councils will act as the conduit between Venues NSW and the local community by not only providing advice to Venues NSW but also establishing a formal means of feedback to the Government with regard to the management of those local venues.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Keira has had his opportunity to contribute to the debate. I remind him of Standing Order 52.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON: After consulting with local communities, each council will have input into developing venue plans and the management of events at each venue to maximise community engagement and involvement and to maximise the economic priorities of the State, our State Plan and tourism. I strongly

commend this bill to the House because it reflects our State's strategic priorities. It is about this Government putting matters in order and cleaning up the mess that Labor left when it did not act on reports that set out very clearly what would best deliver for the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [11.59 a.m.]: It is with pleasure that I participate in debate on the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill 2011. Such is the passion elicited by the bill from members on both sides of the House during this debate, particularly during the contribution made by the member for Keira and some Government members such as the member for Vaucluse who preceded me, that I wonder what can go wrong and whether the sky will fall in as a result of this legislation. My reading of the bill suggests that nothing untoward will occur. Perhaps some of the passion evinced by members has overstated the position. Nevertheless, on balance, some issues related to the bill cause me some concern.

On the one hand I understand the Government's claims that benefits such as economies of scale will result from amalgamation of the management of sporting facilities in the Illawarra, the Hunter and Parramatta, but on the other hand I am convinced of the need for competitive tension among venues across the State. This bill may well reduce opportunities to benefit from local expertise, the thoughtfulness of local communities and the passion that has driven local communities to develop sporting and entertainment venues. I do not intend to discuss what happened in the Illawarra and Parramatta, because other members have wide-ranging expertise in those matters, but for quite some time I have been a keen observer of events in the Hunter. While I appreciate that the Minister felt the need to take action in relation to Hunter Venues, removal of the board raised some concerns about allegations that were made against good people who work caught up in a turf war involving the Government, Hunter Venues and the management of the Newcastle Knights.

Although one party probably cannot be blamed for all the problems, it must be said that it was the responsibility of the previous Government to resolve the matter in a timely manner. That did not happen. The previous member for Newcastle and previous Minister for the Hunter at that time, Jodi McKay, perhaps received some poor advice. The action she took inflamed the situation and resulted in the loss of people such as Ted Atchison, the former chairman of Hunter Venues—a person I have observed over many years and for whom I have high regard. It is very sad that such people feel they have been badly treated. A number of former associates of Ted Atchison who were involved in the development of Ausgrid Stadium are saddened by the outcome. The bill seems to suggest that local expertise in financial management and governance is not adequate to manage stadiums and venues. I categorically deny that that is the case, particularly in the Hunter, and I would be very surprised if sufficient knowledge and expertise did not exist in other areas.

I am concerned about the centralised administration of venues. While I note the inclusion of advisory boards, I think all members understand that advisory boards are a sop to local communities who for many years have driven the development of venues. We all understand that very substantial State investment is involved and that the State wants to achieve a proper return from the appropriate management of facilities. Despite all the righteous indignation and calls by the Opposition for the Government to do certain things, we all know that this bill is a fait accompli. That is a political fact of life. I state for the record, without having been implored by the member for Cessnock to do so—we do not need the member for Cessnock to direct speakers in this debate—that I appreciate the passion underlying support for venues. I believe that this bill is a kick in the guts to local communities, particularly those in the Hunter, who have a long history of hard work that has been dedicated to development of venues, expertise and co-opting of expertise that has been needed to operate the facilities.

I note the presence of the Minister in the Chamber and understand that he felt it was necessary to intervene in relation to certain issues. However, an examination of the economic issues of redevelopment of the western grandstand of the Ausgrid Stadium suggests that the Minister's intervention probably was a disproportionate response to a relatively minor cost variation in the overall scheme. I am not aware of sufficient justification in the form of the cost variation being so great that it warranted ministerial intervention. I believe justification for ministerial intervention needs to be greater than existed in that instance. If the circumstances of the Minister's intervention in that instance are meant to be interpreted as a yardstick for ministerial intervention there would be many government projects warranting ministerial intervention.

The current Government will need to be mindful of the implications of its actions because I will be very surprised if similar cost variations do not exist in future government projects. I am sure consideration of the circumstances justifying a suggestion that a board of management is incompetent will emerge again. Nevertheless, the die is cast and I have no doubt that the bill will become law. However, I hope the Government will keep an open mind, keenly observe what occurs in the future, and finetune processes to ensure that the best use is made of local resources and expertise.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [12.06 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill 2011 which was introduced by the Minister for Sport and Recreation. It is a great move to introduce new legislation to clean up the mess left by the previous Labor Government. The fundamental question that should be asked in relation to this legislation is: Who owns the asset?

Dr Geoff Lee: The State Government.

Mr TONY ISSA: The State Government is entitled to manage its own asset. I cannot see a problem with that. I became seriously concerned after the member for Keira had spoken in the debate for 15 minutes without contributing anything but criticism of the current Government for lacking vision.

Dr Geoff Lee: Yes, it was very sad.

Mr TONY ISSA: Contributions to debate by Government members were positive, but contributions by Labor members were negative.

Dr Geoff Lee: Ours were competent, but theirs were incompetent.

Mr TONY ISSA: I agree. The Government has a vision for the future but the Opposition lives in the shadow of the past, and that is what this debate is all about.

Dr Geoff Lee: We do not need to say more.

Mr TONY ISSA: Nothing more needs to be said. Unlike the member for Keira and other Opposition members, I do not intend to waste the time of the House by criticising the Government. Rather I wish to thank the Minister's staff for their research, hard work and support of this Chamber ensuring that the truth is conveyed to the community so that people know the underlying principles of the bill, exactly how the bill has been formulated, and the benefits that this legislation will deliver. Obviously, Opposition members are not interested in doing that. I support the bill because it will create Venues NSW, which will be a new authority with responsibility for government-owned sports and entertainment venues in Parramatta, Wollongong and Newcastle. Venues NSW will consolidate the Illawarra Venues Authority, the Parramatta Stadium Trust and the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority to create a single organisation that will be managed by one government board. This bill is all about one board managing venues on behalf of the State. I am a councillor of 24 years experience.

Dr Geoff Lee: And a good councillor.

Mr TONY ISSA: I also have had experience as a deputy mayor and mayor. I acknowledge the interjections made by my good friend and colleague the member for Parramatta, Dr Geoff Lee, that highlight the benefits that his electorate of Parramatta will receive following creation of the new board. Nobody knows better what is in the best interests of an electorate than an area's member of Parliament. As a member of Parliament, a councillor, a former deputy mayor and mayor, I am certain that 24 years of working for my local community enables me to judge what is best to meet the needs of that community.

Other venues which will come under Venues NSW include WIN Stadium and WIN Entertainment Centre in Wollongong—I do not know what the member for Wollongong was talking about—Ausgrid Stadium, Newcastle Entertainment Centre and Showground and other venues managed by the Hunter Region Sporting Venue Authority. Probably one day we will include a stadium at Canterbury. I heard negative comments from members of the Opposition that the Government is not including the community. I state quite clearly that local communities will continue to have a say in how their venues are managed through local venues councils which will be established in the Hunter, Illawarra and western Sydney.

Local venues councils will ensure that venues meet the needs of the community by helping with community consultation, providing feedback about plans for the venue, for example, master plans, providing advice on improvements to venues and providing advice on strategies linked to regional tourism and events, sport and recreation development and community participation. Regional engagement is one of the bill's key objectives. Local communities will continue to have a say in how their venues are managed through local venues councils which will be established in the Hunter, Illawarra and western Sydney. The chair of each local venues council will be on the board of Venues NSW. We are not excluding anyone. They will have a say in and representation on the board.

No additional funding is required as the new management structure can be funded from existing resources. Under the proposed new structure a head of Venues NSW will be supported by a management team responsible for asset management, development and operational oversight, business development, marketing and corporate services. The management team will be supported by a venues manager and staff located in the Illawarra, Hunter and western Sydney regions. This means that local venues will continue to provide local jobs in the Illawarra, western Sydney and Hunter areas. Future operational requirements will be addressed by Venues NSW management as per usual practice.

The establishment of Venues NSW will not preclude any existing contracts with suppliers, sporting organisations or sponsors from going ahead. That was a concern of the member for Keira. This Government has made a commitment that they are on board. If members of the Opposition had read the bill before making their contributions they would have supported it. Members of the Government have read the bill but members of the Opposition make negative comments. This change is about delivering the best possible community and commercial outcomes rather than simply cutting costs. As the venues do not receive funding for operations from Government, it is important that they achieve sound commercial outcomes. The Government provides venues with capital funding assistance when required.

The Government wants to include other venues in the future. The bill consolidates the responsibilities of the Illawarra Venues Authority, Parramatta Stadium Trust and Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. However, there is the potential to bring other venues under Venues NSW at a later time. The bill has been drafted to allow for the further consolidation of government-operated venues should this be considered beneficial in the future. The Government is not making these changes because of problems with the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. These reforms have a much broader focus than just dealing with the management of the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. In addition, KPMG recommended these reforms in 2010—the former Government ignored them but this Government takes them seriously—before any issues with the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority's budget became apparent.

The Government introduced the bill because these changes will lead to improved community and commercial outcomes for all the venues that will come under Venues NSW. The Act has been reviewed because the Government wants to provide a greater level of transparency and the opportunity for a legal review to ensure that the legislation would provide the best possible framework for achieving the Government's objectives. A part of this review has been the inclusion of local venues councils. The new regulations will include that the board of Venues NSW will have a maximum of two terms, and that the board will include the chairs of the three local venues councils, and an officer from the Department of Education and Communities. The regulations will also include further information on the local venues councils and state that, in the board's absence, the Minister can nominate who will be responsible for a period of six months.

The board of Venues NSW will have up to 11 members and include the chairs of each local venues council and an employee from the Office of Communities. A new board will be established for Venues NSW which will include responsibilities for the venues formerly managed by Parramatta Stadium Trust, the Illawarra Venues Authority and the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. It is proposed that Venues NSW will include business streams based on existing structures. Each stream will continue to have its own set of accounts, including budget, balance sheet and profit and loss statement. This is a great bill and I commend it to the House.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [12.17 p.m.]: I support the Sporting Venues Authorities Amendment (Venues NSW) Bill 2011, which is important legislation. I congratulate the Minister on introducing it to this Parliament. Like the member for Granville, I am appalled and disappointed by the very negative attitude towards this legislation.

Ms Linda Burney: You don't mean that.

Mr ANDREW GEE: I mean it. Members of the Opposition have taken a very negative approach.

Dr Geoff Lee: Positive—negative.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Yes, and that is why those opposites have been reduced to the ragtag band of political misfits roaming the political wilderness that they are today, because of the negative approach they take to every piece of legislation that comes into this House. Those opposites have complained about lack of local input with respect to these venues. Members of the Opposition clearly have not read the legislation because if they had they would have seen that section 18 provides for local venues councils.

Dr Geoff Lee: What was that?

Mr ANDREW GEE: Section 18 provides for a number of local venues councils, including the Hunter Local Venues Council, the Illawarra Local Venues Council and the Western Sydney Local Venues Council. The member for Canterbury may well interject but today we have heard nothing but bizarre negative ramblings from her. She even bizarrely referred to the member for Wollondilly as "darling". That shows how strange and twisted things have become on the opposition benches. Local venues councils will ensure that venues meet the needs of local communities. They will promote community consultation. They will provide feedback about plans for the venues. They will provide advice on improvement to venues and on strategies linked to regional tourism and events, sport and recreation development and community participation. We have again been subjected to a negative campaign by members opposite. However, at the heart of this bill is community consultation.

Dr Geoff Lee: And economic sense.

Mr ANDREW GEE: That is correct. It is also economically sensible because establishing Venues NSW will require no additional funding. The new management structure can be funded from existing resources. I commend the Minister for his fine economic management. The head of Venues NSW will be supported by a management team responsible for asset management, development and operational oversight, business development, marketing and corporate services. The management team will be further supported by a venue manager and staff in each region so that local venues can continue to operate locally and to provide local jobs. As the member for Parramatta rightly pointed out, that will be of great benefit to New South Wales, including western Sydney and Parramatta.

Dr Geoff Lee: The capital of greater western Sydney.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Yes, it is. The establishment of Venues NSW will not preclude any existing contracts with suppliers, sporting organisations or sponsors from going ahead. It is about delivering the best possible community and commercial outcomes rather than simply cutting costs. As the venues do not receive funding for their operations from the Government, it is important that they achieve sound economic outcomes. The Government provides venues with capital funding assistance where it is required. That again highlights the difference between members on this side of the House and members opposite: We provide sound financial management and they provide financial mismanagement.

This bill consolidates the responsibilities of the Illawarra Venues Authority, the Parramatta Stadium Trust and the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. However, there is potential to bring other venues under the Venues NSW umbrella. The bill has been drafted to allow for further consolidation of government-operated venues should this be considered beneficial in the future. The Act was reviewed because the Government wanted to provide a greater level of transparency and the opportunity for a legal review to ensure that the legislation would provide the best possible framework for achieving its objectives. As I said, proposed section 18 deals with local venues councils. The regulations will provide that the Venues NSW board will serve for a maximum of two terms and will include the chairs of the three local venues councils and an officer from the Department of Education and Communities.

The regulations will also include further information about the local venues councils and provide that in the board's absence the Minister can nominate who will be responsible for a period of six months. The board of Venues NSW will have up to 11 members including the chairs of each local venues council—which means there will be community input—and an employee from the Office of Communities. A new board will be established for Venues NSW that will be responsible for the venues formerly managed by the Parramatta Stadium Trust, the Illawarra Venues Authority and the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority. The bill consolidates the responsibilities and operations of those bodies. It will allow the venues to reach critical mass and to take advantage of economies of scale. It is a hallmark of this bill that it has efficient management at its heart. It is proposed that Venues NSW will include business streams based on existing structures and each stream will continue to have its own set of accounts, including a budget, a balance sheet and a profit-and-loss statement.

One of the reasons we have heard so much negativity from members of the Opposition is that they are probably bored because they no longer have the treasury books to cook. Unfortunately that has brought to the fore their very negative approach to legislation introduced in this House. I am told that after a caucus meeting or two members opposite still practise cooking the books. They no longer have treasury books so they fire up the barbie and throw on address books, phone books and any other books they can find while they wait for the day

they regain the government benches. Sadly for them, it will be a long wait. In the meantime, the barbie is still burning and negativity continues. I congratulate the Minister on introducing this important legislation. It is positive and worthwhile and the entire State will benefit, particularly the regions referred to in the bill.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [12.27 p.m.]: I support the Sporting Venues Authorities (Venues NSW) Amendment Bill 2011. I commend the Minister for introducing this bill and for his continued support of south western Sydney. The Minister is a friend of Camden and has visited many times. Camden has produced many champions and this year alone Danny Geale won the International Boxing Federation middleweight world championship and Natasha Burt only last month won the women's black belt world cup grand championship in full contact sparring. I am very proud that this Government, through this Minister, sponsored the world karate event held in western Sydney.

The Minister has made time to visit and to congratulate both of these local champions. He also presented the Macarthur Hockey Association with a \$1 million cheque for a new state-of-the-art, all-weather hockey field. The member for Parramatta made a statement that I must correct for the record. He said that Parramatta is the birthplace of the nation. That is incorrect: Camden is the birthplace of the nation's wealth and the wheat, wine and wool industries primarily because of the contribution of the Macarthur family. Although it was unintentional, the member for Parramatta did mislead the House.

This bill will amend the Sporting Venues Authority Act 2008 and repeal the Parramatta Stadium Trust Act 1988 to establish a new authority, Venues NSW. The new authority will consolidate the Illawarra Venues Authority, the Parramatta Stadium Trust and the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority into one organisation managed by one governing board. As a long-suffering Parramatta Eels supporter one of my finest memories was flying down from my then home town in Port Macquarie as a 10-year-old to watch the mighty Parramatta Eels win their first premiership in 1981 against the Newtown Jets. The historians among us will remember that Parramatta went on to beat Manly in the following two grand finals. The member for Parramatta—quoting from his BlackBerry—reported that Parramatta has trumped Manly in tourism. What a wonderful achievement. Clearly, that is a repeat of the heady days of the 1982 and 1983 grand finals when Parramatta once again outshone Manly.

It was after Parramatta's first grand final appearance in 1981 that the long-suffering supporters burnt down the Cumberland Oval grandstand before the move to the Parramatta Stadium. In continuing this Government's commitment to providing transparency, a review of the Act was conducted to ensure that legislation would reflect and provide the best possible framework for achieving the Government's objectives. This Government provides investment for sporting venues for entertainment, social and economic reasons and it will continue providing those important venues with assistance to increase their alignment with its objectives and strategic priorities. This legislation will assist our communities in boosting regional tourism events and participation.

A key recommendation of this review is to establish local venues councils in the Hunter, the Illawarra and western Sydney. The local venues councils maintain for the local communities surrounding those venues an input into and a say in how their local venues are run. That is a very good point, but it is lost on those on the other side of the Chamber. The local venues councils will help with community consultation, provide feedback about plans for the venues, provide advice on improvements to venues, and provide advice on strategies linked to regional tourism and events, sport and recreation development and community participation. The local venues councils are an important component of the bill. We need and want the input and knowledge of local communities.

This Government believes in engaging the community and consulting with the community, and this bill is another way to achieve that outcome. Opposition members rabbited on about lack of community consultation. That is rich coming from Labor members who, when in government for the past 16 years, made it a sport and a daily practice not to involve the community in many of its secretive and non-consultative decision-making processes. The former Government put no value on openness, transparency and accountability. We on this side of the Chamber do.

A new Venues NSW board will be established with up to 11 members, including the chairs of each of the local venues councils and an employee of the Office of Communities. The chief executive officer will be determined as part of the implementation planning. The chief executive officer will receive support from a management team who will be responsible for asset management, development and operational oversight, business development, marketing and corporate services. The management team will receive support from a

venue manager in each region. All future operational requirements will be addressed by Venues NSW management as per usual practice. The bill will also provide the potential to bring other venues under Venues NSW at a later time should that be considered beneficial. Less is more. Consolidating these venues to pool resources and experience is common sense. Opportunity can be shared and community participation increased. Australians are renowned for their love of sport, both as spectators and participants, and this bill allows so much room for growth in both those important areas of our lives.

As I have stated before, being a Parramatta supporter, short of Greg Hartley, Graham Annesley showed no love to my mighty Eels. It is good to see the Minister has left that on the paddock and is doing a fantastic job in his portfolio. The support he has shown the people of Camden has been outstanding. The Minister oversaw about 250 first grade games, State of Origin matches and test matches from 1982 to 1997. The same level of enthusiasm and professionalism shown on the football field has been brought to this ministry.

Mr Ryan Park: He was a good ref.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I concur with the member for Keira: he was a wonderful ref. And he is a wonderful Minister. On behalf of the people of Camden, I thank the Minister for his ongoing support for the people. As I have said, I am a proud Parramatta supporter. That has been the case since the first day I played footy for St Monica's under 6's at North Parramatta. The member for Wollondilly, a dyed-in-the-wool Tigers man, mentioned Campbelltown stadium. He has tried to get me to change sides on many occasions. He argued, "You live in Camden so you should be a Tigers man." He said the Tigers win more games than the Eels, so I should be a Tigers man. He even argued that the Premier is a Tigers man, so I should be a Tigers man. The member for Wollondilly does not understand that one never changes sides; one always sticks solid. I am glad the member for Keira has made his way back to the Chamber, because he spoke a lot about "embarrassing" and "embarrassment". It is a crying shame that *Hansard* is not on video, because I would have liked to show his performance back home.

Mr Stuart Ayres: It is on video.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I stand corrected. I will be cancelling my Foxtel subscription, because my three-year-old son is sick of *JoJo's Circus* and is looking for another clown to support. I will be taking the member's speech home. He waffled on for 15 minutes, but said nothing. The member for Keira said he felt sorry for the Minister's staff—waffle, waffle, waffle. I ask the Minister to make his hardworking staff available to speak to Opposition members. Those staff—Chris Hall, Bernard Bratusa, Marc Landrigan, Cassandra Lawry, who is at the back of the Chamber today, Justin De Domenico and Belinda Rae—are great staff members. I ask the Minister to lend some of those staff to the Opposition, who have no understanding or comprehension of what we are debating today. Send Cassandra over there and let Opposition members know what is going on. This is a wonderful bill. I thank the Minister for it and commend his effort. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY (Miranda—Minister for Sport and Recreation) [12.35 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members who contributed to the debate, the shadow Minister, the member for Canterbury, and the members for the electorates of Newcastle, Riverstone, Wollongong, Heathcote, Cessnock, Parramatta, Keira, Wollondilly, Cabramatta, Vacluse, Lake Macquarie, Granville, Orange and Camden. The bill amends the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008, repeals the Parramatta Stadium Trust Act 1988 and establishes a new authority, Venues NSW. A key part of the bill is maintaining strong regional engagement through the establishment of local venues councils in each region—one for the Hunter, one for the Illawarra and another in western Sydney.

The very real expectation is that the local venues councils will comprise people with genuine local interest and experience who will utilise their skill sets to maximise opportunities for their respective venues. These councils will provide advice to Venues NSW on what each region needs and requires from these important community assets. We have heard examples of some of the community events held at these venues, including markets, concerts, festivals and fairs. To promote this important community role we will seek local venues council members that reflect a broad cross-section of the community. The Venues NSW board will also reflect the importance of community engagement. It will include the chair of each local venues council along with other appointees.

In addition to the strong community focus, this reform will deliver more efficient services and better commercial outcomes for the people of New South Wales through opportunities for the venues to work together to attract more events and share experience, contracts and staff in areas such as financial services and asset

management. The bill reflects our commitment to good stewardship of public funds. Our sporting and entertainment venues are very important community assets. However they are also expensive to build and maintain and, like all infrastructure, they require upgrades at certain times. The Government recognises that we have a responsibility to taxpayers to ensure that these publicly owned assets are managed as efficiently as possible. The previous Government missed a real opportunity to better utilise these taxpayer-funded venues by ignoring advice from independent consultants. Instead, the former Labor Government chose to prop up poorly managed multimillion-dollar projects by simply approving more taxpayer funds without addressing the governance issues.

Much has been said by those opposite in today's debate about a number of issues, and I shall address those generally. In response to queries about local autonomy and influence, I again emphasise that this bill ensures local communities will continue to have a significant say in how their local venues are managed through the establishment of the local venues councils in the Hunter and Illawarra regions, and in western Sydney, with up to seven members being selected to be the local community voice. Criticism of some of the Government's regional members for their support for this bill is unfounded because the bill ensures the continuation of local community representation and ensures that good governance is observed in the future. Local venues councils will assist Venues NSW to consult and engage with their local communities. Members of local venues councils will be local people who want to work with Venues NSW to get the best out of their local venues and the best for their communities. They will be there to represent the interests of the community, not to serve as puppets for political agendas or for certain industry groups.

Accordingly, we will be seeking representatives from a broad cross-section of the local community whose curriculum vitae boast professional and personal life experiences, a willingness to achieve for the area they represent and the capacity to be a team player. Draft advertisements have been prepared and will be going out to each area seeking people who are willing to be part of local venues councils, and requiring them to have experience that will contribute to the role of venues in strengthening the local community through recreational, sporting and cultural events, regional knowledge and/or participation in local activities, and some understanding of their local venues, facilities and business.

Local venues councils will review plans for improvements to venues to ensure that they meet the communities' needs both now and in the future. They will work with Venues NSW on strategies to increase local participation in sport and recreation, and assist in establishing more active, stronger and healthier communities. They will work with Venues NSW to develop new ideas to boost the use of venues and increase local events and regional tourism. Local venues councils will work with Venues NSW to develop new approaches to improve utilisation of these vital assets so that the people of the Illawarra, Hunter and western Sydney have the opportunity to enjoy top-class sporting and entertainment events. Most importantly, and again to ensure that local communities have a voice in all discussions relating to their regions, the chairs of the three local venues councils will sit on the Venues NSW board.

The issue of ministerial appointments was raised earlier. This change is consistent with the recent trend of legislation. In my own portfolio the Sydney Olympic Park Authority Act 2001 requires the board to consist of no fewer than three persons appointed by the Minister. The Australian Jockey and Sydney Turf Clubs Merger Act 2010, which was introduced by my predecessor, requires the trust to consist of three trustees appointed by the Minister. The Barangaroo Delivery Authority Act 2009, under former Minister Kristina Keneally, required the authority to consist of not more than four persons appointed by the Minister. Clearly, this practice has been in place for some time and was certainly in place under the previous Government.

This bill is not just about securing better commercial outcomes from local sporting and entertainment venues in the Illawarra, Hunter and Parramatta; it is also about achieving better community outcomes. The bill is about increasing the utilisation of expensive taxpayer-funded venues and, most importantly, it is about continuing to maintain a high level of community involvement. Consulting with and engaging local communities are key focuses to achieving improved community outcomes. As already outlined, the role and reporting structure of new local venues councils is pivotal and will ensure local engagement features strongly in all decisions concerning venues.

This bill is acting on not one but two independent reports that recommended the benefits of a single authority while ensuring a strong community focus is maintained, which in turn will increase opportunities for people to use these venues. In 2010 reports from KPMG and Ernst and Young made recommendations to the previous Government that alternative management models included the establishment of a central agency responsible for the management of a number of venues, as is the case with Stadiums Queensland and

VenuesWest in Western Australia. This management model would ensure that the venue operates in line with the Government's objectives and could provide some economies of scale through the joint management of multiple venues.

This change has been made to acknowledge the fact that venues are to be used for community and recreational events such as markets and festivals, as well as sporting activities, rather than simply for sporting events. Again, this breadth of function will be greatly enhanced by the respective local venues councils appointed to provide advice and direction to Venues NSW. Local venues councils will be able to table a range of options within centralised procurement to allow local communities to be included in better commercial solutions for the purchasing of goods and services whilst still delivering value-for-money initiatives to New South Wales taxpayers.

An issue was raised in the Legislative Council regarding the removal of the word "annoyance" from the legislation in relation to the power to remove persons from venues. This change reflects a Federal Court decision in *Evans v State of New South Wales* in 2008. The Federal Court declared the term "annoyance" invalid in the World Youth Day Regulation 2008 and, as a result of that decision, the term is slowly being removed from New South Wales legislation. The issue of consolidated purchasing has also been raised. Over recent years, consideration has been given to identifying opportunities for venues to work together and adopt a consolidated approach to provide mutual community and commercial benefits, for example, through shared contracts and the purchase of shared event flooring for non-sporting events. Previous independent advice also highlighted opportunities to improve a range of outcomes under the Venues NSW model. As other speakers have mentioned, while the bill at this stage incorporates only the Parramatta Stadium and the Hunter and Illawarra venues, it provides for the addition of other venues should the Government so decide based on circumstances in the future.

I will refer briefly to some of the specific issues raised by those opposite. The shadow Minister and the member for Canterbury referred to this being a more expensive exercise. In fact that is not the case. The venue councils will not receive any fee for being included, which is quite different from what currently happens. At the moment a wide variety of fees applies to venues; there is no consistency. Currently the Illawarra does not receive a fee, whereas the other two councils do. The new venue councils will not receive a fee. Overall my expectation is that no additional costs will be incurred by taxpayers as a result of the change to the legislation. The member for Canterbury referred also to the appointments process. As I have already outlined, these positions will be advertised so that the widest cross-section of the community will have an opportunity to apply.

The member for Wollongong said it was crucial for the number of St George-Illawarra rugby league games at WIN Stadium to be maintained. Whilst I am sure that is the case, what I have said in the past—and I think I may have been verballed to a degree—is that all the indications from the St George-Illawarra chief executive are that they have an ongoing commitment to the Illawarra and they intend to honour that commitment. I am sure those opposite would agree that the number of games is a commercial negotiation, and commercial negotiations are ongoing and have been a feature of hiring agreements under this Government and the previous Government. One might well ask why the previous Government committed to a \$31 million project without having secured a long-term hiring arrangement before making that commitment. The appointment process will be the same as that under the previous Government.

The member for Cessnock spoke about loss of local control and decisions being Sydney-based. I remind him that this is Venues NSW, not Venues Sydney—it represents the interests of the entire State. Under the current model the actions of some venues indicated that they considered themselves to be autonomous of government and that led to some of the problems experienced, for example, with Hunter venues. Members will recall that on 6 June, when the decision was made to remove the Hunter venues authority, Mr Bob McGregor was appointed acting general manager. Mr McGregor is a former senior public servant and a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators. He is also considered to be somewhat of an expert in public sector governance. After his investigation of the situation in the Hunter when he took on that role he submitted a report that highlighted a number of disturbing factors. He pointed out that the New South Wales Auditor-General's website includes a Public Sector Corporate Governance Ready Reckoner "Better Practice Guide", which was first published in 1999. That guide sets out five aspects of the role of a public sector board.

Mr McGregor compared the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority board to the ready reckoner guide and considered that the board had failed to fulfil its fundamental role in a number of areas. For example, a public sector board is required to set strategic direction. He found that the board did not have a strategic or corporate plan or any articulated vision. A public sector board is required also to liaise with stakeholders, but as

I said earlier, some of these boards considered themselves to be autonomous. He found there was no effective engagement with the Office of Communities. A public sector board is required to ensure compliance with statutory requirements.

Mr McGregor's investigation revealed that the Hunter Region Sporting Venues Authority board had no current plan of management as required by the Sporting Venues Authorities Act 2008. A public sector board is required to manage risk, but no risk management plan was in place. A public sector board is required to monitor organisational performance. The report found that the western grandstand project capital budget and expenditure had been inadequately managed. Far from being a decision based purely on cost overrun, the decision was based on all those factors, which were confirmed by that report. Yet the board, which was given ample opportunity to respond, could not give any reason why the cost overrun had occurred.

I am responding to the criticisms of Opposition members. The member for Keira, apart from giving the House a lecture on how best to deliver speeches in this place, referred to the issue of local input. He referred to the current authority's delivery of the \$31 million stadium upgrade. That was originally a \$28.9 million upgrade but it required an additional \$2.1 million just before the last election. He also referred to criticism of the Government in not having delivered Lysaght Oval. The decision to spend \$2.5 million on Lysaght Oval was made close to 10 years ago. In fact, some \$2.5 million was spent but nothing was delivered. I have been engaged in discussions with Football South Coast and Wollongong City Council and I am waiting on them to submit an alternative proposal.

The member for Cabramatta repeated a lot of the comments about lack of local input, which I have adequately addressed. He spoke about 32 board members being remunerated. I have already confirmed that that is not the case. Finally, the member for Lake Macquarie spoke about competitive tension being good in some cases. Whilst competitive tension generally might be good for customers, in this case one needs to look at who the customers are. The customers primarily are event promoters. I am not too sure whether New South Wales taxpayers should be financially propping up event promoters because of competitive tension. I inform the member for Lake Macquarie that I took no pleasure in removing the Hunter authority board. It was the last thing I wanted to do but, based on the information that I have outlined to the House, I had no alternative.

I do not consider a blowout in overspend in the Hunter to be a minor cost variation and I am not too sure whether many New South Wales taxpayers would consider millions of dollars to be a minor cost variation. In summary, these reforms aim to improve community access to and participation in sporting and cultural events. They provide an opportunity to increase events in regional communities and create better access for all community groups by delivering more efficient services and providing better value for public investment. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now agreed to in principle—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 61

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

Noes, 19

Mr Barr	Mr Lulich	Mr Rees
Ms Burney	Mr Lynch	Mr Robertson
Mr Daley	Dr McDonald	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Furolo	Ms Mihailuk	
Ms Hay	Mr Parker	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Hornery	Mrs Perry	Mr Amery
Ms Keneally	Mr Piper	Mr Park

Pairs

Mr Bromhead	Ms Burton
Mr Hazzard	Ms Watson
Mr Piccoli	Mr Zangari

Question 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.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**Financial Year 2011-2012**

Debate resumed from 8 November 2011.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.12 p.m.]: I am pleased to participate in debate on the State budget. I do so each year, but this is the first time in many years that I have spoken in debate on a Coalition budget. This is the first Coalition budget since 1994.

Dr Geoff Lee: The first responsible one.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I note that interjections have begun already. The member for Parramatta might have said how irresponsible this budget is. During my contribution to this debate, I will trace the origins of the current budget and the base from which it was formulated, make some comment about budget claims made by the Treasurer and Government members, and of course I will refer to the budget's impact on my electorate of Mount Druitt in western Sydney and on other parts of New South Wales. Budget surpluses and deficits fluctuate virtually on a daily basis. Natural disasters, rises and falls in consumer confidence and delays in receipts and payments affect predictions substantially. It is because of this obvious situation that most people now scoff at the silly story pushed by the Government of a \$5 billion black hole in the budget. That story was based on what might happen in 2014-15. Treasury releases a substantial update on the budget a couple of times a year and a monthly bulletin is posted on Treasury's website. Some months ago Treasury undertook an adjustment of budget figures and a substantial rewrite was undertaken approximately six months ago. It is no wonder that the budget black hole story is now so discredited by economic commentators and the general community.

Where is the starting point for this budget, the budget debate and the budget's figures? The second page of the Treasurer's published Budget Speech begins with the heading, "Labor's Legacy—What we inherited". Let us examine what this Government inherited. Last year the former Treasurer, the Hon. Eric Roozendaal, referred to the global financial crisis and how the Australian and New South Wales economies had survived better than other countries and better than some other States. At that time he stated that the surplus for the year 2010-11 would be \$885 million. I repeat for the benefit of members in the Chamber: the Labor budget for 2010-11 achieved a surplus.

Dr Geoff Lee: Was that before or after the sell-off of power assets?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I am quoting from the budget papers. I am trying to tell the member for Parramatta that that is what the budget papers stated. The new Treasurer, Mike Baird, contradicted the previous Labor Treasurer in relation to the budget surplus. The new Treasurer reported that the 2010-11 budget surplus had been understated and in fact was \$1.3 billion. So the new Government's starting point for its budget was a surplus of \$1.3 billion. They are not my words.

Dr Geoff Lee: The MasterChef?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: No. I am not referring to anybody that the member for Parramatta might be thinking of. They are the words of the new Treasurer, Mike Baird. If the member for Parramatta does not agree with what I am saying, I refer him to the third page of Treasurer Baird's Budget Speech in this Parliament only a few months ago. He stated:

Madam Speaker, The 2010-11 budget result is a \$1.3 billion surplus compared to last year's budget forecast of \$773 million.

There was a small discrepancy in the projected surplus, but that should not detract from the point I make, which is that the Coalition Government had \$1.3 billion with which to begin its administration. I only wish I had what the Coalition Government described as a black hole in my bank account's balance. I will not spend much time debunking the misinformed comments of Government members who peddle the line that the former Government did nothing. I have dealt with that on other occasions, so I will include that comment with others and treat them with the contempt they deserve. Suffice it to say that *Hansard* records what Government members say, and most Government members have set themselves up for ridicule by future readers of this Parliament's record of debates.

The situation with this year's budget regarding my electorate is unclear in relation to some matters. I notice that since the budget was presented, the Government has been claiming credit in the press for funds allocated to the commuter car park near the Mount Druitt railway station. I will add some historical context to those claims. When the commuter car park was added to the metropolitan traffic plan by the former Labor Government discussions were conducted by me and officers from the Department of Transport to ensure that the project was submitted to public tendering, contracts were entered into and the project was signed off prior to the 2011 State election. That project was approved and it is now going ahead. If the Government had decided to cancel the project, compensation would have had to be paid. But that begs this question: What would have happened if a contract had not been signed in relation to the Mount Druitt commuter car park? What would this Government have done with the funds that had been allocated to that project?

I will provide the answer to my own question, and the answer is not speculative. One only has to examine the fate of car park projects that were not as far advanced as the Mount Druitt commuter car park. For example, tenders had not been called and contracts had not been signed in relation to some car parks. The definitive answer to my question is of course very simple: Anyone who wants to know what would have happened to the Mount Druitt railway commuter car park project needs only to ask rail commuters from Blaxland, Granville and Cabramatta. All those projects were stopped by the Coalition Government. I thank the people in the department for acting so promptly on the Mount Druitt project. Unfortunately, tenders and the contracting processes were not completed for the other projects so this Government canned them very quickly. When completed, the Mount Druitt commuter car park will add to other substantial transport infrastructure in my electorate such as the Mount Druitt interchange constructed by the former Labor Government.

I hope that in budget debates in future years I will be able to mention projects in my electorate that have been funded by this Coalition Government. Of course I will be happy to recognise them. The future expansion of dental services at Mount Druitt Hospital is also unclear. I raised this matter in a private member's statement and the Minister for Health also mentioned it in an answer to a question on notice, suggesting that the expansion, the building and the provision of extra chairs is not yet dead in the water. I look forward to hearing more from the Government on that issue. Of course, it is not in the budget papers but hopefully it will be picked up in the global allocation of some \$17 million to the Health portfolio.

I also hope for a better outcome regarding the election promise made by the Coalition in opposition in relation to Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals—something to which the Leader of the Opposition has referred locally. The Coalition's promised a \$125-million upgrade of the Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospital system—two campuses, one hospital. However, the actual budget allocation is \$500,000 for planning. The less said about that, I suppose, the better. We wait for more information about whether the promised \$125 million will ever be allocated by the Government.

I am very interested in Metrobus services. The budget refers to bus services in a number of places, but what is happening to the already announced service between Mount Druitt and Castle Hill? It was announced by the former Labor Government prior to the election but since then the Opposition has been unable to get further information about it. During the upper House estimates hearing the Minister was asked about the service but made no commitment to it. Again, we will wait and see if something is done to improve services for bus commuters between Mount Druitt and the northern suburbs of Sydney. Overall, the Government's transport plans are very thin. Its plan is to mention the North West Rail Link over and over again. It is not only its main item; it is its only item.

The Government seeks to own the project commenced by the former Labor Government—that is, the South West Rail Link. The Government is going ahead with the project because the previous Government had already spent millions of dollars on it—contracts signed, tenders called for. If this Government wants to put its fingerprints on that project, so be it. We will all welcome the South West Rail Link as well as the start of the North West Rail Link, which is mentioned so often by the Government. But consider the history of Coalition governments and rail lines. For instance, the eastern suburbs railway line was started by a Labor Government, canned by a Liberal Government and completed by a Labor Government.

A Labor Government had half finished the Riverstone to Richmond electrification for north-west commuters when the Greiner Government halted the project. The Hawke Government then funded its completion. We will always be happy to support construction of the North West Rail Link and completion of the South West Rail Link. It will be the only public rail line built by a Coalition government since well before World War II, setting aside the airport rail link—and the less said about that project and its cost, the better. The disregard for western Sydney in the budget is probably most obvious in the dumping of the first home owner's stamp duty concession for existing dwellings. My electorate is the youngest in the State.

Dr Geoff Lee: You're the oldest member.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: No, not quite; I am the longest-serving member. The member for Parramatta should not interrupt. I am a great defender of his—the member for Coogee said of the member for Parramatta that he did not have the brains of a sheep, but I defended him and said he did. Demographically, the Mount Druitt electorate is the youngest in the State. The 2007 census revealed that Mount Druitt is number one for the number of 0 to 5-year-olds and also number one for 5- to 14-year-olds. We have the highest number of single-parent families, the highest number of Aboriginal people living in an urban area and we always feature on the list of areas with the most first home buyers—that is, people applying for assistance to buy their first home. The reason is that the electorate is a mixture of recently built homes in new suburbs, older suburbs comprising houses built by the Department of Housing, and estate housing built by private builders and individuals over many decades.

A person can still buy an existing house in the Mount Druitt electorate for between \$250,000 and \$350,000—although prices have crept up lately—and houses costing more than \$500,000 are uncommon in percentage terms. Buying a block of land and building a new house on it is a much more expensive option for first home buyers. A cleared and developed block of land is nearly as expensive as some of the existing homes that are for sale in the electorate. This decision of the Government was not a tough one, as mentioned by the Treasurer and Premier, but it was the wrong decision. It will hurt those who have been saving for years to buy and build their own home, particularly in electorates such as mine. Building a home from the ground up will cost well over \$500,000—perhaps \$100,000 more than the cost of many existing homes in the area.

In summary, the Government has cut back on infrastructure projects. It has flagged a loss of some 5,000 jobs. It has increased the rents of Department of Housing tenants—those opposite can deny that if they wish. It has cut the wages of public servants. It has sold off Port Botany. It is selling off Sydney Ferries. It has axed the Parramatta to Epping rail line. It has cut benefits to homebuyers. That is the result of a budget that, as the Treasurer told this House, started with a surplus of \$1.3 million. Heaven knows what would have happened had this Government inherited a deficit. In summary, the last Labor budget was in surplus.

Dr Geoff Lee: Yes, MasterChef.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I think it is insulting for the member for Parramatta to call his Treasurer a MasterChef. I think he should be more respectful of members of his team. The Treasurer told this House that the surplus was \$1.3 billion, and the first Coalition budget has projected a deficit. The record speaks for itself. I will close with a couple of comments by members of this House. I have already mentioned the statement about a budget black hole, which is not repeated by many Government members these days.

Mr Darren Webber: Except for Treasury; Treasury is saying it.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Yes, Treasury. The Government believes in a black hole that does not exist and does not believe in climate change, which does exist. I do not understand where it is coming from. The member for Murray-Darling, who is very popular in this place, made a comment that I do not think any other Government member has made. He said that Labor was in government for 16 years and did not build anything, which is quite unique. He said that Labor spent nothing in the electorate of Murray-Darling in 16 years. I will put on the record the Treasurer's statement on page two of his speech when he outlined what this Government inherited. The member for Murray-Darling inherited the reinstatement of the Outback Explorer rail service to Broken Hill, with an annual subsidy from the Government of some \$2 million—that is hardly nothing. He inherited the maintenance of the annual Treasury water subsidy for Broken Hill, which was \$2 million per annum or the equivalent of about \$200 per household.

The member for Murray-Darling also inherited approximately 100 kilometres of sealing of the Silver City or Tibooburra Road over 10 years—financial allocations in some of the State's budget with which the former Member for Murray Darling was associated. As Chairman of the 2001 Year of the Outback, Peter Black actually secured something like \$2 million to promote tourism in the Murray-Darling electorate. The town of Hay got a new hospital. The former Government built the first-ever hall at the Hay Memorial High School. During my term as the Minister for Land and Water Conservation, water treatment works throughout the Murray-Darling electorate, and other country areas, were substantial. I recall standing at the lectern on that side of the House actually boasting that we were spending \$1 million a week promoting water and sewerage projects for the country.

For the information of the member for Murray-Darling, that was for things like new waterworks at Tibooburra, Hillston and many other country towns in the south-west of the State. We put sealing on the all-weather access for Ivanhoe—the Cobb Highway—which was very much against the wishes of the Roads and Traffic Authority. There were significant increases in road funding grants for Western Division shires, including the funding and sealing of sections of the two Carrathool Shire roads and reform of the Western Lands Act in accordance with the wishes of the Western Division shires, which were actually named after the former member. I wanted to pick just one of the electorates—

Dr Geoff Lee: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76. I ask that the member for Mount Druitt be directed back to the budget estimates, rather than giving a dialogue about his past memories and about how wonderful he was.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Mount Druitt has 45 seconds in which to conclude his contribution.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: For the information of Government members who will take similar points of order on Opposition members, I point out that in the Budget speech the Treasurer—no more insults—started off by referring to what the former Labor Government did and what this Government inherited. It was a major part of his speech. Anything I said about what the previous Labor Government did during its 16 years in office is certainly in response to not only what the Treasurer said to the Parliament but also what individual members have claimed falsely on many occasions.

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

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.32 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

CLERK OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY APPOINTMENT

The SPEAKER: I have very much pleasure in announcing that following recent recruitment action I have requested the Premier to recommend to Her Excellency the Governor approval for the appointment of Ms Ronda Mary Miller as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. The Premier has confirmed that the recommendation will be made to Her Excellency the Governor and the appointment is expected to be made next week. Congratulations, Ronda.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The SPEAKER: I inform the House that consequent upon the appointment of Geoffrey Keith Provest as a Parliamentary Secretary and pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 20 I nominate Giovanni Domenic Barilaro as a Temporary Speaker in place of Mr Provest, effective from 22 November 2011.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.22 p.m.]

ELECTRICITY ASSETS SALE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Tamberlin inquiry made no recommendations about the State's electricity poles and wires, will the Premier now stand by his election commitment and rule out selling them?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I was fascinated that on the day on which the Tamberlin report was released—the day on which I indicated to the media that the Government would make a decision on the report and its recommendations by Christmas—the Leader of the Opposition pronounced airily on Channel 7, "I was, I am and I always will be opposed to electricity privatisation." I think I should remind the House that although the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Blacktown, came into this House on 26 March this year, he has been a member of Parliament for at least two years. I should put on the record that the Leader of the Opposition, as a member of the other House, was also a Minister in the former Government of the member for Heffron. I should also put on the public record the fact that the person who said, "I was, I am and I always will be opposed to electricity privatisation" was part of Kristina Keneally's sell-off of the State's electricity assets.

I will stand by the commitment I made Monday week ago: the Government will consider the Tamberlin report and will make a decision by Christmas. Unlike decisions made by those opposite in the dying hours of the former Parliament, a Parliament they shut down to avoid scrutiny of their asset sale, the decision we make will be one that is made in the public interest and one that seeks to secure the lowest possible energy prices in the future for families and small businesses. That is in stark contrast with what those opposite did in relation to the Cobbora coalmine deal or that other millstone around the neck of the Leader of the Opposition, the solar bonus scheme. That solar bonus scheme, which was meant to cost less than \$400 million, will cost \$1.75 billion.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That solar bonus scheme, if action had not been taken, would have cost taxpayers more than \$3 billion.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I remind the public of a simple fact. Those opposite delayed the release of an Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal report on electricity until after the State election campaign.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point is taken under Standing Order 129. The question is simple: Does the Premier propose to go back on his election commitment or not? It is not about anything else.

The SPEAKER: Order! Standing Order 129 relates to relevance, and the member knows that. The Premier's response has been relevant. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Those electricity price proposals that came through after the election from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal—in a report that was delayed until after the election for clear political reasons—show that almost 50 per cent of the power increases were as a result of Federal and State renewable energy schemes, the sorts of energy schemes that those opposite presided over—energy schemes like the disastrous solar bonus scheme that the Leader of the Opposition put together, without proper analysis, and that taxpayers will be paying billions of dollars for over the next 10 years.

AUSTRALIA-INDIA TRADE RELATIONS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: I direct a question to the Premier. What is the Government doing to boost trade and investment in India?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Strathfield for his question and commend his close association with the Indian Australian community. Every day that we wake up and hear about turmoil and

uncertainty in Europe is a day on which we should remind ourselves how fortunate we are to be part of Asia with those two tiger economies of China and India on our very doorstep. China and India will be this century's economic powerhouses. Asia helped spare us the worst of the global financial crisis and is inextricably linked to the prosperity and future success of this nation. If we are to rebuild the New South Wales economy, which the Government is committed to doing, we have to build and strengthen our relationship with both India and China. Increased trade and investment will help us achieve just that; it will help us grow the State's economy.

Of course, the importance of growing an economy and having a strong economy is not just the jobs that it creates, and it is not just the opportunities it creates for people; it is the fact that it provides revenue—revenue to government to provide services like schools, hospitals and policing, and infrastructure like roads and ports that help provide those services that people need and want. Increased trade and investment, especially in our region, is a vital part of a future that I envisage for New South Wales, a future built on engagement, rather than withdrawals as we saw from those opposite over the past 16 years. In July I led a trade mission to China. I leave on Saturday to lead a similar trade mission to India. I will be joined by business representatives from key New South Wales industry sectors—

Ms Kristina Keneally: What is India like, Barry?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: How often did you go to India?

Ms Kristina Keneally: I'm going on Saturday.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Heffron will cease interjecting.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: How often did you go to India as Premier? That is the point. Increased trade and investment, especially within our region, is a vital part of that positive future. I will be joined by business representatives from key New South Wales industry sectors, including education, information communication technology, resources, financial services and infrastructure. The delegation will travel to India's commercial heart in Mumbai, its government centre, New Delhi, and the centre of information and communications technology, Bangalore.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. I would have thought they would be interested in this issue.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: They are not interested because over 16 years there were two visits to India—two visits to India over 16 years—by those opposite, whilst their counterparts in Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and other States were going on annual trade delegations and, as a result, attracting the lion's share of trade and investment.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That speaks volumes for those opposite. They were not interested in the main game, not interested in economic growth, not interested in jobs and not interested in the future of students like those sitting in the gallery.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: They were simply preoccupied with their own factional doings to see who was going to be next leader in that rotisserie of leaders we had over those years.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is untrue that the member for Heffron is the Kim Kardashian of State Parliament. It is true that she managed to spend \$10 million over three months before the election—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The Premier needs to be reminded that he won the election.

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

Mr Michael Daley: He does not need to carry on with respect to the member for Heffron in such a boorish and undignified manner.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: He is the Premier and he should start acting like one.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: It is against the standing orders and you should remind him to pull his head in.

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Maroubra on two calls to order for refusing to resume his seat. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Of course, if there were no interjections, I would not respond.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The point is that what we are doing as a Government, and what we are doing with the support of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, is ensuring that this State engages with Asia, that this State engages with India, in those great areas—not just resources, not just financial services, but education.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Indian Prime Minister has set a goal of skilling 500 million people over the next 10 years. That presents enormous opportunities for TAFE and other education providers in this State and they are opportunities that we intend to pursue. [*Time expired.*]

ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. How can he justify deliberately misleading power workers in Lithgow just before the election, telling them that there would be no privatisation and that their jobs would be safe?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier can choose to answer that question, but I am tempted to rule it out of order because it contains an imputation—and the Leader of the Opposition knows it.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am happy to answer it, and I will answer it with a question. How can the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Blacktown, the former Minister in the Keneally Government, justify his statement, "I was, I am, and I always will be opposed to electricity privatisation"? I do not remember any briefings out of the Labor Cabinet that regularly briefed the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Sydney Morning Herald* about any objections by the Leader of the Opposition to the sale of electricity. I do not remember the Leader of the Opposition demonstrating some principle and resigning from Cabinet over the lousy return from the sale of electricity assets that the Auditor-General belled last week in his report to this Parliament. I say again to the Leader of the Opposition: Let us not pursue the Kemps Creek strategy, because he would certainly be embarrassed there. No decision has been made; a decision will be announced before Christmas, and we respect that position.

PRISONER DRUG REHABILITATION

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: My question is addressed to the Attorney General. How is the Government helping to rehabilitate prisoners with drug abuse problems?

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for Baulkham Hills for his question and for his ongoing interest in this area. All members understand the devastation that drug addiction causes. It obviously impacts upon a person's health, relationships, employment, finances and safety. It also significantly contributes to crime. Offenders with substance abuse problems are overrepresented among prisoners in New South Wales. Approximately 15,000 people were received into custody in 2007-08 in New South Wales. Of these, around 59 per cent are estimated to have been under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of their most serious offence, 71 per cent have committed drug-related crimes including alcohol-related crimes, 54 per cent have a history of injecting drug use, and, sadly, 36 per cent are current injectors.

Prior to the 26 March election, the Liberal-Nationals Coalition promised to establish a 300-bed drug treatment facility and a second metropolitan Drug Court. I am pleased to say that we will be implementing the

first commitment by establishing an Intensive Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program for inmates at the John Morony and Dillwynia correctional centres, located within the John Morony correctional complex at Berkshire Park. The program will aim to provide a total of 300 beds, comprising 250 male beds at the John Morony correctional centre and 50 female beds at Dillwynia correctional centre. The program will be implemented in stages, the first of which will involve the establishment of a 62-bed accommodation unit at John Morony correctional centre by February 2012.

Eligible offenders will be sentenced inmates with a documented history of problematic drug and/or alcohol use with a minimum non-parole period of six months still to serve and a minimum or medium security classification. Offenders subject to the program will benefit from specialist staff and will be supported in their transition back to the community. Corrective Services NSW data indicates that more than 4,500 inmates across New South Wales are currently identified as having medium to high or requiring the highest level of intensive intervention to address alcohol and other drug-related needs. Corrective Services NSW anticipates no difficulties in identifying suitable candidates for participation in the program.

The New South Wales Government will be establishing a second metropolitan Drug Court, which will sit initially at the Downing Centre one day a week and involve 40 participants a year. It will complement the existing Drug Courts at Parramatta and Toronto, and will be operational from May 2012. Drug Courts are specialist courts that aim to reduce the drug dependency of eligible persons. The courts also aim to promote the reintegration of those persons into the community and reduce their need to resort to criminal activity to support their drug dependencies.

The Drug Court of New South Wales located in Parramatta was the first Drug Court to be trialled and evaluated in Australia. I was privileged to be in attendance at the opening, representing the Senior Crown Prosecutor. Later, I appeared for the Director of Public Prosecutions in two cases in the Court of Appeal concerning the jurisdiction of the Drug Court. The Drug Court started operating in 1999 and was evaluated by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in 2002 and 2008. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research found that the Drug Court is more cost-effective than prison in reducing the rate of reoffending among offenders who had committed drug-related crime.

The Leader of the Opposition agreed to the privatisation of Parklea as I remember. The bureau's 2008 study also found that Drug Court participants, when compared with those in the comparison group, were 17 per cent less likely to be reconvicted for any offence, 30 per cent less likely to be reconvicted for a violent offence and 38 per cent less likely to be reconvicted for a drug offence at any point during the follow-up period. The New South Wales Government believes that initiatives such as the Intensive Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program and the second metropolitan Drug Court will greatly assist our efforts to reduce recidivism, which is unacceptably high in New South Wales, by tackling the underlying causes of crime through meaningful rehabilitation.

ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I direct my question to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier join The Nationals members for the electorates of Bathurst and Orange and fight to protect regional jobs by saying no to power privatisation?

Mr ANDREW STONER: One would have thought that the Deputy Leader of the Opposition would be the last person to raise the privatisation of the electricity industry, given that she sat at the Cabinet table in the last term of the former Government and ticked off on a privatisation deal that has been found by both the Auditor-General and Mr Tamberlin to be deficient in value for the taxpayers and electricity consumers of this State. The member for Canterbury also sat at the Cabinet table when the former Government ticked off on the Solar Bonus Scheme, which was administered by none other than the Leader of the Opposition. Despite the public pronouncements of the Leader of the Opposition that he was not, and will never be, in favour of electricity privatisation, he did exactly that as part of Cabinet. On Monday 31 October the Government received the report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Electricity Industry. The report makes a series of recommendations about the future of the electricity industry in this State.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: For the benefit of those opposite, the report recommends a number of things including the sale or long-term lease of generation assets, and the sale of development sites and the Cobbora mine. It also recommends that the Government make a decision about the network business at a future point in time. The Premier both received and released the report on 31 October. He also gave a commitment that the Government would respond to the report by Christmas. The report confirmed that the sale of the gentrader

rights by the former Labor Government was "the second best option", which had generated gross proceeds of \$5.3 billion. It also revealed that the way the sale was done was not appropriate—it was done by way of a late-night deal with Parliament shut down to avoid any scrutiny of it. One would have thought that the Opposition would not have raised this issue, given its track record of sheer hypocrisy on it. The people of New South Wales passed their judgement on that process on 26 March this year. The members for the electorates of Bathurst and Orange are contributing to what is a very important debate for the future of the State, and the Government looks forward to all members contributing to the Government's deliberations in the appropriate forums in the coming period.

RAILCORP STORM DAMAGE RESPONSE

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: I address my question to the Minister for Transport. How is RailCorp dealing with the current wave of wild weather?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for the question and his continuing interest in public transport. This is an important issue because last night's wild weather could not have come at a worse time for the travelling public. Those opposite obviously do not care about the travelling public. The wild weather hit in the evening peak, when thousands of commuters were on our trains or waiting at train stations.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Opposition members do not care about commuters but they should listen and learn how RailCorp dealt with last night's wild storms.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Last night's wild weather hit in the evening peak when thousands of commuters were on their way home. Some 150 traffic lights were knocked out of action and the airport was closed due to the extreme conditions. There were major delays across the network due to the severe storms, with lightning strikes, heavy rain and strong winds causing chaos on the Airport, East Hills, Bankstown, Illawarra, Northern and North Shore lines. The weather-related incidents that caused these major problems included a tree falling on overhead wiring at Denistone on the Northern line. As a consequence, some trains from the Northern line were diverted to the North Shore line. But soon after that line was also impacted when a number of objects blew into overhead wiring at St Leonards and caused havoc. At about the same time, a train heading from the North Shore to the city was hit by lightning at Killara, which created multiple signal failures for city-bound trains but, fortunately, there were no injuries to staff or customers. There was also a lightning strike near a substation at Sydenham, which affected signals on the Airport, East Hills and Illawarra lines.

RailCorp staff worked as hard and as quickly as possible to deal with all these events, but delays were inevitable. I thank the public for their patience through what was a very stressful time. While repairs were underway, alternative transport arrangements were made. Train tickets were recognised on buses and ferries, and buses not already being used to carry the peak-hour load were brought into service where possible. Many customers had a long and frustrating trip home and for that the Government apologises. Safety is always the Government's priority and extreme weather conditions necessarily pose a challenge for public transport. RailCorp staff was instructed to keep passengers informed and updated. While most people understand that wild storms will cause problems, they rightly want to know—and should know—what is going on so they can amend their plans, if necessary.

Station staff and train crews made every effort to communicate service changes to customers. Circumstances made this difficult due to the changing nature of the situation and CityRail acknowledges that there were delays in some customers receiving information. As well as on-board announcements, customers were updated by various methods. For example, customers travelling to the airport were asked to identify themselves to station staff. Taxis were then arranged for those customers with urgent flights. Station staff across the network also volunteered to stay beyond rostered hours to help customers. In one case a train driver extended his shift by three hours to ensure that customers could get to Newcastle after experiencing extensive delays.

Today's weather forecast is not good news, with a repeat of yesterday's weather likely in Sydney, the Illawarra and Newcastle. We cannot change the weather conditions, but transport staff will be working hard to minimise any disruptions and keep passengers posted on the latest developments. RailCorp has allocated additional resources to response teams for this afternoon's peak. This means extra staff will be on standby to

repair signals, remove trees from lines, and deal with flooding or failed embankments. In addition, extra electrical staff will be on hand to respond quickly to problems with overhead wires and power supplies from substations. I am advised by RailCorp that extra staff is due to be deployed across the network from 2.00 p.m. today. The Rail Management Centre will closely monitor the development of storms as the afternoon progresses, and can move staff to other locations if needed.

I was gratified to hear positive comments from some passengers who acknowledged the efforts of staff despite yesterday's trials. One commuter on the 5.46 pm Central Coast train departing from Wynyard explained how the guard kept everyone advised of what was going on. She said, "It made the long journey home a lot less stressful." Whilst there were many good examples, I acknowledge that there were others that were not so positive. I have stressed to RailCorp the need for clear, timely communication so passengers know exactly what is going on. I again thank the staff for their ongoing efforts to improve customer service.

ELECTRICITY PRIVATISATION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I direct my question to the Deputy Premier. As Leader of The Nationals why will the Deputy Premier not stand up for the 550 power workers who live and work in the Clarence Valley and the North Coast whose livelihoods are on the line due to the threat of privatisation?

Mr ANDREW STONER: Inexplicably the Leader of the Opposition has bowled up essentially the same question time and time again, despite getting hit for six twice by the Premier. If he wants to hear it all again, I am happy to deliver it all again. This is the height of hypocrisy from an Opposition leader who sat around the Cabinet table and ticked off on a botched privatisation deal of the electricity industry and who then walks out and says he was not, and will never be, in favour of electricity privatisation.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: There is a certain amount of nepotism in a bloke who has that form and gets up and asks that question. But for his benefit, yet again I will tell the House that we received the report of the Tamberlin inquiry on 31 October. That report made a number of findings and it is there for all to see. It has been made public by this Government, unlike those opposite, who, during their privatisation exercise, prorogued the Parliament, rammed it through without any debate whatsoever in this Parliament and in so doing duded the taxpayers and electricity consumers of this State. It is all there to see. One of the things that it did find, as I said earlier, was that the sale of the gentrader rights by those opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, was the second best option for the people of this State. We will consider the recommendations of the Tamberlin inquiry and make a response before the end of the year.

REGIONAL HEALTH

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. How is the Government getting on with the job of rebuilding hospitals in regional New South Wales?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his question. He is an excellent member, who has always stood as a champion for his electorate and the people not only of Wagga Wagga but of those in surrounding areas who most rely upon the services of that hospital. I remind the House that in this year's budget we had a record capital investment of \$343 million for new works—more than \$1 billion in total—which is \$67 million more than last year and \$4.7 billion over the next four years, which is a 50 per cent increase over the previous four years. It is worth asking: Why are we investing in rebuilding our hospitals? We want to expand capacity for more beds. We want adequate infrastructure for clinicians to care for patients and above all we are addressing a significant underinvestment by the former Labor Government over the past 16 years. Since we were elected in March we have been getting on with the job of rebuilding our hospitals and I will highlight some of those in regional New South Wales. I am glad the member for Wagga Wagga has asked this question because on 30 September—

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: —I was very pleased to attend Wagga Wagga Hospital with him and accompanied by Health Infrastructure to show the community of Wagga Wagga and all the people of that hospital the plans and drawings for the new \$270 million redevelopment and to announce that the following week the builders would start demolishing the building—

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: —so they could actually start on the new car park, which is a very important aspect of the plan. The new car park will have an extra 70 car parking spaces, which the hospital desperately needs. On top of that a new acute and non-acute mental health facility will be completed in 2013, and new emergency services, operating theatres and inpatient units will be completed in 2015. The balance of acute services—which will include new facilities for further inpatient units, renal services, angiography suites, medical imaging and a new main entrance—will be completed in 2016. This project was fantastically well received in Wagga Wagga.

On 5 October I was on the Central Coast with my very good colleagues the member for Terrigal, the member for The Entrance, the member for Gosford and the member for Wyong. We did two things. We turned the first sod for the development of the Central Coast radiotherapy centre at Gosford Hospital, which was very well received by the local people. We expect that the two linear accelerators will provide treatment for an extra 800 presentations each year. The centre will be commissioned in early 2013. We were then able to announce that Woy Woy rehabilitation funds secured by this Government, added to funding provided by the Commonwealth, enabled us to meet our promise to reopen the rehabilitation centre at Woy Woy.

On the 6 October I was very pleased to be with the member for Port Macquarie and the Leader of The Nationals to talk about the initial design work of the \$110 million expansion of Port Macquarie Hospital, which will provide an additional 12,000 square metres to that 18,000 square metre hospital, which is a substantial upgrade. That work is expected to be finished in about 10 months. We then announced the tender for the cancer centre at Tamworth. The member for Tamworth, an excellent member of Parliament, was talking about the tender won by Richard Crookes Construction. That centre will be a \$41 million project, which is scheduled to begin next month. Again in Tamworth, on 16 October the member for Tamworth announced the appointment of McConnell Smith and Johnson as project manager, the architects of the major redevelopment of Tamworth Hospital. The construction is expected to start in 2013 and take three years.

The Bega Valley Hospital is a step closer. I can inform the member for Bega, an excellent member and very good champion for the people of his electorate, that construction of the \$170 million hospital has moved another step closer with the appointment of the lead consultants. Last week I was in Parkes, Forbes and Dubbo with the fabulous member for Dubbo, talking to clinicians and people there about the work that will soon start for the people of Dubbo who were ignored by Labor for the past 16 years.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members should curtail their conversations and instead concentrate on the answers. Members who persist will be placed on calls to order.

ERARING POWER STATION FIRE

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. What investigations will be undertaken into the causes of the recent discharge of transformer oil into Lake Macquarie and its impacts on the local environment? Is the Minister satisfied with the dissemination of information to the public during this event?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question. I know his concern for the residents of Lake Macquarie and the workers at Eraring Power Station. I know the Minister for Resources and Energy also shares our concern and I note that fortunately after the recent fire, which started about 2.30 a.m. on 28 October 2011, no-one at Eraring Power Station was hurt. Fire and Rescue NSW was on site and was the lead combat agency. The Office of Environment and Heritage was informed of the fire by Fire and Rescue Newcastle at 3.51 a.m. on 28 October. As with all such incidents, the role of the Office of Environment and Heritage is to manage the environmental impacts of incidents, not lead the response; that is, the Office of Environment and Heritage supports the combat agency and provides advice about mitigating impacts. Therefore it was only once the fire had been brought under control by Fire and Rescue and the situation was made safe that the Office of Environment and Heritage commenced co-ordinating the clean-up response. This did not occur until 6.00 p.m. on 28 October 2011.

The Office of Environment and Heritage responded promptly to reports of oil on Lake Macquarie and undertook site inspections. The Office of Environment and Heritage noted that as part of the initial response to the incident, Fire and Rescue NSW and Eraring staff had deployed booms to limit the ingress of oil into Lake Macquarie. As part of its environmental regulation oversight role, the Office of Environment and Heritage

urgently sought a detailed report of the incident from Eraring. This report was delivered to the Office of Environment and Heritage last Friday. The report is being reviewed by regional staff and this will guide further decisions on the regulatory action. I can assure the member for Lake Macquarie that any investigations undertaken by the Office of Environment and Heritage will be exhaustive and thorough. Staff from the Office of Environment and Heritage will continue to inspect the site and monitor the impact, if any, upon the lake. Today staff will inspect parts of the lake to investigate recent complaints of an oil sheen. Based on the outcomes of that inspection, decisions will be made on whether any remedial work is required.

In relation to communication during and after the incident, as I have stated, Fire and Rescue NSW was the combat agency during the initial phase of the incident until the fire was brought under control. I am aware that Fire and Rescue NSW made public statements about the fire and the response to it. I will leave it to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Mike Gallacher, MLC, to respond. It is the responsibility of the lead agency to coordinate that type of communication. Since the incident the Office of Environment and Heritage has provided media updates and has responded to community inquiries. I know that the member for Lake Macquarie has been actively involved in this work. The Office of Environment and Heritage will continue to provide updates and responses. If an environmental risk is demonstrated the Office of Environment and Heritage will contact the relevant parties to provide advice, including the Lake Macquarie City Council, and will work with the council to ensure that the lake, which is so valued by the member for Lake Macquarie and the people of his electorate, is protected as much as possible, and that any required remediation is undertaken.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business. How is the New South Wales Government ensuring the highest food safety standards for consumers?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I thank the member, who is 100 per cent for the Tweed, for his very timely question and for his obvious interest in safe food preparation and handling in New South Wales eateries. This week is Australian Food Safety Week. No-one wants to suffer from food poisoning but, as we all know, anybody can be subjected to it. It is very timely to remind the community about the importance of food safety and the practical steps that can be taken to minimise the very real risks of food-borne illness.

The ability to access safe and nutritious food while avoiding food-borne illness is a fundamental issue for everyone. Apart from the very obvious unpleasant side effects of food-borne illness, food poisoning is estimated to cost this State a whopping \$416 million each year. The need to minimise the risk of food-borne illness is even more important for people in the community who naturally are placed at greater risk—people such as the elderly, babies, infants, pregnant women and those with any one of a range of conditions that affect immune systems. It is vital for people to be aware of the risks involved in preparing and handling food, particularly people who are in the more vulnerable groups.

The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is taking the opportunity presented by Australian Food Safety Week to help to promote messages about safe food preparation and handling. In New South Wales the Food Authority provides information on safe food handling for children, pregnant women, people with low immunity, people with major illness, and elderly people. Recently the authority developed a series of materials aimed at protecting food consumers who have heightened needs when it comes to food safety. Approximately 90,000 New South Wales women fall pregnant every year, many for the first time. For them, the health and safety of their unborn baby obviously is paramount. But, despite that, more than half of the pregnant women surveyed in recent research commissioned by the New South Wales Food Authority were unsure about which foods to avoid during pregnancy. For example, some fish have high levels of mercury and some cheeses should be avoided.

Mr Adrian Piccoli: And salami.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: As the Minister for Education points out, pregnant women should avoid salami and processed meat generally. What are the risks to pregnant women associated with food? A pregnancy booklet and wallet card have been developed and distributed widely throughout the State to councils and medical clinics. They can be ordered through the New South Wales Food Authority's website. The wallet card has been applauded by the Australian Medical Association and the Australian College of Midwives. A councillor of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Andrew Zuschmann, said that the association is pleased to see that this important dietary advice is being provided to new and expectant mothers.

Materials are being produced that give advice to the food service industry—which includes cafés and restaurants, catering organisations, delicatessens and fast-food outlets—to help reduce allergic reactions in people who eat out. Food allergies are a serious issue that can have devastating effects and sometimes even fatal consequences if they are not correctly understood and managed by all who are involved in the food service industry. Studies from throughout the world demonstrate that a majority of severe allergic reactions occur when people are eating outside their home. That is why it is so vital that all people working in the food service industry understand their roles and responsibilities when preparing and serving food to their customers, particularly those who may have an allergy.

Local businesses and community organisations also have an important role to play in reducing food-borne illness by educating themselves about safe food handling requirements and applying them to their operations. Nobody wants their customers to become ill or suffer from food poisoning. Very simple steps must be followed, but unfortunately there are a few businesses that still do not quite get it. Just this week the Food Authority released its local government activity report, which reveals a very high compliance rate that is well up on previous years. The report demonstrates that 94.2 per cent of food businesses in New South Wales are now food-safety compliant. This is an increase of two percentage points compared with the previous year. The rate of non-compliance over the past three years decreased from 10 per cent in 2008-09 to 7.8 per cent in the following year, and to 5.8 per cent last year. I obviously would like to see a compliance rate of 100 per cent.

The Government will continue to reinforce its message to all food outlets throughout New South Wales about the importance of food safety and food handling. I congratulate regional and rural food businesses on outperforming their metropolitan colleagues by achieving a compliance rate of 96 per cent in relation to food safety. That is great news for both visiting and local diners in our favourite rural and regional tourism locations. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is committed to ensuring the State's food businesses are given the very best opportunity to meet food safety standards. I again call on all food businesses, community organisations and indeed the whole community to embrace the Australian Food Safety Week message of safe food preparation and handling.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY INQUIRY

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. Given that none of his Government's reviews ever seem to make any real recommendations, why should New South Wales have to suffer record low construction activity while we wait until 2013 for him to conduct yet another inquiry?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: What a great question from a shadow Minister who would not know the first thing about planning, who is seated in front of a former Minister for Planning who did nothing about planning, and who is a member of a group of 20 people who still know nothing about planning. It is fantastic! I indicate to the House, in particular to the 68 members of the Coalition, that this Government is doing far more in planning than the Labor Government did during its more than 16 years in government. Furthermore, we are doing it honestly, openly and transparently

I am sure Opposition members recall the dollars-for-deals culture and the stories that constantly engaged the attention of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. A long line of Labor members had permanent places and car spots at the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The Labor era was a great period for planning! The Coalition Government inherited a dollars-for-deals culture from Labor and we have moved very quickly to act in relation to a whole range of issues.

Ms Linda Burney: Read them to me, Brad.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Canterbury asked the question and should listen to the answer.

Mr John Robertson: You lecture us about how you are going but say nothing.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: If the Leader of the Opposition had read the paper he would know that he can convince only a stray journalist who has made a couple of cheap attacks that were not valid or verified. But now he is running off at the mouth during question time. Good luck to him. Opposition members should listen to this. In the last five years of the Labor Government housing approvals averaged less than 30,000 homes a year.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Under the administration of the former Minister for Planning and former Premier, who has just fled the Chamber again—every time I stand up to speak she disappears out of the Chamber—New South Wales hit a record low of 26,900 new homes a year. This was the lowest number of housing approvals ever recorded in New South Wales and the lowest number of housing starts in 50 years.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Housing Industry Association said this about the previous Government's approach to housing:

Through policy failure after policy failure, we effectively killed off housing in this State and the economy has been underperforming year in, year out as a result.

The Liberal-Nationals Government has set about righting Labor's wrongs and giving hope to aspiring homeowners across New South Wales, hope that had been smashed by years of Labor failures in planning. Since April 2011 the Department of Planning and Infrastructure has finalised, under my direction, 134 local environment plan amendments and comprehensive local environment plans across the State. Zoning new land for housing and employment opportunities right across the State has been occurring at an unprecedented rate. We have approved the Parramatta local environment plan, promoting increased housing density and diversity around transport hubs, about which the member for Parramatta is very pleased. Unfortunately, the former member for Parramatta does not have a say because she is in the outside the Chamber group.

We have also been providing greater projects for low-density neighbourhoods in Parramatta and environmentally sensitive areas along the Parramatta River. We have approved an amendment to the Maitland local environment plan, rezoning land to create opportunities for up to 5,000 new homes in Lochinvar, while protecting key environmental areas. We have repealed Labor's rotten part 3A and replaced it with a system that puts decisions on projects of genuine State significance at arm's length from the Minister. Instead of major projects being approved by Labor Ministers behind closed doors, State-significant development is now determined by the independent Planning and Assessment Commission.

Ms Linda Burney: What about new roads?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Gee you are juvenile at times. You know absolutely nothing about planning.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Premier just pointed out I should have stopped at "nothing": the member knows absolutely nothing, full stop. That is the problem with the entire front bench, but particularly the member for Canterbury.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: For State-significant developments, since the State election in March determinations have been made for 175 projects and modification to the value of more than \$6.2 billion, creating more than 23,000 new jobs. Graham Bradley, chairman of Stockland, said it all on the weekend:

The New South Wales Government is sending a clear message to business that it welcomes investment.

In other words, business is back in town because you guys are out of town.

Question time concluded at 3.12 p.m.

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Reference: Inquiry into the Establishment of Special Economic Zones

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [3.13 p.m.]: I inform the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Legislative Assembly Committee on Economic Development has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the establishment of special economic zones, full details of which are on the committee's website.

PETITIONS

The Speaker announced that the following petitions signed by more than 10,000 persons were lodged for presentation:

South Tralee Rezoning

Petition requesting the House to direct the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to immediately rezone South Tralee or alternatively refer the rezoning to Queanbeyan City Council for final decision in accordance with government policy, received from **Mr John Barilaro**.

Tamworth Base Hospital Car Park

Petition requesting that a multistorey car park be included in the planning of the redeveloped Tamworth Base Hospital, received from **Mr Kevin Anderson**.

Discussions on petitions set down as orders of the day for a future day.

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

Coal Seam Gas Mining

Petition requesting a moratorium on coal seam gas mining until a royal commission into its impacts is conducted and requesting a ban on hydraulic fracturing extraction, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

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**.

Container Deposit Levy

Petition requesting the Government to introduce a container deposit levy to reduce litter and increase recycling rates of drink containers, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

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

Newbridge Heights Public School Oval

Petition requesting the immediate closure of the oval at Newbridge Heights Public School and that the soil be tested for asbestos contamination, received from **Ms Melanie Gibbons**.

Coal Seam Gas Mining

Petition requesting an independent statutory body oversee coal seam gas mining, a ban on hydraulic fracturing extraction and a moratorium on coal seam gas mining applications until an independent investigation is conducted, received from **Mr Geoff Provost**.

Pittwater Fishing

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Private Members' Statements**

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.14 p.m.]: I indicate to members that at the conclusion of debate on the motion to be accorded priority this afternoon we will then deal with the Agricultural Tenancies Amendment Bill 2011 followed by the Plumbing and Drainage Bill 2011. This shows the equitable and fair way this Government approaches the remaining hump and rump of the Labor Party is the Government will provide time for additional private members' statements, as per the undertaking given to the member for Maroubra.

Ms Linda Burney: We get one.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: No, you get about three: you are very lucky. You can make three and show three times how silly you are.

The SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear the Minister's comments.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I apologise. Members were obviously very obliging to allow Government business to be dealt with through the proceeding few weeks. I indicated that we would try to give time for additional private members' statements and this is delivering on that promise. From 4.15 p.m. until 5.45 p.m.—before we deal with the remaining business with which members are familiar—we will deal with approximately 18 private members' statements. I formally seek leave to allow that to occur at 4.15 p.m.

Leave granted.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**Carbon Tax**

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [3.16 p.m.]: Earlier I gave notice of my motion opposing the Federal's Government's carbon tax, which increases the cost of living for New South Wales families and businesses. We can continue to represent the people of New South Wales. We should definitely make sure that this motion is accorded priority. The carbon tax is bad for the people of New South Wales and every single person in this House is elected to represent the people of New South Wales. I will start with jobs. Members should go to level 10 and see white signs that refer to supporting workers' rights. The biggest risk to the rights of workers and to jobs in this State is the carbon tax. The Leader of the Opposition knows it. Why am I bothering? He is the artist formally known as the Leader of the Opposition. This State could lose up to 31,000 jobs as a result of this tax. I will work through regions: 18,000 jobs lost across the Hunter, 70,000 jobs lost right across the Illawarra and a further 1,000 jobs lost right across the Central Coast.

In relation to the possible impact on manufacturing in Western Sydney I do not even want to consider what people are thinking about when they are looking at the increase in their electricity prices. What impact will it have on a car repairer in Mount Druitt? What will be the electricity price rises in a car repair shop that operates out of Mount Druitt. What about the impact on a transport worker who is operating a business in Dubbo? I will not even touch on the people in regional New South Wales because they will be hurt the most. The cost of living has the utmost pressure on people right across this State and all the Federal Government wants to do is to add a further price on to them. My motion deserves priority because families right across this State have this challenge ahead of them.

They can afford what they want, that is, televisions and things that they would like to have, but they cannot afford the things that they need, for example, food, electricity and the cost of sending kids to schools. The carbon tax will continue to place upward pressure on the cost of living right across this State. A family trying to manage their household budget has to devise a way to find extra dollars from 1 July 2012. My motion should be accorded priority because if we take a family in Penrith, made up of a police officer and nurse, both earning \$70,000.

Mr John Robertson: Oh, a police officer.

Mr STUART AYRES: Yes, dead right, a police officer and a nurse. From 1 July 2012, even with the compensation, that family with one dependent child will be \$230 worse off. If those two workers decide to work

a couple of extra shifts and earn \$5,000 more they will be \$528 worse off. That has nothing to do with price structures and wages in this State; it has everything to do with the impact of the carbon tax imposed on us by Canberra. Costs are increasing across the State and the impact on the budget will be more than \$1 billion over the forward estimates. We are collecting \$700 million less in taxes and dividends and electricity prices are increasing. Households across this State will pay \$498 more for electricity. Small or medium businesses can expect to pay \$927 more at the low end or \$4,191 at the high end. That is the difference between employing and not employing another staff member.

That is the decision we must make about restoring New South Wales as the premier State in this country. That is the decision that businesses must make to ensure that this State employs more people. The Federal Government should spend more time talking to State Governments to establish their infrastructure needs so that we can improve our productivity rather than finding another way to tax people. Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia are echoing these sentiments. Every State in this country will be worse off after the imposition of the carbon tax. The output of our coalmines will be reduced by 2.3 per cent and the production of coal-fired electricity will be reduced by 9.6 per cent— [Time expired.]

Electricity Privatisation

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.21 p.m.]: My motion deserves priority because when a politician looks Lithgow power station workers in the eye and promises that their jobs are safe it means something. On 28 January Barry O'Farrell made what will go down in history as his Lithgow declaration. That was the day he made the announcement and he was duly reported in the *Lithgow Mercury* as saying:

We have absolutely no plans to privatise either the generators or the poles and wires.

He was not satisfied giving that good news only to Lithgow. On 1 February he doubled down to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and said:

We have ruled out the sale of poles and wires because that is where the jobs are and we are determined to protect jobs.

They are two unequivocal promises forever seared into the heart of the Premier's political persona. They are also confirmed in the Liberal-Nationals energy policy—a detailed 14-page manifesto designed to convince the people of New South Wales that Barry O'Farrell had no intention of privatising a single megawatt. I draw the attention of the House to page 1 of that policy, which states:

The NSW Liberals and Nationals will be honest with the people of New South Wales about the future of electricity assets. Under our plan, the poles and wires will stay in public hands.

This motion deserves priority because today both the Premier and the Deputy Premier were given the opportunity to confirm those undertakings but they did not. What did we see? We saw ducking, diving and weaving. It appears that this Premier's promises are about as good as the word of O. J. Simpson. The Premier announced that his number one promise was not to privatise electricity. That promise was made not once but three times. The Premier has now told the people of New South Wales that he will announce his plans for the future of the State's electricity assets prior to Christmas. Frankly, it is just not good enough for him to make that promise to the workers at Lithgow, which was reported in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and is clear in his policy document, and then to say that he will wait to see and provide an answer at the end of the year.

The Premier gave a commitment and he should keep his paws off the generators, poles and wires. He should be a man of his word as he said he would be. He reassured the State's power station workers that their jobs were safe. That message resounded all the way from the Hunter to the Monaro to the Central West and gave workers the security they needed to vote for the Coalition. Barry O'Farrell said he would keep his promise. Today, given the opportunity, he avoided repeating that commitment. I know that the member for Bathurst agrees because he knows the workers at power stations in his electorate, such as Wallerawang and Mount Piper, would be smashed by a generator sell-off. The member for Orange agrees because dozens of his constituents commute from his electorate every day to work in those power stations. That is why those honourable gentlemen put out a joint press release last week opposing electricity privatisation. As the member for Bathurst told the *Western Advocate*—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order—

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The member for Wakehurst does not like me. Every time he takes a point of order I worry.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I cannot hear the point of order.

Mr Brad Hazzard: I just love watching the Leader of the Opposition carry on.

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

Mr Brad Hazzard: I refer to Standing Order 128 (3) (d). The Leader of the Opposition is seeking to rely on media reports and is unable to confirm them. If he can—

The SPEAKER: Order! Standing Order 128 deals with the asking of questions.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Standing Order 129 relates to relevance—

The SPEAKER: Order! It relates to the answering of questions. There is no point of order.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: If the Leader of the House is that interested he will vote in favour of giving my motion priority and I will be happy to table the media releases from those two gentlemen. That will be no problem because I have them here. I heard the member for Penrith talk about price rises. Privatisation in South Australia saw electricity prices rise by 30 per cent. So vote for this, mate. [*Time expired.*]

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 64

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

Noes, 21

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

Pairs

Mr Annesley
Mr Bromhead
Mr O'Farrell

Ms Burton
Ms Watson
Mr Zangari

Question resolved in the affirmative.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Divisions and Quorums**

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.42 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide that from the commencement of private members' statements until the rising of the House no divisions or quorums be called.

As I indicated earlier, private members' statements will commence at the conclusion of the usual routine of business. We will then deal with notices of motions and proceed with normal business for the remainder of the evening.

Motion agreed to.

CARBON TAX**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [3.35 p.m.]: I move:

That this House opposes the Federal Government's carbon tax, which will increase the cost of living for New South Wales families and businesses.

We have heard a number of times already, but never enough, about the cost of living pressures on families and businesses right across New South Wales. A direct impact on the cost of living is job security. There is no greater risk to job security in this State than the Federal Labor Government's carbon tax. The carbon tax has the potential to impact 31,000 jobs across New South Wales by 2020; that is, 31,000 jobs lost in this State by 2020. Whether the carbon tax restricts growth or results in a downward movement in jobs, this State cannot afford it. As I indicated earlier, the areas of this State worst impacted are high energy producing areas such as the Hunter region and around Newcastle. Some 18,500 jobs are at risk under a carbon tax. In the Illawarra, 7,000 are at risk due to the carbon tax. Across the Central West, up to 1,000 jobs could be at risk, with an almost untold number of the millions of people who work in western Sydney.

Much of the debate on the carbon tax has centred on the impact on small businesses because that is where I think the carbon tax will strike hardest the families and households right across New South Wales. Electricity prices in New South Wales are increasing as a result of the carbon tax; at the low end it is \$927 a year up to \$4,191 for a medium-size business. That will have a direct impact on the decision-making in that business, and that clearly will affect whether those businesses choose to engage new employees or, more likely under this scenario, let people go. On a daily basis, mums and dads and singles trying to manage their budgets and get ahead in the world will open up their electricity bills each month and figure out how they will pay those bills. They will throw into the mix the school fees, sporting club fees for the children, fuel costs and all the other costs that are increasing so significantly that people and families across the State feel they are getting swamped.

While this Government frames a budget that tries to relieve some of those pressures, from Canberra comes a tax that again increases the pressures. The impact of the carbon tax on the New South Wales budget is significant—\$700 million less in taxes and dividends from generators, \$100 million less in payroll tax receipts, and \$70 million more in power bills for New South Wales government agencies. One of the Penrith government agencies impacted is Nepean Hospital, the most westerly teaching hospital in this State. If residents of central New South Wales need access to a high quality teaching hospital facility, it is likely that they will come to Nepean Hospital. The carbon tax will increase the cost of electricity needed to operate that hospital. Therefore it is likely that somewhere across that space someone will have to take a cut. Is that the type of thing we should be putting on an already stretched health system? The answer is clearly no.

There are significant other impacts of the carbon tax on output and growth right across the State. The Federal Labor Government has shown time and again that it disregards or takes little notice of any of those impacts on State budgets. As far as output growth goes, we will see 2.3 per cent less growth in coalmining, coal-fired electricity generation drop by 9.6 per cent, iron and steel manufacturing drop by 21.3 per cent, and aluminium manufacturing drop by 61.7 per cent. What strikes me is what type of compensation has the Federal Government considered offering the people of New South Wales? It has offered the people of Victoria a fair amount of compensation. There is compensation of the order of \$2.3 billion to the Victorian Government and electricity generation assets in Victoria, but New South Wales gets a big fat zero.

The most offensive thing about those compensation figures is that electricity generation in Victoria is one-third owned by the French Government. The Federal Government is willing to give the French Government \$800 million in compensation, but it will not give a single New South Wales resident or the New South Wales Government any form of compensation. If we take that public sector family I mentioned earlier, the police officer and nurse on \$70,000 a year, even after the compensation allocated for this package they will be \$230 worse off. If they had an extra \$5,000 in their back pockets because they worked a few extra shifts, tried to do something good for their community or just tried to get a little further ahead with their family, they would be slugged an extra couple of hundred dollars and they would find themselves \$528 worse off after the carbon tax.

It is clear that nothing about this carbon tax will protect our environment. A carbon tax will not reduce global emissions. If we were serious about having a pricing mechanism that drove innovation we would set the pricing mechanism to do that without negatively impacting on people's pockets. But clearly that is not what this tax will do. This tax is significantly higher than the carbon price that is operating in the European Union and it will generate upwards of \$70 billion; that is, well over \$50 billion more than any other carbon pricing scheme across the globe. The scheme has been priced significantly out of existence so that this Government can offer some sort of temporary compensation to buy its way through. This package is nothing other than a political fix so that a weak government in Canberra can continue to obtain the support it needs to govern. It has walked away from people in this country, it has walked away from people in this State and all it is doing is driving the cost of living through the roof.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [3.42 p.m.]: There are many questions about the best way of dealing with the difficulties of global warming. I have a question for everybody in this House today: Will the alarmist and fact-free speech read by the member for Penrith ever be read by anyone outside this Parliament? This is the tenth time that the issue of carbon pricing has been raised in this Parliament—an issue over which this Parliament has no jurisdiction. It will be followed by 18 private members' statements about electorates. In reality this is a deliberate ploy by those opposite to avoid discussing issues over which the State Government has jurisdiction. As I said earlier, there was not one fact in the speech of the member for Penrith—not even a statement to indicate whether he believes in global warming. I ask him to place on the *Hansard* record whether he is a climate change sceptic or whether he believes in global warming. I expect every member in this place to place on record their belief or lack of belief in global warming. As Peter Hartcher said on 13 October 2011 in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

The carbon tax is a much bigger political issue than it is an economic one. The treasury calculates that it will increase energy prices by about 10 per cent, raise consumer prices by 0.7 per cent and reduce economic growth by 0.1 per cent a year ...

The campaign of disassembly and alarm by those opposite has been successful. Many local businesses believe that the carbon tax will affect their business. In reality by 2020 national employment is projected to increase by 1.6 million jobs with or without a carbon tax. In New South Wales and in the rest of Australia the main driver of investment in industries such as energy intensive manufacturers and electricity generators is not the carbon price but the economic development of countries such as China. Under the current Chinese economic boom, they need to build two cities the size of Chicago every year. That is what drives employment growth in Australia and that is what will drive the Australian economy—not a carbon price.

In New South Wales, over the last term of government, there was an increase of 340,000 jobs. What this Government does not want to become well known is that there has been a loss of nearly 40,000 jobs since the March 2011 election with no carbon price. Tony Abbott is damned by his own words. As he said, the Howard Government proposed an emissions trading scheme—a system that over time would change the emissions trading scheme. Mr Abbott felt that this was the best way to obtain the highest emission reduction at the lowest cost. Tony Abbott had this to say in his book *Battlelines*:

For this reason, many now believe a carbon charge scheme directed at the least environmentally efficient producers would be simpler and fairer than an emissions trading scheme.

Something has to be done about global warming. Our society's decision is whether to follow the Labor Party policy of having polluters pay, with compensation for low income earners for higher prices, or whether to follow the Abbott plan which is to have taxpayers pay. I am glad that the member for Penrith mentioned Nepean Hospital because he talked about a nurse and policeman who were married and whose real wages had been cut by this Government. The consumer price index is 3.8 per cent and their salary increase was 2.5 per cent. That family had a real salary cut due to the policies of this Government. Motions like this will keep coming up because this Government wants to avoid discussion about the real cost of living reduction that this couple will face due to the deliberate policies of the Liberal-Nationals Government.

Economists agree that the effects on the Australian budget of a carbon price will be modest compared with other changes facing the economy, such as the high terms of trade and demographic change. It is little wonder that Tony Abbott hates economists because they, as a group, have said over and again that the effects on the Australian budget bottom line will be modest. In reality we have to do something about global warming. Any number of serious economic commentators, such as Ross Garnaut, have said that the cost of inaction is far greater than the cost of action. Climate change affects not only our economy.

The latest *Medical Journal of Australia*, which devotes a large section to climate change, also has a nice photograph of the Minister for Health. I hope that the Minister reads the rest of the journal as it raises concerns about climate change. *The Lancet* of 14 May 2009 states that climate change is the biggest global health threat of the twenty-first century and that climate change adaptation and mitigation must be made central to developmental policy. Health can play a crucial role in strengthening carbon mitigation debates and targets. That is why the overwhelming majority of health professionals worldwide support meaningful reductions in carbon emissions. Every economist worldwide believes that carbon pricing is the most effective form of doing something about it.

Climate change will have devastating consequences on human health, from changing disease patterns, reducing water and food security, increasing the frequency and magnitude of extreme climate events, large-scale population migration and the likelihood of civil unrest. Members opposite do not want to know this because they show wilful blindness. Wilful blindness is characterised by something one should have known and chose not to know, but for which one is still responsible. Members opposite are responsible for doing nothing about climate change, which is the greatest threat to the health of the people of the world.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [3.49 p.m.]: In establishing priority Government members established who was better able to run this State. I support the motion of the member for Penrith which is in the following terms:

That this House opposes the Federal Labor Government's carbon tax, which will increase the cost of living for NSW families and businesses.

Those on this side of the House believe in standing up for New South Wales families and for our local communities. We do not want to burden the families and businesses of New South Wales with another Labor tax—a tax that they cannot afford and a tax that was cynically forced upon them. For the past 16 years the people of New South Wales have endured a government that failed to listen and now they have a Federal Labor Government that lies. Prime Minister Gillard said only days before the last Federal election, "... there will be no carbon tax under the government I lead". Treasurer Wayne Swan has said, "... what we reject[ed] is this hysterical allegation that somehow we are moving towards a carbon tax".

Is it any wonder that the number of those opposite was decimated by the electorate to a meagre 20 of the 93 seats in this place? As Bob Hawke said, "the people always get it right". Members know that the families in our electorates—whom we are here to represent—do not want this imposition. They cannot afford to pay higher electricity prices and they cannot afford an increase in the cost of living. The last thing that the people of New South Wales want is a carbon tax. At a time when families are doing it tough Labor has abandoned them.

Members from both sides of the House should support this motion. I am not surprised that those opposite do not understand how toxic this tax is. The carbon tax will hurt the people that Labor members have been elected to represent. Let me enlighten those opposite about the devastating effects of this tax. A NSW Treasury analysis found that 31,000 jobs across the State will be lost as a consequence of this carbon tax—a \$3.7 billion setback to the New South Wales economy. The people of New South Wales, in particular, those in the electorate of Rockdale, do not want this tax because it will have pervasive affects everywhere. Will the people of New South Wales pay more to use public transport with a carbon tax?

Government members: Yes.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS: Will the people of New South Wales pay more when they use their lights at night?

Government members: Yes.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS: Will groceries be more expensive?

Government members: Yes.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS: Will the elderly shiver in winter?

Government members: Yes.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS: Will the elderly suffer during long, hot summers?

Government members: Yes.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS: Everything the Federal Labor Government touches turns to mud. Members know how cruel the carbon tax is. I wish we were not debating this motion because I would prefer it if we had no carbon tax. The Federal Labor Government has betrayed the people of Australia. Those on this side of the House will not betray the people of New South Wales, and that is why I am proud to support the motion.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [3.54 p.m.]: I congratulate Prime Minister Gillard on taking leadership in carbon pollution and thereby doing something about climate change, unlike Premier O'Farrell and those opposite who clearly are all over the place on this issue. History was made yesterday when the country took a significant step forward to reduce carbon pollution. Through the carbon price scheme, emissions will be cut by at least 5 per cent by 2020. The price will be levied at the top 500 big polluters who currently pump millions of tonnes of pollution into the atmosphere for free. The Gillard Government has released a detailed package of assistance for households via industry tax cuts and compensation, and increased pension and family payments. People should be very suspicious whenever Premier O'Farrell releases junk analysis—as he did in this case—to scare people about price effects.

It is a trick to distract attention from budget cuts and the electricity and rail price gouges he is bringing down in New South Wales. More than 17,000 jobs have been lost in New South Wales since Barry O'Farrell became the Premier. He has no credibility in relation to jobs and he has no plans to get them back. Economists agree that putting a price on carbon pollution is the cheapest and most efficient way to tackle climate change. That is because it makes clean energy sources cheaper and provides a financial incentive for industry to go as clean as possible. Climate scientists from across the world agree that manmade climate change is happening. We can see it in the drastic melting of the Arctic ice sheets, the rising sea levels, the increasing coral bleaching and record high temperatures across the world.

If those opposite want to make jokes about that they should ask the people of Tuvalu. Labor stands united in support of scientists and in support of a carbon price scheme. We have one planet and, as Rupert Murdoch said, "The planet deserves the benefit of the doubt." Coalition members do not know what they believe in. They are all over the shop on this issue. On the one hand their Federal leader is screeching across the airwaves that climate change is imaginary and that scientists do not know what they are talking about. Tony Abbott curiously made a "blood pledge" to repeal the carbon tax laws after the next election if he wins office. He said that climate change is "absolute crap"—such wonderful language—but those are his words, not mine. Then we have Premier O'Farrell who said, "I accept climate change. I accept the impact of man on climate change."

Mr Lee Evans: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 76. We are talking about carbon tax, not climate change. The member should be asked to return to the leave of the motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The motion reads, "That this House opposes the Federal Labor Government's carbon tax, which will increase the cost of living for New South Wales families and businesses." The member is referring to the motion. The member for Canterbury has the call.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I find that to be one of the most remarkably ignorant statements I have heard in this place. To say that there is not a connection between carbon pricing and pollution is absolutely ridiculous.

Mr Lee Evans: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 76. We are talking about a carbon tax. We are not discussing climate change at the moment; we are talking about the impacts of carbon tax on the economy.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard enough on the point of order. I am sure the member is just about to return to the leave of the motion.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am going to ignore that interruption because it is not worth responding to. It is just inconceivable that someone cannot make the connection between carbon pricing and pollution.

Mr Lee Evans: Point of order: My point of order is relevance.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Is it the same point of order?

Mr Lee Evans: The discussion is about how much carbon is being taken out of the economy. Please enlighten us.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! That is not a point of order.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I say to those opposite who feign indignation on this issue: what are your plans to reduce pollution and take out carbon in the atmosphere? Direct action will not do the job. [*Time expired.*]

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [3.59 p.m.], in reply: As we have heard from the member for Rockdale, it is very clear that families across this State are adversely impacted by the Federal Labor Government's carbon tax. It will significantly increase the cost of living pressures that are already a heavy burden on families, household budgets and singles, and how they manage their budgets; and that is why this House should oppose this tax and continue to send that message to the people of New South Wales. If you are a representative in the New South Wales Government your job is to represent the people of New South Wales.

If the Federal Government is trying to impose a tax that has a negative impact on the people of New South Wales it is our responsibility to speak out against it—whether it is 10 times, 15 times, 20 times, or whatever number you want to talk about. At no stage during my speech or in the speech of the member for Rockdale did either of us indicate that we did not believe in climate change. In fact, one of the points I made was that if this pricing mechanism was really about innovation and change it would have been structured completely differently. We would not have over priced the carbon to the point where we could generate a huge amount of compensation that does not cover it.

Ms Linda Burney: How do you know that?

Mr STUART AYRES: Because the modelling shows that if you are a \$70,000-a-year earner, your partner is a \$70,000-a-year earner and you have an average spend for one dependent child, you will not be in front at the end of the carbon tax, which means you are increasing the cost of living pressures on families. It is not that difficult to understand. The carbon tax will make it harder for people.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Canterbury has had her opportunity to contribute to the debate. She will listen to the member's reply in silence. I remind the member for Canterbury that she is on three calls to order.

Mr STUART AYRES: The member for Rockdale also referred to the significant impact of the carbon tax on jobs. If we want to protect jobs in this State the single best thing we can do is to continue to talk against the carbon tax, because there is little doubt that it will cost jobs. This particular package has done absolutely nothing to generate the type of work that is required to invest in new technologies at an appropriate price; all it does is price carbon out of the market to generate a compensation package so that the Federal Government can go to people on the 1 July and say "Look, you are going to be worse off, but not as bad as you first thought."

That is the reality of this particular tax. It is a bad tax for New South Wales and it is a bad tax for State governments. It is even worse for State governments that own their electricity assets, like New South Wales,

because they lose out big time under this tax. If you are State government that has decided to make the transition from brown coal to black coal, so you can be a little bit more efficient and burn less carbon, the Federal Government will slug you even more—you will not get any compensation. But if you are the French Government, the Federal Government will fling you a little \$800 gift just to say, "Thanks for coming. Come back again. Invest in Victoria, but do not bother supporting the people of New South Wales."

These points have been raised time and time again. They will be reinforced continually right up until the Federal Government is held accountable for this poorly designed tax. It does not do the things that it needs to do to encourage investment in the types of technologies that we can actually look at. It is a political fix from a weak Federal Government that does not have the numbers to control its own Parliament and that will continue to come up with political fix after political fix to maintain its own survival. It is just like the previous Labor Government in this State: it is too focused on itself and not focused enough on the people of this country and this particular State.

I acknowledge the contributions of the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Canterbury. It is pretty clear we disagree on this issue at this point. Perhaps if they were looking at the billions and billions of dollars that were being raised by the carbon tax they might consider some of the infrastructure projects that money could be spent on to improve the productivity of this State, which would do more than anything else to secure jobs in New South Wales. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 59

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

Noes, 19

Mr Barr	Mr Lalich	Mr Rees
Ms Burney	Mr Lynch	Mr Robertson
Mr Daley	Dr McDonald	Ms Tebbutt
Mr Furolo	Ms Mihailuk	
Ms Hay	Ms Moore	<i>Tellers,</i>
Ms Hornery	Mrs Perry	Mr Amery
Ms Keneally	Mr Piper	Mr Park

Pairs

Mr Bromhead	Ms Burton
Mr Cornwell	Ms Watson
Mr Spence	Mr Zangari

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): It being close to 4.30 p.m. the House will now proceed with government business.

AGRICULTURAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Anthony Roberts.

Agreement in Principle

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [4.18 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Agricultural Tenancies Amendment Bill 2011. The purpose of the bill is to establish a new process for resolving agricultural tenancy disputes by the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. Earlier this year, the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1990 was transferred from Primary Industries to the Fair Trading portfolio. The Act is a good fit with other tenancy-related responsibilities within the Fair Trading portfolio. Agricultural tenancy laws have been in operation in New South Wales since 1916. During an earlier discussion with the member for Mount Druitt, he mentioned that in the past he had spoken during debate on this legislation. I assumed he was referring to the 1990 bill, not the 1916 bill, but I will seek clarification.

Mr Richard Amery: It was both of them.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: The member for Mount Druitt said it was both of them. The laws were first introduced to address the power imbalance between landowners and tenants, and also to help prevent the degradation of agricultural land that resulted from poor farming practices. The laws have been amended over time to keep up with developments in agricultural practices and the changing circumstances of tenant farmers. These matters are now dealt with by the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1990, which regulates the rights and responsibilities of landowners, tenants and sharefarmers in relation to agricultural tenancies. The Act applies to land used for grazing, dairying, pig farming, viticulture, orcharding, beekeeping, growing vegetables or other crops, forestry, or any combination of these activities. The Act also provides an arbitration process for resolving disputes that may arise during a tenancy.

These disputes can involve matters such as land misuse, weed growth or the financial benefits flowing to the tenant or the landowner from the use of the land or the making of improvements. Under the current terms of the Act, the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries is responsible for the arbitration of disputes. However, it would be neither logical nor practical to transfer administrative responsibility for the Act to Fair Trading without also transferring responsibility for the dispute resolution role. As the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal already provides dispute resolution services and has extensive experience in tenancy-related matters, it is ideally placed to take on this role. The tribunal has eight registries, including three in rural and regional areas, and conducts hearings in more than 70 locations around the State. This widespread choice of venues will make it easier for hearings to be held in a convenient location for the parties to a dispute.

A memorandum of understanding will be entered into so that the tribunal can seek expert advice or technical assistance from the Department of Primary Industries as required. Existing provisions in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal Act cover virtually all procedural matters currently provided for in the Agricultural Tenancies Act. The bill therefore proposes to remove the duplicate provisions from the Agricultural Tenancies Act. Not only will the amendment bill streamline the Agricultural Tenancies Act to a significant degree but it will also repeal the Agricultural Tenancies Regulation, which will now be redundant. The key stakeholder for agricultural tenancies is the New South Wales Farmers Association. The association was consulted before and during the drafting of the amendment bill and supports the introduction of the new dispute resolution process in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal.

The Agricultural Tenancies Amendment Bill is brief and straightforward. First, the bill proposes to amend the objectives and definitions of the Agricultural Tenancies Act to reflect that the dispute resolution

service is to be provided by the tribunal. This will also mean that the current functions of the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries will become redundant and will be omitted from the Act. Part 2 of the current Act sets out the general rights of tenants and owners, including the right to have matters determined by arbitration. The amendment bill proposes to delete all references to the current arbitration process in part 2 of the Act and replace them with references to the tribunal. Part 2 of the Act will be otherwise unchanged, and will still cover the general rights of tenants and owners in regard to improvements to land undertaken by tenants or owners, tenants' fixtures, owners' rights of entry, recording a farm's condition, keeping of accounts and terminating of tenancies.

Part 3 of the Act concerns the determination of compensation payable for improvements that have been made to the land. This includes improvements made by either a tenant or an owner. Part 3 also provides for tenants to be compensated for stored products that are left behind when they leave the farm, and for owners to be compensated for any deterioration in the condition of the farm. As is the case with part 2 of the Act, for part 3 of the Act the amendment bill proposes to replace references to arbitration with references to the tribunal. The current power for the Director General of Primary Industries to appoint someone to make a record of the condition of a farm under section 12 will be omitted. However, it is proposed that tenants and owners will be able to apply for tribunal orders in relation to a dispute about a record of condition.

The provisions in part 4 of the Act concern the current system for arbitrating disputes and the application of the Commercial Arbitration Act 2010. Similar procedural and administrative provisions are contained in the tribunal's Act and apply to all matters within its jurisdiction. Accordingly, the amendment bill proposes to replace part 4 of the Act. New part 4 to be inserted into the Act will provide for a handful of procedural and administrative matters that are not already covered in the tribunal's Act. Some of the provisions in part 4 will be carried over and retained. New section 20 of new part 4 gives tenants and owners the right to apply to the tribunal for resolution of agricultural tenancy disputes. It is also proposed to expand the types of disputes that can be determined.

Under the existing arbitration process, applications cannot be made for disputes concerning rental arrears or evictions. These matters must currently be heard in the courts. Under the bill, parties to these kinds of disputes will be able to apply to the tribunal for dispute resolution at a much lower cost. The current time limit for applying for arbitration of disputes is three months after the dispute arises or after the end of the tenancy, whichever is the latest. New section 20 retains the same time limit for the tribunal process. The tribunal's Act also allows for an extension of time to be granted where appropriate.

New section 21 will list the range of orders that the tribunal can make under the Act. The tribunal will be able to make orders to give effect to a dispute determination, restrain any action that breaches a term of a tenancy, amend or not amend a record of the condition of a farm, require an action to be performed, require payment of money or compensation, direct a tenant or owner to undertake work to remedy a breach of a term of a tenancy, direct an owner, an owner's agent or a tenant to comply with the Act or regulation, terminate a tenancy and return possession, or require an owner to allow a tenant to recover goods or fixtures.

New section 21 will also establish the tribunal's financial jurisdiction. Currently, the financial limit for matters that can be determined by the Director General of Primary Industries is \$100,000. It is proposed to increase this limit so that the tribunal can determine matters and make orders involving amounts of up to \$500,000. Disputes involving larger amounts will continue to be heard in the courts. Given that the amounts involved with agricultural tenancy disputes can add up to millions of dollars, a limit of \$500,000 for the tribunal is considered appropriate. Increasing the monetary jurisdiction will mean a wider range of disputes can be determined in the lower cost tribunal instead of in the courts.

Under the current arbitration system, case management and mediation have proven to be effective in resolving many matters, and there is no reason why this should not continue to be the case. Tribunal members are highly experienced in alternative dispute resolution methods. Mediation of disputes reduces the costs for all parties involved, and can deliver a very quick result. Accordingly, new section 22 will require the tribunal to promote conciliation and use its best endeavours to bring the parties to an agreed settlement. Matters that are not able to be settled will be referred to mediation. The details of the mediation process are already covered under part 5 of the tribunal's Act. If mediation is unsuccessful, then the chairperson can direct that the matter be subject to an inquiry by an assessor, or the matter can proceed to a hearing.

Existing provisions in the Agricultural Tenancies Act provide for a charge to be placed on land in order to secure amounts that have been ordered to be paid to a tenant. The charge is released once the owner pays the

tenant the amounts in question. The charge on land is being retained in new section 23 of the amendment bill. Section 27 of the Act voids any agreements that seek to waive or cancel any of the rights, powers and duties under the Act. This important provision is being retained. The current procedures for serving documents and basic regulation-making powers will also be retained.

Item [7] of schedule 1 to the bill concern a tenant's right to make improvements to a farm. Item [7] states that without the owner's consent a tenant is only allowed to carry out improvements to a farm if the improvement is listed in schedule 1, or the improvement is prescribed by regulation, or the improvement has been determined as suitable and desirable. The improvements listed in schedule 1 are crucial to the operation of a farm. The list includes drainage, roads, bridges, and repairs to essential farm buildings. The schedule also includes important activities such as destruction of pests, destruction of prickly pear and noxious weed control.

Mr David Elliott: Hear! Hear!

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: Rightly so, as the member for Baulkham Hills says. It is a very important issue to many people on the land. The bill proposes to retain schedule 1 in its current form. Schedule 2 of the current Act contains the savings and transitional provisions that are required to deal with administrative matters. The bill proposes to update that schedule to provide for management of any dispute applications which were lodged but which have not been finalised before the new dispute resolution process comes into effect. The final proposals in the bill concern minor changes to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal Act that will be required to give the tribunal jurisdiction to determine agricultural tenancy disputes. The bill proposes amendments to section 5 of the tribunal's Act that will add the Agricultural Tenancies Act to the list of Acts that confer jurisdiction on the tribunal.

The tribunal has nine divisions that are listed in schedule 1 of the Act. Each division covers a different area of the tribunal's responsibilities for dispute resolution. The bill proposes to amend schedule 1 of the Act so that agricultural tenancy disputes are dealt with in the Commercial Division. In summary, the Agricultural Tenancies Amendment Bill contains only measures that are required to confer jurisdiction over agricultural tenancy disputes on the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal, which is the direct result of the transfer of the Agricultural Tenancies Act to the Fair Trading portfolio. The bill will ensure that farm owners, share farmers and farm tenants will have ongoing access to an affordable and accessible dispute resolution service. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Tania Mihailuk and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE BILL 2011

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendment.

Schedule of amendment referred to in message of 20 October 2011

No. 1 Page 3, clause 4. Insert after line 14:

Note. The plumbing and drainage work to which this Act applies is commonly referred to as on-site plumbing and drainage work.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [4.23 p.m.]: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendment.

The Government is pleased to support the minor amendment made by the Legislative Council. I note that this amendment came about through some last minute negotiations between the Government, the Opposition and the Master Plumbers Association. While it is a very minor note in the bill, it does help to acknowledge the important role that plumbers play in our society. I particularly thank the member for Kogarah and the Master Plumbers Association for their dialogue and input with regard to this amendment. This bill delivers historic reform and cuts red tape for plumbers to the benefit of both plumbers and the people of New South Wales. The Liberals and The Nationals are getting on with the job of reforming and rebuilding New South Wales. I commend the amendment to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.24 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to remind the House that this is an Opposition amendment. I also pay tribute to the Master Plumbers Association and the former shadow Minister for Fair Trading, Cherie Burton, for the hard work that they did in securing this important amendment. The nature of the parliamentary system is from time to time adversarial and it can be particularly confrontational. Therefore, it makes for a pleasant change to discuss a matter on which both sides have worked together to produce a better outcome.

The Opposition's amendment confirms that those works covered by the bill are onsite plumbing and drainage works. The effect of this amendment is to ensure that the bill covers only those works that are agreed to by all parties. The Government accepted the necessity for this amendment and I commend the Minister for that decision. In the past plumbers who were undertaking a job on a property could be liable for previous work undertaken on that property that was non-compliant. This amendment clarifies that plumbers are responsible only for work that they agree to undertake and that they are obliged to notify the property owner only if they find previous work that is non-compliant.

Since becoming shadow Minister for Fair Trading I have met with the Master Plumbers Association to hear its concerns. While the association was pleased with the initial amendment to the bill, it has a series of other concerns that have not been addressed. At present there are seven different regulators for the plumbing industry. The association has proposed a plumbing licensing and regulation advisory council. Such a council would be able to provide advice on the implementation of the National Licensing Agreement. I am advised that the association has an undertaking from the Minister to establish such a council and I look forward to receiving further advice on that matter. I also note that the Minister is to meet with the association at some stage during this current session of Parliament to discuss this matter further.

The Master Plumbers Association has received a further undertaking from the Minister that certain amendments will be incorporated in future regulations. I take this opportunity to outline these amendments. Clause 4 (1) (b) restricts works covered by the bill to residential building work. The association has received an undertaking that the regulation will incorporate all plumbing construction work. The bill also does not define what is meant by onsite works. I am advised that the industry definition is those works that are on the property in question. I understand that the regulation will include a definition of onsite plumbing. The Master Plumbers Association is concerned about the limiting of the definition of "plumbing and drainage work" in clause 5 (5). This provision outlines excluded works for the purpose of the bill only. The association has requested that it be specified that these works are excluded from the definition only for the purposes of the bill.

The association has made that request to ensure that the restrictions in the definition of plumbing and drainage work do not have wider ramifications. The association has also asked that part 4, division 1, clause 22 be amended to specify that inspectors must hold a trade certificate issued by the Office of Fair Trading that confirms their qualification to undertake that work. The Master Plumbers Association has also requested that the regulation specify that plumbers are not required to have a work permit for the creation of a sewer service diagram. The association is also seeking an amendment to specify that someone who prepares a sewer service diagram will not be responsible for any defects discovered on the property, although they should be required to notify the owners of those defects in accordance with clause 10 (1).

Plumbing constitutes an important skilled trade and the future of the plumbing industry is dependent on qualified plumbers not being undermined and underpriced by less qualified and less skilled tradespeople purporting to be more qualified than they are. There is great concern within the industry that works that have traditionally been the responsibility of plumbers are increasingly being undertaken by other and often unskilled persons. Traditionally, seven areas of plumber training were acknowledged and these were incorporated into the TAFE training program. They are water, drainage, sanitary drainage, roof, gas, mechanical and stormwater. The streams of "roof" and now "stormwater" have been removed from the regulation as solely the responsibility of plumbers. It is important that plumbers are qualified for all types of works and the association is opposed to the trend toward specialist plumbers. For the benefit of the industry and for the safety of the tradespeople involved, it is important that we take action to ensure, wherever possible, that tradespersons undertaking work are qualified to do that work.

The Master Plumbers Association also raised the ongoing concern about plumbers recouping costs. Many plumbers are being forced to go without payment or are facing the possibility of lengthy and costly legal proceedings to recoup the moneys that they are owed. As parliamentarians it is our duty to remember that some

of the first people to be affected by an economic downturn are sole traders and small business operators. I look forward to having the opportunity to work toward a fairer system for New South Wales plumbers and I am sure that in this matter both sides of the House can continue to work together constructively.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendment agreed to.

Message sent to the Legislative Council advising it of the resolution.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MAITLAND RUGBY LEAGUE

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [4.42 p.m.]: It is with great pride that I inform the House that the real NRL premiership trophy has returned to Maitland for a second consecutive year. The "real NRL" is the way the people of the lower Hunter like to refer to the Newcastle rugby league competition, in which Maitland is one of 10 teams. I know the member for Swansea will join me in celebrating Maitland's winning this prestigious award for the second year in a row. This competition traces its origins back to 1910, just two years after the New South Wales premiership introduced rugby league to this country.

The Maitland team is affectionately known as the Pickers. It is a nickname that came from the merger of our original NRL team, Maitland United, with Morpeth-East Maitland in 1942 to form the Maitland Pumpkin Pickers. The Maitland first grade side of 2011 certainly was the cream of this year's NRL crop. It finished the normal competition season with 18 wins, three losses and one draw. Maitland achieved back-to-back minor premierships, topping the table by one point from the club it would eventually face on grand final day, the Western Suburbs Rosellas. Wests only lowered the Pickers' colours once this year, when they met in round seven and won 20 points to six. Round 15 set the scene for what would be the battle for supremacy between the clubs, culminating in their grand final encounter at Newcastle's Number One Sportsground.

In round 15 the Pickers were victorious by two points, and that two-point margin was repeated in the major semi-final, Maitland 24 defeating Wests 22. The Pickers went into the grand final not only as back-to-back minor premiers but also for the second consecutive year having had their coach named the Newcastle Rugby League Coach of the Year. Noel Dent coached Maitland to glory in 2010 to break a 27-year premiership drought. This year it was Trevor Ott's turn and the reigning Coach of the Year capped off 2011 with the ultimate prize and a piece of Maitland rugby league history. One of the enjoyable highs for me as the member for Maitland was to be in the crowd at Number One Sportsground on grand final day to witness this titanic struggle.

I proudly wore my Maitland Pickers hat, with "Maitland back-to-back" on the back of it. The team proved to be victorious. The Pickers made a dominant start with tries to Dan Metcalf, Dan Randall and Vern Moana-Mason, all converted by Mick Moran to give Maitland an 18-nil lead after just 25 minutes. In the second half Wests struck back and by fulltime had drawn level, 18 all. The 2011 Newcastle Rugby League grand final then went into golden point extra time. The first five minutes could not break the deadlock but the Pickers were true to their team song *We will not be done*.

Mr Tim Owen: Don't rub it in, Robyn.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: The member for Newcastle does not want to hear this, I know. But two minutes into the second period of extra time the boot of Mick Moran was the deciding factor—the score, Maitland 19, Western Suburbs 18, game and season to the Pickers. Mick Moran commented after the match:

I couldn't have hit it any sweeter.

And the Man of the Match judges agreed, awarding him the J. J. 'Mo' Wilson medal. It was a bitter-sweet victory for Maitland captain P. J. Ellis, who left the field after he injured his arm. But it did not stop him from lifting the premiership trophy aloft. The Pickers of 2011 are now among the club's greats because it is only the third time that Maitland has won consecutive grand finals. I am also pleased to report that Maitland's rugby

league success continued over the October long weekend at the New South Wales Aboriginal Knockout at Bathurst. The Mindaribba Warriors were impressive in the final, with a 56 to 24 victory. They returned home not only as champions but also with the hosting rights for the 2012 New South Wales Aboriginal Rugby League Knockout. The Warriors were coached by Ron Griffiths, who next year will become the Maitland Pickers' first grade coach. Yes, 2011 has been a sensational year for Maitland's rugby league teams, and I look forward to cheering on both the Pickers and the Warriors next season. I look forward to hosting the knockout in Maitland. It will be fantastic to have all the teams there. Go, the Pickers—back to back in 2011.

NORTH STRATHFIELD AND CONCORD WEST RAILWAY STATIONS LIFT ACCESS

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [4.44 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to speak to the House on a matter of paramount importance to my electorate of Drummoyne. Since I became the member for Drummoyne in March I have received many representations calling for the installation of lift access at both North Strathfield and Concord West railway stations. There is an urgent need for lift access at those stations, with the only means currently available being steep flights of stairs. This makes it extremely difficult for the elderly, mothers with prams, commuters with heavy packages and the disabled. It is simply unacceptable that, while renovations are undertaken at North Strathfield station, lift access is not part of the plan. I recognise that in these tough economic times lift access is an expensive option, but it is essential and in the long term more economically viable.

This Government is continually encouraging people to use public transport and get more cars off our already congested roads. This is the twenty-first century: we must start to plan for a time when more and more people will be reliant on public transport and less reliant on using a car. The Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, is to be commended for a number of transport initiatives in the Drummoyne electorate, particularly the 25 extra RiverCat services per week, for which we are very grateful. The job is a tough one. For 16 years the planning system was in a mess, school enrolments exceeded places available because of the Government's lack of forward planning, and the road system had commuters in traffic jams. Yes, this Government will fix the problems, but not overnight. The building of lifts at these two key railway stations, North Strathfield and Concord West, would cost far less than the construction of more arterial roads and freeways. It is simply not good enough to suggest that these commuters use a nearby station that has lift access. As one constituent wrote:

It is so disappointing to me that I am continually forced into my car when I could very easily jump on a train, but cannot get to the platform.

This is a young mum who cannot physically get her baby's pram onto the platform because of the steps. That is not good enough. It is not good enough to live across the road from North Strathfield station or Concord West station and be forced to travel the roads or to Strathfield station to get wheelchair access to the platform. As a government we are there to provide adequate services to the public and to provide for future needs. I know I sound like a broken record, as the member for Mount Druitt would harp about, in asking for things all the time, but this is a huge challenge for our electorate. I know that Labor did absolutely nothing about this issue. It promised to solve it on a number of occasions but did absolutely nothing.

The Drummoyne electorate has had a number of huge successes, and I commend all Ministers for their help, whether it was the \$1.2 million for the Concord Hospital Institute, or banning fishing on the wharf at Cabarita, or the announcement on Monday by the Minister of a \$300,000 grant for a hydrotherapy pool at the Lucas Gardens School. The lift access matter is urgent: it requires immediate funding. People living near North Strathfield and Concord West railway stations need access to train services. It is not a luxury; it is a necessity. I formally give notice that lift access at both Strathfield North and Concord West stations is a matter of urgency. I urge the Government to make funds available to provide this service to my constituents. I will update the House in the future on progress on this issue of importance, and I will endeavour to collect 10,000 signatures, if required, to bring this serious issue to the Parliament. I am determined to fight this one for the people of Drummoyne.

LURNEA HIGH SCHOOL LOOKING GOOD FEELING GREAT PROGRAM

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [4.49 p.m.]: Yesterday I met a young man in year 6 at school who next year will attend Lurnea High School. He was very proud to be going to Lurnea High School and it gives me great pleasure today to talk about a most fantastic recent achievement of Lurnea High School, which is a \$50,000 grant from the National Australia Bank Schools First Program. The grant will enhance and ensure continuation of a program called Looking Good Feeling Great for girls at Lurnea High School, and it will support extension of that program to boys.

This generation of children has grown up in the most complex society that the world has ever seen and they run the risk of having a shorter lifespan than their parents because of the dual challenges that the generation will have to meet, which are obesity and mental health. The reality is that habits developed in childhood set one up for life. I commend Ms Deb Young, the project coordinator of Looking Good Feeling Great, on what she has done for the young women who have gone through this program and for the continuation of the program. The Looking Good Feeling Great program was established six years ago. It includes weekly fitness classes for female students, seminars to address low self-esteem and workshops to maintain a healthy diet. It started as an idea to get girls to overcome body image issues and to improve their fitness levels in general. About 15 girls have participated in the program every term.

Joanne Short, from Move Fitness Ladies Centre, runs some of the classes, which include boot camp, Zumba, circuit, boxing, step, yoga and aerobics. The \$50,000 will be used to buy fitness equipment and to provide grooming and deportment classes. The grant means that every girl in the school can be offered the program and there will be a shadow program for boys. Sally McCarren, a young lady who has participated in the program, said that it helped to improve her self-esteem and, "After the classes you feel really good." She added, "Since participating in the program, I've started playing soccer again", because it made her realise how much she needed to maintain her fitness. These young women from Lurnea will be future mothers in our community and the skills that they are learning will have spinoff benefits for generations to come. As I have said, this generation runs the risk of having a shorter lifespan than their parents.

Mental health is an issue that responds well to exercise. Exercise is called nature's anti-depressant and the benefit of exercise for improving mental health and self-esteem is well known. The program was established in 2005 and in 2010 the school established a partnership with the Butterfly Foundation, which has continued into 2011, to address low levels of self-esteem. National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] results have demonstrated that girls in year 7 were placed in the bottom two bands compared with 19 per cent of the State. School average growth of year 9 female students was below the State, region and similar school group averages. The results show improvement in National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy results for female students who participate in the program.

This is a wonderful partnership. The weekly fitness classes by Move Fitness, the mental health seminars by the Butterfly Foundation, the nutritional seminars by Coach Approach educational workshops and the annual Mental Health Day for Girls are vital programs that will improve the health of these young people for many years to come. Lurnea High School is doing extremely well and I pay tribute to the school's former principal, Dominique Splatt, who retired last year. Jim Samphier is now acting school principal until a full-time principal is appointed. Mathew Waters, the regional executive of the National Australia Bank, attended the school and I commend the National Australia Bank and thank it for its support.

RYDE MIDWIFERY GROUP PRACTICE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [4.54 p.m.]: I commend and pay tribute to the work of the Ryde Midwifery Group Practice. Ryde Hospital is not in my electorate of Castle Hill. Unfortunately, we do not have a hospital in Castle Hill, or a courthouse or rail line. In fact, the only thing we have in Castle Hill is taxpayers. Families in my electorate contribute a lot in taxes, but for the past 16 years we have received very little in return. Whilst we are very happy to see rapid progress under the new Government with the development of the North West Rail Link, I appreciate that it may be a very long time before we see a hospital at Castle Hill. However, in some ways I am fortunate that there is not a hospital in my electorate because my second daughter was born at Ryde Hospital, and I commend the great work of the Ryde Midwifery Group Practice.

On 28 September my wife, Helen, gave birth to our second daughter, Amelia Frances, through the maternity service at Ryde Hospital. It was a perfect birth—as perfect as births can be—through the support and care provided by the midwives at Ryde Hospital. The philosophy of the Ryde Midwifery Group Practice is to offer women the opportunity to give birth assisted by a named midwife in a low-risk setting. The group was acknowledged in 2004 as a leader in the provision of continuity of midwifery care within a primary health model to women without identified medical risk factors.

From my recent experience I can acknowledge them as the best in the business when it comes to support, preparation and post-natal care—in fact they are so good that they have their own fan page called Mums@Ryde, which my wife Helen is in the process of joining. The Mums@Ryde group believes that not all women need medical intervention in pregnancy and birth, and women who are able to access the service get the best possible care from their own midwives. They believe that many women in the community would benefit from having their babies with the Ryde group but do not know about the wonderful service that it provides.

I particularly commend the work of Alyssea Kemp, who was our midwife throughout the pregnancy. She was incredibly caring, respectful and supportive, and a strong advocate of our wishes for the birth plan. She helped to create a very warm and supportive environment. She inspired Helen with confidence, which helped her endure a drug-free labour, just as she wanted. If anyone in the Chamber is thinking of giving birth, or maybe their wives are—I note the member for Baulkham Hills is present; it is about time he had one for the country—I recommend that you head down to Ryde Hospital and ask for Alyssea. I also commend Martin Griffiths, who assisted at the birth.

An interesting thing came to my attention following the birth. I read in the newspaper that part of the NSW Health Towards Normal Birth directive to be implemented by 2015 is for early discharge of women following uncomplicated pregnancy and childbirth. If I was taken back to a few months prior to the birth of my daughter I would have been a bit unsure about it, but Helen was discharged four hours after Amelia's birth and the care provided by the midwife, Alyssea, was second to none. I think this is the way forward in terms of alleviating pressure on our hospital system. Dr Rupert Sherwood, who is the president of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, said that if women could be well cared for at home it would alleviate pressure on maternity staff. He further said:

If the postnatal care can be done safely in the community, that can have benefits in terms of freeing up those highly developed skills of the midwives in terms of labour room care.

I commend the work of the midwives at Ryde. I understand that they are seeking to have a new birth centre set up in the future, and I will certainly raise that with the Minister and do all I can to provide greater awareness and support for the work done at the Ryde midwifery centre.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I thank the member for Castle Hill for his support for midwifery and natal classes et cetera. I also congratulate him on the birth of his lovely daughter.

MENAI DISTRICT SPORTS AWARDS

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [4.59 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about the sporting prowess of some of my constituents in Menai. This year's Menai District Sports Awards winners showcase the broad range of sporting talents of past years. The Junior Male Rookie Sports Person of the Year was Antonio Sansone from Menai Hawks Football Club. Antonio has already been affectionately labelled a "freak of nature" by his coach who says that he has not seen anyone so young with so much talent. In the same category the junior female was Luisa Healy from Illawong and Districts Senior Athletics Club. Luisa only joined this season but she has already competed at the Athletics New South Wales State Relays in relay teams that won gold medals.

The Senior Female Rookie of the Year went to Kate Donnelly of Bangor Football Club. This was Kate's first year of football and she even won the player's player award, which is voted on by her teammates. The Junior Female Sports Person of the Year was Jessica Kable from Barden Ridgebacks Football Club. Jessica has a long list of achievements for 2011, including soccer coach for the under 10s, playing with the 14Bs, refereeing, captaining Illawong Little Athletics and participating in zone soccer and cross country, as well as discus, shot-put, javelin and the 1,500 metres—one can clearly see why she deserves this award. The Junior Male Sports Person of the Year was Jarrod Geddes from the Illawong and Districts Senior Athletics Club. It was Jarrod's season goal to be selected to represent Australia at the 2011 IAAF World Youth Athletics Championship in the under 18s. I am happy to say that he reached his goal and did his country proud.

It is important also to acknowledge the teams that have worked together to achieve excellence. Junior Male Sports Team of the Year went to the Bangor Tigers under 16s. They were the first team in the club's history to take out the Greater Southern Sydney championship. The Junior Female Sports Team of the Year was awarded to the Menai Hawks Football Club women's 16B team. Not only did the Menai Hawks women's 16B team finish the 2011 season second on the competition table; they also went on to win the grand final 1-0. The Senior Male Sports Team of the Year went to Illawong and Districts Senior Athletics Club 4 x 100 metres and 4 x 200 metres team. The team competed with great success at the 2010 Athletics New South Wales State Relays competition, where they were placed second after giving their best performance. Bangor Football Club Senior B1 team took home the Senior Female Sports Team of the Year Award, finishing as undefeated premiers. Due to their success this year they will progress to A grade next season, which makes them the club's first senior women's A grade team.

A lot of people work behind the scenes to make our sporting clubs operate so well. They are usually passionate sportspeople themselves who are keen to see others also enjoy sport. This year's Sporting Club

Person of the Year went to the energetic Christine Newman of Menai Hawks Netball Club. Celebrating 30 years of membership in 2011, Christine Newman is the club secretary, Sutherland Shire Netball Association liaison, coach of 8T1 and an active player. Christine goes over and above on so many occasions to benefit the club and its members. The 2011 Sporting Club of the Year went to Illawong Menai Cricket Club. The club started in 1977 from a humble initial single junior team, numbers began to grow in the early 1990s and now the club consistently fields over 20 junior teams plus senior teams in the Sutherland competition. The club implemented a "fair go" policy in 1995-96 to ensure that all players get an equal opportunity to bowl and to rotate the batting order. This policy is still encouraged today and the results from the season are outstanding considering there is no "win at all costs" mentality.

The biggest award in the Menai District Sports Awards line-up is the Sports Star of the Year. This year it was won by Jake Hammond from the Illawong and Districts Senior Athletics Club. Jake has represented Australia in the World Athletics Championships in the under 20s, he has competed around Australia and was invited to be part of the Australian Open 4 x 100 metre relay team competing at the Taiwanese Athletic Championships. Once again I congratulate each and every one of the winners on their impressive achievements. I also congratulate the clubs that support them. I take this opportunity also to pay tribute to Warwick Copeland. Warwick was a regular attendee at this event. Sadly he passed away on the same day as the awards. Warwick, with his wife, Dee, will always be remembered for their tireless efforts and dedication to the Jenko pony club, the Menai District Sports Association and the Menai community. His presence was missed on the night.

FINANCIAL LITERACY PROGRAM

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [5.04 p.m.]: This week I had an interesting conversation with Mr Otto Henfling from CatholicCare Social Services, Parramatta Diocese at my electorate office. Mr Henfling was accompanied at that meeting by Miss Ann O'Brien, the counselling and education senior manager of that organisation. Miss O'Brien is basically in charge of the subject matter we discussed—a financial literacy program. The program targets older teenagers, such as senior high school students, and is designed to build financial awareness and budgeting ability amongst young people. Miss O'Brien explained that this interactive course looks at the "money personality"—an interesting new term—of young people in how they budget and spend money. I support the principles of the project. It has always been my view that the basic skill of how to manage money should be a major part of any school curriculum and that it should not only be taught in commerce or economic classes.

Electorate offices deal with many social problems, and mine is no exception. These include alcoholism, domestic violence, rent payments not only to private agencies but also to the Department of Housing resulting in people being evicted from their homes, and non-payment of traffic fines resulting in the loss of licences with resultant employment impacts. Underpinning these problems—when one digs a little deeper—is the lack of any financial training or skills in how to manage a basic household budget. It is easy to be judgemental in these matters but there is very little training in our school system—public and private—to assist people to manage a basic household budget.

The program that Miss O'Brien runs is sponsored by the Castle Hill RSL Club, Eastern Creek Tavern, St Mary's RSL Club and Wentworthville Leagues Club. It is designed to identify personal attitudes to money management, to practice making considered decisions prior to purchasing, to discuss and compare the benefits and pitfalls of buying on credit, and to explore the advantage of creating a budget. In our conversation I recounted a situation from my youth when I had picked up a brochure from a bank about a system known as "system saving". That system was designed to add up one's bills for the year, divide them from the frequency of one's salary or wage—whether it be 52 weeks, 26 fortnights or 12 months—and then put aside money to pay for those bills. That system played a big part in my budgeting training and it should be encouraged. Miss O'Brien told me that it is almost impossible to get her program into schools, including Catholic schools but she has made representations to the chief executive officer of the Parramatta Diocese.

I appreciate that schools have individual timetables, class structures, curriculums, et cetera. I have always said that it is not how much one earns but what one does with what one gets. This program would resolve many of the problems faced by many of those who come not only to my electorate office but also to non-government agencies to seek assistance. Miss O'Brien said when doing a project about supported accommodation, which involved places such as Patrician Brothers at Blacktown, she talked to young people about owning and driving a car, how much it costs to register a car and insurance consequences for young people, and about managing the use of a mobile phone. They are presented with a money wallet and receive advice about various services under Fair Trading, spreadsheets and the like. I commend Miss O'Brien,

Mr Henfling and CatholicCare Social Services, Parramatta, for bringing this matter to my attention. I advise members that I will be making representations to the Minister in a non-political way as I believe these matters should be given as much encouragement as possible.

HOUSE WITH NO STEPS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.09 p.m.]: House with No Steps, a community organisation that supports people with a disability, their families and carers, has its headquarters in my electorate of Davidson at Belrose, where it was founded in 1962 by Lionel Watts, CMG, MBE, and his wife Dorothy Watts, OAM. Lionel Watts became a severe quadriplegic as a result of one of Australia's last polio epidemics. After experiencing the appalling standard of services available for people with a disability, Lionel resolved to do something about it and shortly after formed the House with No Steps. While most local people today know the nearby Lionel Watts Oval, which has been named in his honour, they probably do not appreciate how Lionel was a true innovator and passed on his spirit of entrepreneurship to the organisation he founded. Next year the House with No Steps will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary as it continues to develop new services and support to better meet the needs of people with a disability.

The House with No Steps is now one of the leading organisations providing support for people with a disability and mental health problems in New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. It provides support through employment, education, training, accommodation and social connection programs to 3,300 people across 160 locations. With around \$100 million in annual revenue and over \$50 million in assets, it is a substantial entity. The House with No Steps empowers people to plan for and achieve their goals and determine their own life choices. It works in partnership with people with a disability, and their families and carers, to help them achieve their personal potential and to lead a full life in their community. The House with No Steps helps people take positive control of their lives and to make a valuable contribution to their community.

The House with No Steps focuses on people's abilities rather than their disabilities and treats all people as respected equals. Through businesses in 10 diverse industries the House with No Steps provides meaningful employment opportunities for 600 people with a disability. On a recent visit to the Belrose site I witnessed the facilities and met many of the people working there. They operate in a happy work environment and contribute meaningfully to society. The people I met included Colin, Michael and Lisa, who will appear in my next Davidson electorate newsletter. I spoke also with Andrew Richardson, Chief Executive Officer, and David Jackett, General Manager, Fundraising and Community Relations, who both welcomed the person-centred approach being championed at a State level as well as the foreshadowed National Disability Insurance Scheme. I note Andrew's insight when he said that they:

... work with some of the most inspiring people. People whose capability, commitment and sheer joy of life are at times overwhelming.

The organisational values of empowerment, respect, inclusion, commitment and achievement were clearly on display during my visit to the House with No Steps. With this solid philosophical and moral framework, as well as solid leadership from management and its board, the House with No Steps is well placed to adapt to future challenges and opportunities in the sector. I look forward to celebrating its 50 years of service in 2012 and I know that Lionel Watts would be proud of his legacy.

TRI-GENERATION PROJECT

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [5.14 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to acknowledge a visit that the member for Coffs Harbour and I made on Monday morning to 76 Berry Street, North Sydney. It might sound peculiar if I state that we were well and truly out of our jurisdiction but some aspects of what we saw on the day incorporated my electorate. I quote from the media release of Local Government Super entitled "Launch of the world class tri-generation project at 76 Berry Street, North Sydney", which states:

The 25-year-old A-grade commercial building has been retrofitted by the Local Government Super to provide industry leading energy efficiency with a project committed to a 6-star rating from NABERS, (one of only two projects in the country) and remaining fully occupied during the whole upgrade.

The state of the art tri-generation project used Australian technologies such as the Shaw method of air-conditioning, Envirolight E1 lights, Bennett Clayton engines and Power Pax Chillers as a key part of the refurbishment. In a world first, Bennett Clayton engine technology, which was engineered in country New South Wales, has been used in a commercial application.

As a result, the building's emissions have been reduced by approximately 85 per cent and it is expected to operate 100 per cent independently of the electricity grid the first year following completion.

These improvements were approximately half the cost of what Arup/Property Council of Australia estimates is needed to reach a 4.5 star NABERS rating ...

76 Berry Street was recognised in 2010 as an exemplar project by the Federal Government's Green Building Fund. Recently it has attracted the interest of the World Economic Forum ...

An American representative from that group recognised the importance of this project worldwide. We were given an opportunity to go and inspect the installation. Importantly, Bennett Clayton has a workshop in Deniliquin where it built these engines and it used specialised technology to ensure that its diesel engines run on natural gas. At that location in 76 Berry Street, oxides of nitrogen had been reduced by 96 per cent, carbon monoxide by 30 per cent, volatile organic compounds by 97 per cent, and total solid particulates by 99 per cent—a big piece of technology for Deniliquin which is located in country New South Wales. During our inspection the member for Coffs Harbour and I saw the diesel generators that had been put together by Bennett Clayton and that were running on natural gas. The water that is heated by those engines is put into hot water tanks that are used in buildings at that site.

These generators are used also in a process that converts hot water into chilled water. Time does not permit me to explain how that works but Bennett Clayton has the technology to do that. We saw firsthand how the Shaw method of air-conditioning technology [SMAC] works. It is all about incorporating every aspect of the provision of power by this organisation and using the latest technology to ensure that nothing is lost to the environment. This has resulted in a major reduction to the cost of supplying power and air-conditioning to buildings on that site—contrast that with buildings in metropolitan Sydney which are using 38 per cent more power than residential properties—and all this technology has been created by Bennett Clayton in Deniliquin.

ST GEORGE COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [5.19 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to inform the House of my recent St George Community Awards, which were held on 27 October at Club Central in Hurstville. It was a fantastic opportunity to pay tribute to all the people in my community who give so much of their time and energy to helping others and to making my community a special place. It was a particularly special occasion as the special guest for the evening, the Premier of New South Wales, addressed the audience and distributed awards to all the award winners. More than 300 people attended, which is testament to the strength and passion of my community.

Awards were distributed across a range of categories including the St George Community Award, the Young Person of the Year Award, the Older Person of the Year Award, the Sports Person of the Year Award and the Community Group of the Year Award. It was a real honour and privilege for me to present the awards as the local parliamentary representative and to be able to celebrate such a vibrant and diverse group of people. They each make a difference. Whether it is by volunteering to drive a community bus, assisting migrants and new arrivals to settle into our local community or raising money for charity, everyone who was recognised on the night makes an outstanding contribution. I am pleased I had the opportunity to celebrate that.

There were some fantastic stories on the night of selflessness among the 50 award winners. The stories included older members of the community giving years of help to disadvantaged people and raising important funding for community groups, which simply would not function without volunteers' efforts and dollars. The contribution of some of the younger members of our community and the work they do is positively outstanding. They are involving themselves in a range of activities across the community—from charity to sporting groups. It certainly puts to bed the commonly peddled notion that generation Y has no interest beyond self-interest. I met a group of young people who will be great community leaders in the near future.

Volunteering is worthwhile from the point of view of personal benefit—that feeling of being able to give back something to the community—but also for building a strong community network, which is something I love about the St George region. Some of the award winners on the night were people such as Anton Bregovic. Anton is a charter member of the city of Hurstville Lions Club and has been elected as President for five out of seven terms. James Forrester has twice been a Paul Harris Fellow winner and has been a member of the Hurstville Rotary Club since 1996. He runs the local Mulga Road Bookshop, which is open six days a week. All profits go back to the community as part of Rotary Club projects.

Another winner is Monica Chu. Over the past decade, Monica has contributed to the community by playing a highly active role in various organisations within the Chinese community, particularly in aged care

and charity. She is currently Chairman of the Australian Chinese Charity Foundation, a trustee of the Australian Nursing Home Foundation and a local resident in my community. Another winner is Robin Bevan, who for more than 10 years has been involved with the Pole Depot Community Centre. She has provided representative support to carers in her capacity as member of the centre's board. Mrs Bevan is a tireless advocate for the centre. She provides much-needed encouragement and support to carers throughout the Pole Depot Community Centre.

Another winner is Dr Bin Lin, who is the Principal of the Chinese Australian Services Society, Chinese schools in Kogarah and Hurstville, and a current affairs broadcaster on 2CR, the China Radio Network. He is highly dedicated to promoting multiculturalism within the St George community through his work in education and both serves and promotes the Chinese community in Sydney. Another award winner is John Atkinson, who is a member of the 2NBC-FM 90.1 team, which is the local radio station in the St George community. John is recognised as an outstanding contributor to our local community through his fundraising efforts, assisting migrants and new arrivals and his extracurricular activities at the radio station. He keeps busy by working and providing an important local community service.

Another winner is Professor John Kearsley, who is currently the Director of the Department of Radiation Oncology at St George Hospital and the Professor of Medicine (Conjoint) at the University of New South Wales and the University of Wollongong. John's distinguished career has included time spent at the St George Hospital as an intern in 1977 and returning as Director of Radiation Oncology in 1993. John is renowned for his tireless fundraising efforts for cancer research, particularly for the St George Hospital. My St George community is a great part of Sydney. It is filled with people from different faiths, backgrounds and occupations. Growing that sense of community is so important.

GRANVILLE ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [5.24 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I draw to the attention of the House that the Liberal-Nationals State Government has honoured its commitment to the people of my electorate, to the people of western Sydney and, in particular, to the families and staff of the Blaxcell Street Public School in Granville, which has more than 800 students. As the Coalition promised prior to the 2011 election, flashing lights have been installed, ahead of schedule, at the school on the corner of Blaxcell Street and Guildford Road, Granville, to increase school-zone pedestrian safety in the Granville electorate. Around schools, flashing lights slow down motorists and warn them that they are approaching a school zone.

The lights will operate automatically when a school-zone speed limit is in force and will increase drivers' awareness of school zones that operate between 8.00 a.m. and 9.30 a.m., and between 2.30 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. on school days during school terms. The lights use light-emitting diode [LED] technology, which provides brighter light and is energy efficient. By the end of 2011, there will be 746 flashing light school zones across the State that will provide additional safety for more than 900 schools. That represents more than one quarter of all schools in New South Wales.

Just this week, I received written confirmation from the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, of maintenance funding for the Blaxcell Street Public School in response to my representations on behalf of the school community. Earlier this year during the election campaign, parents and teachers approached me to discuss the deteriorating condition of the school's buildings and infrastructure. In the past, many promises had been made by the previous Government, but nothing had been done. Issues such as drainage, playground conditions and structural problems all cried out for repair. During the election I promised the families of the Blaxcell Street Public School that those problems would be fixed. I am pleased to announce that \$200,000 for maintenance funding has been approved as part of the New South Wales Government's \$40 million Public School Upgrade Program. The funds will be made available to the school at the end of this month.

I look forward to next week when the Minister for Education will present the school with a cheque. I am pleased to confirm that an additional \$10,000 has been allocated for a new intercom system at the Blaxcell Street Public School. I commend the school's parents and citizens committee, the school's principal and the staff for their hard work and for the commitment they have shown while lobbying me and the Government to provide funds for repairs to the school, especially the playground, to maintain the school and provide a safe environment for students. I look forward to the Minister for Education visiting my electorate because that will provide me with an opportunity to accompany him to other schools that require upgrades. I hope that additional funding will be provided for schools in the electorate that I represent.

NORTHERN ILLAWARRA NEIGHBOURHOOD AID

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [5.28 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the outstanding work and achievements of volunteers at Northern Illawarra Neighbourhood Aid, or NINA, as it is known in the local village. Recently I had the privilege of representing the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Andrew Constance, at the opening of this wonderful organisation's new centre. Northern Illawarra Neighbour Aid Inc. is a true success story of the not-for-profit community service sector. From its humble beginning—with funding for just one 15-hour coordinator position in 1989—it has gone from strength to strength, has helped more and more people, and has met overwhelming demand.

In 1990 a second coordinator offered another 20 hours a week and helped add home visiting and individual transport to the list of services. In 1992 a 20-seat bus from Wollongong City Council brought a massive boost to the social bus outing services. Despite the ongoing search for funding and sponsorship, North Illawarra Neighbour Aid [NINA] took on the role of advocate for Helensburgh and District Meals on Wheels in 1997 to help with resources and help obtain a workable budget for the service. The following year it stepped in to rescue the ailing service and prevented 14 clients from losing their service. The Meals on Wheels service suffered another crisis in 2000 and again North Illawarra Neighbour Aid stepped in to save the clients from going hungry. The fact that this was possible, in addition to the vital work already performed by North Illawarra Neighbour Aid, is a remarkable testament to the value and effectiveness of the staff and volunteers.

In 2002 North Illawarra Neighbour Aid received a \$5,000 grant to help launch the friendship group and establish a home and garden maintenance program. In 2003 the crown jewel of North Illawarra Neighbour Aid, a 20-seater Toyota Coaster, arrived with air conditioning, automatic step and wheelchair hoist. That year the Cafe Club began with a fortnightly morning tea and social group in Helensburgh, to the delight and acclaim of clients. In 2006 the group had bestowed on it Multi Service Outlet status with a three-year funding agreement and late last year North Illawarra Neighbour Aid moved to the ground floor shopfront to once again meet the growing needs of the community. Every volunteer played an enormous role in this success story and every one of them should be extremely proud of everything they have achieved together.

The thing I love most about this organisation is the fact that it is powered entirely by the hard work, patience, strength and generosity of volunteers. All across New South Wales volunteers like those that keep North Illawarra Neighbour Aid running are working tirelessly at the coalface of the human experience. They give up their own precious time to make life easier and more enjoyable for some of the most vulnerable and deserving people in our communities. Without those selfless people I cannot imagine what life would be like for their clients. The services they perform mean more to their clients, and the families of their clients, than they could ever know. At my electorate office in Engadine I am regularly visited by the people these volunteers do so much for and I cannot say how proud it makes me to refer them to centres like North Illawarra Neighbour Aid. As a long-time member and former President of the Caringbah Rotary Club, I also know how much can be achieved when we all pitch in and work together to help our neighbours.

The opening of these new premises is a symbol of the collective power we all have when we care enough to act. The move to the new premises on Walker Street, Helensburgh, has greatly improved access and visibility for clients and will help the group continue to meet its growing needs. I applaud this group for all it has achieved, and all that North Illawarra Neighbour Aid will achieve. Its members should be very proud of the work they have done, and the lives they have improved, but they should also be proud of the legacy they have created and the next generation of volunteers that will follow their example. For our part, I am proud to say that we now have a State Government committed to ageing and disability services. During the next five years it will spend more than \$2 billion dollars on disability services, representing a 33 per cent growth in funding and establishing 47,000 new places. With an ageing population, this Government is committed to maintaining as a major priority the proper treatment of our elderly citizens.

BERESFIELD RSL REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [5.33 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Castle Hill on the arrival of his second daughter, Amelia Frances, on 28 September.

It was with great pleasure that I was invited to the Beresfield RSL Remembrance Day service on the weekend. I am fortunate in my electorate to have a number of small villages, and Beresfield is one of them. The service was held at the Woodberry War Memorial, which is just outside my electorate across the train line. I acknowledge the work of Alf and Lyn Keevers who are the stalwarts of that group. Basically if anything

RSL-related occurs it is due to the work of Alf and Lyn. More than 80 people attended on a beautiful warm Sunday, as opposed to the wet days they have had in the past. I recognise the collection of old and young people who were together on the day. On that Sunday a number of young people from various public and private schools, Girl Guides, Scouts, people from Neighbourhood Watch groups, Lady Lions and returned service people gathered to recognise Remembrance Day—which is only two days away.

Wreaths and books were used to reflect the day. It is appropriate that we recognise the day with books as much as we do with wreaths because books can educate our young people about the wars we have fought and hopefully avoid them in the future. Adorned in uniforms, with bagpipes and drums, the returned servicemen and students marched in and out of the gathering. It was terrific to hear from returned servicemen who had served in almost every conflict since World War II. Somehow there was time in the service schedule for almost every school, Girl Guide or Scout group to say a prayer, recite an ode or give a speech of congratulations or thanks. The young people were not tokenistic on the day and were very involved in the service. It was a tribute to the Beresfield RSL, to Alf and Lyn Keevers and to the people of Woodberry who attended in such terrific numbers to reflect on and remember those who were courageous enough to go off and serve this great country in war in times past.

TRIBUTE TO JIM MARSDEN

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.37 p.m.]: I draw members' attention to one of our highly respected local solicitors and law firms, Jim Marsden, senior partner of Marsdens Law Group. Jim Marsden was awarded the Law Society President's Award for 2011 for his ongoing contribution to the pro bono scheme. The awards ceremony was attended by more than 360 guests at Parliament House, including our own Attorney General, the Hon. Greg Smith. For the past 30 years Jim Marsden has willingly taken on pro bono cases in family, criminal and civil law matters, often on very short notice. Since 1992 the scheme has referred eligible members of the community needing legal assistance to firms willing to provide legal services on a free or substantially reduced fee basis. Assistance can include legal advice, preparation of documents and, if required, representation in court.

The scheme refers people to pro bono panel solicitors across the State every year, relying upon the goodwill and generosity of these solicitors. Jim Marsden has now been recognised for his assistance to those in our community who may not have otherwise had access to our legal system. Participation is voluntary; Jim Marsden has never shied away from what he considers should be available to all members of our community. Knowing Jim as I do, this core belief and core principal sums up Jim's very being. Marsdens Law Group was founded in 1968 by Jim's highly respected brother, John, and the high standard of service professionalism and commitment for which the firm was known continues today under Jim's guidance after the sad passing of John in 2006. Marsdens Law Group has grown to one of the largest and most well-respected law firms in New South Wales. Only recently Marsdens Law Group recognised a combined 150 years of service with one boss. It was one boss, but not one employee.

Nine of Marsdens' staff were recently congratulated on achieving 10 year, 20 year and 30 year milestones. I congratulate Justin Thornton, Brooke Smith, Christina Taylor, Maria Ruiters and Carolyn Baragry each of whom has contributed 10 years of service. Congratulations to Elizabeth Corbett and Chris Vouden on having achieved 20 years of service. Rosemary Olsson and Kim Warner have been a part of the Marsden's family for 30 years. Rosemary is Jim Marsden's personal assistant, and has worked directly with him for the most part of those 30 years. I would suggest that not only is Rosemary a wonderful employee but she also clearly has the patience of a saint. Kim Warner, who started on the same day as Rosemary, has been an integral part of the firm's information technology development over the years. This long-term commitment by the staff shows that Marsden's Law Group values its 135-strong staff. A firm of this repute and this size does not prosper if it does not look after its staff. It is a credit to Jim and the firm's partners.

Jim Marsden is also well known in my area for his commitment to local charities and sporting groups. He has always said he is Macarthur through and through. Jim's great love is the Western Suburbs Magpies, now the Wests Tigers, and he has served that club in many roles over the years, most predominantly as president. Jim Marsden was one of four highly respected solicitors who were nominated for this award, which only goes to show the calibre of the man who has finally been recognised among his peers for his commitment to his work and his community. I am proud to say that Jim Marsden is a good friend of mine and I know he will be very humbled at receiving this award. Typically, he will continue to provide his service to those in our community who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

I am taking the unusual step of highlighting this great effort and achievement again, despite the fact that it was so well done only yesterday by the member for Wollondilly. This is a well-earned appreciation that Jim deserves and I feel the need to put it on the record myself. Congratulations Jim, your contribution to the Macarthur area has been of great benefit to members of our community from all backgrounds and walks of life, and it has not gone unnoticed. Jim, I consider you a great mate and I not only respect your views but I also appreciate the counsel and advice you have given, and I look forward to this continuing.

COOGEE ELECTORATE SCHOOL FETES

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [5.42 p.m.]: Over the past couple of months I have had the great pleasure of attending a number of school fetes in my electorate. I am sure every member remembers fondly that sense of anticipation and excitement they felt in their own school days with the approach of the annual fete. That is certainly true of me. My mother was part of the organising committee for the fetes held at my school. Therefore, the lead-up to the fete was long. My father manned the fairy floss machine. He would hire the machine the day before and go to the garage the night before to practice his technique at swirling the floss. His efforts were witnessed and rapidly consumed by an array of expectant neighbourhood kids.

So it was with these fond memories that I went along to the Bronte Public School fete in August. It was huge. In the time I was there I witnessed hundreds of students and their parents pour into the school grounds, but, importantly, also many locals who normally have no other contact with the school. Clearly, Bronte Public School ticked all the boxes when it comes to event management. Principal Kellie Paton and her team of volunteers would have been very pleased with the outcome of the fete because they raised a massive \$100,000. Waverley Public School held its fete in September. I had the pleasure of opening the fete and, believe me, there was a lot going on that day. Obviously a great deal of coordination was involved. The logistics of school fetes are massive and the results are even more impressive when one considers that the event is pulled together by the volunteers of the parents and citizen's associations, friends of the school and, of course, the students, teachers and principal.

The volunteers must organise the advertising, entertainment and sound, first aid, food and drink, power supplies, car parking, signage sponsorship and cleaning up, and also come up with new ways to attract a wider and more sophisticated audience to the event. Of course, there is always the bric-a-brac stall. Principal Glenn Levitt and his team at Waverley Public School raised an impressive \$10,000 for the school. I opened the Kensington Karnivale in October on a beautiful warm day, much to the relief of any school fete organiser fearing a wash out. Principal Annie Jones and her enthusiastic team of volunteers pulled out all stops and raised \$30,000 on the day, which will be of enormous assistance and allow it to invest in more resources for its students. This was a very impressive effort given that it was the first fete the school had held in about 15 years.

I believe school fetes are one of the great unsung heroes of our education system and must be one of the oldest ways that a school can raise extra funds for educational resources. They are an important component of the school's calendar. However, the success of a fete is not to be measured in dollars. School fetes bring together the entire school community to work together in a positive way for a common cause. They are a great way of bringing the wider local community together with the school and help to forge stronger ties and a stronger neighbourhood. The success of a school fete is measured by the smiles on the faces of the kids who arrive with weeks of pent up anticipation and excitement and who rush from stall to stall, from one amusement to the next, filling their stomachs with not so nutritious food and banking magical memories of a great day at their school. Memories like those I cherish will stay with them a lifetime. As the member for Coogee I am very proud to visit the many schools in my electorate, especially on their fete day, and to assist in furthering the educational opportunities for all our young people.

Private members' statements concluded.

WATER INDUSTRY COMPETITION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Bill received from the Legislative Council and introduced.

Agreement in principle 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.

ADOPTION

Matter of Public Importance

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [6.02 p.m.]: Mr Acting-Speaker, 6 to 13 November is National Adoption Awareness Week. It is a good time to reflect on the current state of play in terms of adoptions in New South Wales and Australia. There has been a sharp decline in adoptions in Australia over the last 35 years due mostly to changing societal values. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare notes that there has been a 21-fold decrease in the number of adoptions in Australia since the 1970s, from 8,542 in 1972-73 to 412 adoptions in 2009-10. Of those adoptions, 54 per cent were inter-country, 15 per cent were local and 31 per cent were known child adoptions, and 65 per cent of adopted children were aged less than five years.

Inter-country adoptions represent about three-quarters of Australia's total adoptions. The number of inter-country adoptions has decreased worldwide over the past few years. This is attributed to the fact that many overseas countries are better able to provide for their children in their own country. A consequence of this is that waiting times for families who have put themselves forward to adopt a child from overseas have increased. It is worth reading an outline of the aims of National Adoption Awareness Week. I quote:

National Adoption Awareness Week is a community of people touched by adoption in some way, and want to recognise that whilst adoption is ultimately never the first option, it is a legitimate part of the solution to provide loving and permanent families for children when other avenues have been exhausted.

Through our work NAAW wants to help encourage a more supportive, positive, and inclusive adoption environment within the Australian community, and also see transparency and best practice policies and procedures that honour the rights of the child when adoption is appropriate.

That is well said, and it touches on many of the issues that are raised through adoption, which I will explore in more detail. What is important to stress is that the issues around adoption are, above all, complex and very much tied up with historical factors. For one person adoption may be viewed as a positive and transformational experience, the chance of a better future. For another person adoption may have connotations of pain, separation and overwhelming loss. What is clear is that some of the issues around adoption today are very much a result of past adoption practices and the desire not to repeat them. Some historical practices have been nothing less than shameful: they are blots on our history and have brought much suffering to many. I refer to the forced removal of children from their parents and families, the stolen generation and the forgotten generation. This was something that was heart-wrenchingly documented in the 1997 report of the Australian Human Rights Commission, *Bringing them Home: The Stolen Generation*.

The national apology to the stolen generation given by the Labor Government through Prime Minister Kevin Rudd acknowledged the existence and the impact of the past policies and practices of forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families. On 16 November 2009 the Commonwealth Government apologised again, this time to the forgotten Australians—the half a million children raised in institutions, orphanages and foster care throughout the last century, some of them child migrants from Great Britain. This number includes about 7,000 child migrants. The New South Wales Labor Government also made an apology to this group of people and this House was the first to make an apology to the stolen generation. I note that the Commonwealth Government is currently holding a Senate inquiry into the Commonwealth contribution to former forced adoption policies and practices.

So how do we get it right? Over the last century policy has swung between extremes, from totally obliterating the birth identity of adopted children in order to remake their identity in their new family, to keeping child and birth parents together at all costs. The task of the Government is to get the balance right—and there is no doubt that it is a complex task. The New South Wales Adoption Act 2000 looks at a number of important principles that need to be applied by persons making decisions about the adoption of a child. Given the time available, I will focus on the first two, which are:

- (a) To emphasise that the best interests of the child concerned, both in childhood and later life, must be the paramount consideration in adoption law and practice.
- (b) To make it clear that adoption is to be regarded as a service for the child concerned.

Adoption must always be in the best interests of the child. This is something that needs to be established and something that can take time to assess. It is vitally important to get it right. There are cases where it is clearly in the best interests of the child to be adopted. There are situations where it is untenable for children to be

left, in situations of absolute deprivation, and in abusive and dysfunctional situations that do untold harm. Children and young people who experience stability and permanency are more likely to develop strong emotional attachments, to be socially engaged and skilled, and to experience higher levels of educational achievement.

For some children in out-of-home care the best outcome is for them to achieve permanency by being adopted by their carers or into kinship care. The former Government was focused on facilitating the adoption of children from out-of-home care where it was deemed best for the child—and in fact I was the Minister who had that responsibility. Early decisions for young children give them permanency and a sense of belonging. The impact on children of failed attempts at restoration is disastrous. Whilst the number of adoptions has plummeted, the number of children in out-of-home care has risen. This is an Australia-wide phenomenon, and what Patrick Parkinson has recently called "the canary in the coalmine". I am very proud of the role that the Cabinet and I had in the former Government in making sure that people with children in out-of-home care who then went on to adoption retained the out-of-home care allowance.

I understand that this is no longer the case but it caused great distress to many of the people planning to adopt who already had foster children. In 2009-10, 48 children were adopted from out-of-home care compared with the previous year when 22 children were adopted. That difference cannot be overstated. That is why I am very concerned about the current Government's decision to replace post-adoption allowances of around \$16,000 with a \$1,500 per annum payment. This will have a detrimental effect on many children. Adoption is a complex area. It is up to governments to ensure that adoptions are in the best interest of children. It is imperative that we get it right.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [6.09 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak today about adoption and National Adoption Awareness Week. On Monday the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women, Ms Pru Goward, spoke at the inaugural Australian National Adoption Awareness Summit, which was organised by Deborra-Lee Furness and Helen McCabe, Editor of the *Australian Women's Weekly*, and held at Commonwealth Bank offices. I congratulate the Pratt Foundation on its contribution and support for an executive to build on Deborra-Lee's leadership to promote adoption, which was announced this week.

All members share a belief in the importance of family and the stability and love that a family can provide. We know that a safe, loving and permanent home for a child is a key foundation for long-term happiness and wellbeing. Having somewhere to call home and people to call family can make an extraordinary difference to a young person's life. In New South Wales, and around the world, it is not always possible for children to live with their birth parents and we rely on foster care and adoption to offer these children the care and protection that is their right. I am proud to be part of a Government that has expressed a clear commitment to strengthening adoption. We want to make real changes and improvements to offer children permanent solutions, not temporary arrangements.

Over the last decade inter-country adoptions in New South Wales have been between two and ten times the number of adoptions from out-of-home care in our State, despite the costs of inter-country adoptions and complete lack of State allowances for people adopting children from overseas. When Labor was in government it was happy for adoptions to wither on the vine. There were 17,892 children and young people in out-of-home care when the Coalition was elected. Labor introduced higher allowances in 2008 but it did not significantly improve adoption numbers. Adoption experts have told us that it is not about the money; it is about the process. From 1 January 2012 new adoptive families will receive a lower \$1,500 post-adoption allowance.

Carers who already have adopted will be grandfathered and will continue to receive their current allowances. Those carers who have already adopted a child in statutory care and who have been receiving a fortnightly allowance will continue to receive the fortnightly allowance until their adopted child turns 18 years of age. There are hundreds of families whose applications to adopt children in out-of-home care are already in the system and many more who have been waiting to proceed with the adoption process. The Government understands the frustration felt by hundreds of families as they waited for their adoption hopes to be pursued under the former Government. Therefore changes to allowances will not affect out-of-home carers who have started the adoption process.

This will include carers whose adoption applications have been filed or finalised in the New South Wales Supreme Court before 1 January 2012, carers whose adoption applications are currently being assessed by Community Services, or their respective agency, but not yet approved or filed in the New South Wales Supreme Court, and carers who formally expressed an interest in adopting the child in their care before the

budget announcement on 6 September 2011 but have not yet proceeded to an assessment. I repeat, Labor introduced higher allowances in 2008 but it did not significantly improve adoption numbers. It is not about the money; it is about the process.

Around 15 per cent of children adopted since 2006 have special needs. Children with disabilities may have significant costs of care and families who adopt children with a disability have priority access to government operated and funded specialist disability services. For those carers considering adoption of a child with a disability, Community Services will work closely with families, carers and Ageing, Disability and Home Care to provide priority support. Ageing, Disability and Home Care offers a wide range of services, which include family support programs, early childhood intervention, respite and therapy to assist children and young people with a disability, as well as their families and carers.

Parents may also be eligible for the range of Commonwealth services and financial supports available to assist with raising a family where a child has a disability. The New South Wales Government wants to promote adoption as a great permanent outcome for children and young people under long-term care orders. While taking care to make thorough assessments, the Government wants to remove the hurdles to carers adopting children and young people in their care and to encourage foster carers or prospective adoptive parents to consider offering children in out-of-home care a permanent, stable and loving home. The Government is pursuing measures to boost adoption where safe and appropriate.

Where a child or young person has been placed in long-term foster care, for example, and his or her carer has indicated an interest in adoption, there may be procedures and processes that are or should be redundant. We need to reduce the number of steps to adoption, streamline court documentation and processes, and enhance compatibility between care and adoption proceedings to increase the number of adoptions. We need to decrease the average time to adopt and decrease the costs of processing an adoption. Each of these steps will benefit children and young people in out-of-home care. In summary, we need to strengthen adoption as a real and viable option in New South Wales as a pathway to permanency and stability so that children can feel safe and have that deep sense of belonging that comes from family.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [6.16 p.m.]: National Adoption Awareness Week runs from 6 to 13 November. It seeks to bring to our attention the issues surrounding adoption and the often positive impact that adoption can have on a child's life. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition outlined, adoption has a chequered past. For some it will be associated with past practices that brought great harm not only to children who were forcibly removed from their parents but also to their parents and extended families. Ramifications are still being felt generations later. I note the recent public statement of apology by the Benevolent Society for past adoption practices, which included forcing some women to give up their children for adoption. I also note the Australian Catholic Church's apology in July this year for past adoption practices.

Having said that, there are clear examples of adoption being in the best interest of the child. In my work as a legal aid solicitor I saw how the best interest of the child principle was applied in courts. I saw how vital permanency planning was for children. One of the aims of National Adoption Awareness Week is to advocate the best practice in adoption, including reform of Australian laws and practices, to provide a more accessible, efficient and compassionate process for those wishing to adopt. It is important to do everything we can to make the adoption process as efficient and as smooth as possible. But as Jane West from Anglicare, who has extensive experience working in the adoption field, notes "adoption is a legal process". It is a complex process and it is vital that we get it right.

As a result of the 2005 Federal inquiry into adoption a process of Federal harmonisation is currently underway whereby procedures for adoptive parents are standardised across territories. I know that many in the sector say that work needs to be done in making it easier for the people who are seeking to adopt the second or third time. The member for Tamworth spoke about streamlining but that is not the entire answer to adoption and adoption issues. The paramount principle is always what is in the child's best interest. It must also be remembered that adoption is conducted by a court process and that the court determines applications made on the basis of that principle. As the Deputy Leader of the Opposition has noted, the Opposition is equally concerned today about the reinstatement of the post-adoption allowance for families who are adopting children—and I note that the member for Tamworth spent a lot of time in his speech talking about post-adoption allowances.

I want to make some points clear in regard to children in out-of-home care. At 31 March 2010, 50.8 per cent of children and young people in out-of-home care were in relative or kinship care, and

37.6 per cent of those children were in foster care. Those children living in foster care, and those foster care parents, will still be entitled to a foster care allowance. However, what has been said here by this Government, through this Minister's policy, is that if those parents after a couple of years want to adopt those children that have been with them, to give those children some permanency, we are not going to encourage that by allowing the foster care allowance to continue through adoption—we are going to discourage it.

The remaining 11.6 per cent of the children were in other forms of care, including residential care, independent living and in trial restorations with parents. The figure fluctuates from quarter to quarter as to how many children are in out-of-home care. I make the point that too many children are in out-of-home care but the policies that have been advocated, such as streamlining the adoption processes, are not the only policies that are going to reduce that number. That is something I have talked about elsewhere and will continue to talk about. Children coming from out-of-home care often have wide-ranging issues. They have high care needs and, as many carer groups and foster carers have related to me, often the decision to adopt a child from out-of-home care means that a parent needs to stay home to provide the support and stability their child requires. I will continue to advocate for those parents. I will continue to advocate for the post-adoption allowance for families who want to adopt children from out-of-home care.

On this side of the House we continue to advocate that the post-adoption allowance should be reinstated for those parents and those carers wishing to do so from 2012. In addition I make this point: in 2009-2010 48 children were adopted from out-of-home care. Compare that to 2007-2008 when only 22 children were adopted. While this number is small, it constitutes a significant increase. To put it in perspective, it is very important to compare this to the number of children adopted from out-of-home care around Australia. Only 61 Australian children were adopted by non-relatives and 53 by foster carers in 2009-2010. The policies that the former Government had in relation to out-of-home care were working in relation to the out-of-home care post-adoption allowance and to make light of that increase is unfair and unproductive. We should note that the second highest category of adoptions in this country is from out-of-home care.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GLENDALE INTERCHANGE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [6.22 p.m.]: The Glendale interchange has been the topic of many a speech, notice of motion and question of mine over the past four years and will continue to be so for years to come. Why? Because I believe it is one of the most important and long-awaited projects that directly affects my electorate and the Hunter region as a whole. The first time an interchange at Glendale was proposed was in 1995, 16 years ago. While we needed the interchange in 1995, now we need it more than ever. It has been great to see support for the interchange grow and develop recently with more and more people becoming aware of the positive impact it will have on the Hunter region. The commitments of \$15 million from the New South Wales Government—contingent I understand upon Federal Government funding—and \$10 million from Lake Macquarie Council were fantastic to hear, as was the recent application to the Federal Government for a further \$25 million.

After years of campaigning by me, my predecessor and other members across the Hunter the Glendale interchange remains necessary. But is it getting the attention it deserves from the Liberal Government? There is a reason that I and my predecessor, John Mills, have not given up our fight for the interchange: we are aware of its many significant benefits and of the positive impact it will have on the people and businesses of Glendale and the surrounding lower Hunter. It is also why the interchange has the support of Lake Macquarie City Council, the New South Wales Government, Stockland Properties, Knoll Group, Hunter Business Centre, Lake Macquarie Combined Chamber of Commerce, Hunter Sports Centre and all 11 Hunter councils and, most importantly, the students at the fantastic Argenton Public School, as evidenced by their recent *Herald* article. We all know that this region desperately needs a transport and shopping hub, and Glendale is the ideal situation for this job. As one of my constituents put it:

The Cardiff Glendale area is now the centre of "Greater Newcastle" and the Glendale interchange will become the hub for all surrounding suburbs.

The Newcastle central business district, Lake Macquarie, Newcastle Airport, Cessnock, Maitland and the F3 are all close by, making it a perfect location for an interchange. Having the Cardiff industrial estate on its doorstep

makes it much easier for workers to gain entrance to the site. It will also provide a convenient route for heavy vehicles travelling to the Newcastle port or the F3 freeway, subsequently relieving congestion for other road users. Furthermore, the public transport benefits and commuter benefits will be paramount and we should see a massive increase in the use of public transport in the area, and green methods of transport such as walking and cycling. Given the ever-increasing worry of climate change, it is vital that we encourage the use of more environmentally friendly modes of transport, and I know the Glendale interchange will do just that.

What is more, the engineers and planners have designed the interchange so that carbon saving methods can be used in its production: they intend to use energy-efficient technology, design and operational practice to help reduce the carbon emissions of its production. Within the next 20 years the interchange has the potential to create 6,200 jobs for those living in the area. With investment from councils, the State Government and the Federal Government we could see 2,342 direct and indirect jobs developing—and that is just in stage one. Not only that, there will be a potential for another 4,000 job opportunities in 20 years time and, according to modelling, housing construction could inject \$168 million into the economy of the area.

Eight months after the March election, where are we heading since the election commitment made by the member for Charlestown of \$15 million from the Liberal Government for the interchange? We are still awaiting the \$15 million and the stage one Pennant Street bridge is still a dream for lower Hunter commuters. I sincerely hope that the Glendale interchange gets support from all spheres of government now and that we can all work towards ensuring that the funding that is so urgently needed for stage one is forthcoming so we can finally get this long-suffering and long-awaited project underway.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [6.26 p.m.]: I am sure I speak tonight on behalf of every member in this place. I have just been speaking to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to say how proud we were today to wear orange on Wear Orange Wednesday to recognise and support the State Emergency Service. As we have seen time and again, but particularly this year with floods in Queensland, Victoria and across large areas of New South Wales, the State Emergency Service provides the community with invaluable assistance during natural disasters and other emergencies. Whether the members of the service are filling sandbags, issuing safety warnings, evacuating residents in harm's way, tarping rooves or pitching in to help clean up the devastation left in the wake of a flood or storm, the people of this State and nation know they can depend on the men and women in orange for help and protection.

I speak on behalf of every member in this place and especially the Minister to thank all the volunteers and staff from the New South Wales State Emergency Service who have so selflessly given their time and worked so hard to help others in real need. I also acknowledge their families and employers, because without their constant support the volunteers would be unable to fulfil their roles on behalf of us all. The State Government and all the members of this Parliament and the people of New South Wales are proud of you and appreciate very much the work you do as the State Emergency Service. If the New South Wales State Emergency Service is required to assist the community in a timely and professional manner it is important that in addition to quality training and facilities its members have safe and reliable equipment.

On Monday 24 October I joined the New South Wales State Emergency Service Deputy Commissioner, Dieter Gescke, the State Emergency Service Volunteers Association executive officer, Therese Cook, the Richmond Tweed State Emergency Service regional controller, Simon Gregg, the acting local controller and the unit controller, Stuart Ferguson, a volunteer and former local and unit controller, Lindsay Matterson, a volunteer and former local controller who resigned from that position on the day, Brian Griffin, and other members of the Lismore State Emergency Service when I officially presented a new flood rescue boat on behalf of the Minister. The new boat will further strengthen the unit and assist in responding even more efficiently and safely to requests by members of the public for assistance during floods. Approximately 40 Lismore State Emergency Service volunteers attended the event and proudly accepted the new boat that I had the honour of presenting.

On that occasion I also had the privilege of presenting to Mr Tom Maxwell his third National Medal Clasp in recognition of his having joined the Lismore City State Emergency Service unit in 1965. Since that time Tom has held a number of senior positions within the unit, including the positions of rescue officer and training officer. As a retired ambulance officer, Tom was obviously the man to go to for first aid. He has been a very diligent and active member of the unit and has tirelessly given of his time. I know that each and every member of the Lismore State Emergency Service unit was very proud to witness Tom receiving his award. Tom

also is well and truly known for his contribution to the Ambulance Service of NSW during the time, and he has been a volunteer with the State Emergency Service. Tom has made a lifetime contribution to both emergency organisations in the Lismore electorate.

On behalf of every member of the House but especially the Minister, I am pleased to recognise the efforts of State Emergency Service personnel and volunteers. I sincerely thank them for putting their own lives at risk to assist our communities during times of difficulty and sometimes tragedy. It is in those times of need that State Emergency Service personnel put their own lives at risk to provide assistance. On behalf of the New South Wales Parliament I simply say: Thank you.

MOVEMBER

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [6.31 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I inform the House it is that time of year again—the time when men throughout the country come together as a brotherhood to share in the craft and pride of growing a moustache. Yes, I am talking about Movember. It is the one month when men across Australia rejoice in the fact that they do not have to shave their mos. Movember is a time for men everywhere to join together in shaping the perfect mo. I note several Government members are taking part this year and I congratulate them on their commitment.

On 1 November Mo Bros across the country and indeed the world registered online with a clean shaven face. For the rest of the month these men will groom and trim their way into the record books of fine moustache-ry. But of course this fashion statement is not just for fun. Movember began in Melbourne in 2004 and since then has spread across the globe to Ireland, Canada, Spain, the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom, Israel and the United States of America.

For the whole month of Movember, men with mos become walking billboards to promote and discuss men's health issues. Once men register online, anyone can sponsor them by going to the Movember website and making an online donation as well as donating small change into collection tins. Movember is all about raising awareness concerning men's health issues, such as prostate cancer and depression. It is well known that men do not like to discuss health issues with anyone, and even resist going to the doctors at times. But this campaign is a fun and lighthearted way to address a very serious problem.

If men think that something might be wrong they should talk to a friend or, more importantly, visit a doctor. It is always better to be safe than to be sorry. We all know men that hate the idea of a prostate check, but it is absolutely essential that men get this somewhat uncomfortable examination done. Five minutes of discomfort and embarrassment for peace of mind is really nothing. And if something is wrong then, if caught early, prostate cancer is very treatable.

Each year 20,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer in Australia alone, and more than 3,000 men in Australia last year died from this disease. That is why it is so important to raise awareness about this issue and to ensure that men get a check-up. Last year alone, more than 130,000 Australian Mo Bros and Sistas got on board and raised \$25 million. The funds are spent on vital research, support and infrastructure for men's health issues and depression. Movember donates funds to the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia and to beyondblue, the national depression initiative. The Movember Foundation also funds programs such as the prostate cancer Movember Global Action Plan, prostate cancer survivorship programs and Movember's awareness and education program.

On average, men die five to six years of age younger than women, have a suicide rate that is four times higher than women's, and more than five men die prematurely every hour from potentially preventable conditions. This is staggering when there is no biological reason why men should die younger than women. This is why the Movember movement is so important. Education and awareness is the key to breaking down barriers and changing perceptions to bring about real change. Movember is changing the face of men's health. I encourage everyone to get behind this great initiative and to register online at www.movember.com, start growing a moustache and donate or purchase merchandise for this great cause.

I am proud to say that for the month of Movember I will be growing my mo for my fifth consecutive year and forgoing the razor to raise money and help in raising awareness of men's health issues. There is a donation box in the Wyong electorate office along with promotional material. My personal Movember profile page has facilities to donate directly online. Movember provides workplaces with an opportunity to become involved and to participate as a team. There are official mo parties at the end of Movember when mos are

shaven off for another year. Movember has an extensive website that contains information on the campaign, how to donate, videos, Mospace to upload photos of one's mo-growing efforts over the month, news and competitions.

The ladies should not feel left out: Mo Sistas can purchase merchandise to get the message out there, such as posters, mo-party packs, badges, stickers and wristbands. Of course I would not encourage ladies to grow moustaches themselves. This is a great cause, and I hope to see many just like me sporting a mo in Movember. It is a great look. Depression and prostate cancer are serious issues. If a simple task of growing a moustache can raise awareness to help to combat this problem then we should all get on board. So grow a mo for Movember and save a bro.

GOSFORD ELECTORATE VOLUNTEERS

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [6.36 p.m.]: In Australia volunteerism is something of which our society can be proud because we are the envy of the world. This evening I pay tribute to some of the wonderful army of volunteers in New South Wales—in particular volunteers from the peninsula in my electorate of Gosford on the Central Coast. Five peninsula residents were recognised in this year's New South Wales Central Coast Volunteer of the Year Awards that were presented recently at Niagara Park. They are Katie Dixon of Umina, who volunteers with Surf Life Saving New South Wales; Brian Hart of Woy Woy, who volunteers with the MV *Cape Don* Society; Heather Huntington of Woy Woy, who volunteers with the Geoff Wright Cottage dementia day care centre; Coral Kahrimanovich of Blackwall, who volunteers with Community Care Services; and William Scott, who volunteers with Central Coast Tourism.

Ocean Beach surf lifesaver Katie Dixon was nominated for the voluntary time and effort she contributes to Surf Life Saving New South Wales. As part of her community work she patrols beaches, works as a training officer, commands the radio base, monitors the radio, and supports the surf lifesavers on patrol on the beach. She began lifesaving as a nipper who used to go along at weekends with friends. She continued with the club and achieved the award of the Bronze Medallion at the age of 15. Earlier this year she was also presented with an award for Australian Lifesaver of the Year. Another of our peninsula residents, Brian Hart, a resident of Woy Woy, was nominated for his volunteer work with the MV *Cape Don* Society. This society was founded in 2005 to carry out the refurbishment and conservation of the historic lighthouse supply and navigation aids maintenance ship, the MV *Cape Don*.

Brian had been in the army for 20 years as a maritime engineer and prior to his retirement decided to offer his services. He is now president of the MV *Cape Don* Society and hopes that his nomination will help to garner attention from the public for this project. Heather Huntington was recognised for her contribution to the Geoff Wright Cottage and Dementia Care Centre in Woy Woy. Heather is an amazing person who gives of her time for other people. She assists clients at the Dementia Care Centre at Yaringah at Woy Woy and ensures that they have a safe and enjoyable day. Heather helps in all activities including bowls, bingo, quizzes, craft, scrabble, morning tea, lunch, kitchen duties and any other chores needed throughout the day, and she is a great asset to the centre. I forgot to mention that Heather is 83 years of age.

Coral Kahrimanovich was nominated for her volunteer work with Community Care Services in Woy Woy. She does the work happily as she loves helping people and she says, "It does not matter how little or how much, it all counts. If you can make someone's life brighter then it is all worth it." She says she has made lots of friends working with Community Care Services and that at the end of the day she comes home feeling happy and fulfilled. It is a great attitude to life that we should all have.

William Scott of Umina has been recognised for his contribution to Central Coast tourism. Bill delivers exceptional customer service by assisting visitors with recommendations of things to do, places to stay, driving directions, things to see and events to attend. Tourism is vital economically to the Central Coast and Bill is actively helping visitors to enjoy and gain special memories of their visit to the Central Coast. After he retired and moved to the Central Coast he commenced his volunteer service in 1990 at the Umina Beach Visitor Information Centre. He is responsible for the initial overview and training of new recruits and also for product updates. He manages the roster for up to 15 volunteers who operate out of the Gosford Visitor Information Centre and has not missed his Saturday shift for the past 15 years. These people are selfless in their service and they help to make our community great. I salute them for their dedicated volunteer work and congratulate them on being recognised for their contributions to our community.

VIETNAM VETERANS

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [6.41 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about a very solemn matter that will evoke much discussion over the course of the next two or three days as we draw close to the anniversary of the signing of the Armistice in 1918—an Armistice that brought an end to the Great War, the First World War, the war in which Australia was bloodied and from which Australia grew and identified itself as a nation. It is with some regret that I express the views expressed to me by many members of the Castle Hill RSL and Parramatta RSL sub-branches. Over the course of the past few years many veterans have felt out of touch with the Government and have said that the Government did not reflect the views of veterans communities.

As a former army officer and peacekeeper I am acutely aware of the views expressed by veterans communities right around New South Wales about the recent decision of the RSL National Executive and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kevin Rudd, relating to a memorandum of understanding with our former enemies in the Vietnam conflict. As any member who has been exposed to conflict resolution will testify, forgiveness and reconciliation are very personal acts. Those who have been the victims of violence or tragedy cannot have their feelings dictated to them. Forgiveness cannot be manufactured or imposed but must be genuinely felt.

For this reason I am sympathetic to the calls by Vietnam veterans in my electorate to speak out against the draft entente cordiale between the Australian Returned Services League and the Viet Cong. This unilateral decision by the National Executive of the RSL and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Kevin Rudd, was taken without any consultation with the veterans community, in particular, the Vietnam veterans. Our Vietnam veterans are not suggesting that Australia and Vietnam should not have normal and mature bilateral relations. We have enjoyed a positive and beneficial relationship with Vietnam since formal diplomatic relations were established in February in the 1970s. However, our priority must lie with the wellbeing of our veterans who still live with the horrors of the Vietnam conflict.

It was just plain wrong for Australian war veterans in my electorate to find out via the media that the very institutions they have entrusted to act in their best interests have, without any consultation, drafted a document enforcing a friendship agreement. For the memorandum to have any significance for the two former adversaries, presumably it would hold parties to account for their actions. This is where the betrayal begins. As a good proportion of those who fought in the Vietnam war did not volunteer, they had no choice as to whether they agreed with the political genesis of the conflict. They had no voice as to whether or not they would fight. Now these very same men have been denied a voice in the decision to enter into a memorandum of understanding. The fact that the ex-combatants association in Vietnam is both State-run and denies South Vietnamese veterans from joining, suggests that any agreement entered into by the RSL would concur with the values and aims of the Vietnamese Communist party.

Australians are very proud of their military heritage, and rightly so. However, we did not enter into such agreements with former Nazi combatants, or with their Imperial Japanese counterparts, yet our relations with Japan and Germany remain strong. Indeed our generous foreign aid to Vietnam over recent years should highlight the respect we have for our Asian neighbour. As a liberal democracy it is appropriate that Australia promotes tolerance and forgiveness on the world stage. However, governments cannot presume to force opinions onto individual citizens; after all, was that not what the Vietnam conflict was all about? I was delighted that since establishing this point with the Vietnam Veterans Association the National Executive of the RSL has withdrawn its plan to enter into a memorandum of understanding. It is with great pleasure that I can say diggers can rest easy this Remembrance Day knowing that we did not forget to remember.

TRIBUTE TO KERRIE McARDLE

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [6.46 p.m.]: Many members of this House will be aware of Sean McArdle. If they do not know him by name they will certainly know the sound of his voice. Sean is a regular on the talkback line at 2GB. What most people do not know about Sean is that he has battled schizophrenia for most of his life, an illness that severely affects the functioning of the brain and leads to disturbances in perception and behaviour. For many people this disease would greatly restrict their ability to function, but not Sean. He is a dynamic, intelligent man who works tirelessly for the good of the Hornsby community, volunteering his time and energy supporting local charities and events. Nothing is ever too much trouble for Sean.

But he is able to do this because of one person who has made an enormous difference to his life. I am talking about an extraordinary woman, Kerrie McArdle, who also happens to be Sean's wife. She is not just

Sean's wife; she is his soul mate, best friend and inspiration. Kerrie and Sean's partnership has been going strong for 34 years and together they have faced the challenges of Sean's illness. During the years the journey has not always been easy, but they have approached Sean's illness as a team, and that is the secret of their success. I want to recognise the wonderful role that Kerrie has played in helping Sean fulfil his potential and overcome what many regard as a frightening and debilitating illness.

As a carer Kerrie has not just made an enormous difference to Sean's life. Without knowing it she has made a significant contribution to our community, State and nation, firstly, as an example of love and support for someone suffering from an illness. Secondly, Sean and Kerrie now use their experience to help others by devoting a great deal of time educating the community about mental illness. They make presentations to schools and communities groups about mental health issues and are playing a vital role in demystifying a condition that affects so many. The courage they have shown in telling their story is inspirational and it is a great example to us all. I am constantly inspired by their story and on behalf of the community of Hornsby I am proud to draw the attention of the House to the achievements of this remarkable couple.

I met Sean and Kerrie when they addressed my high school in 1998 and talked about the challenges they have faced and how they have overcome them. I am very proud of the relationship that I have with them as the local member and as a friend. Kerrie's inspiration and dedication in caring for Sean and working in the community to destigmatise mental illness are most impressive. She is a great example of what can be achieved through great dedication and spirit. There are about 850,000 carers in New South Wales and they all deserve our recognition and thanks for their selfless efforts in supporting people with a disability, mental illness or chronic health conditions and those who are frail.

I am delighted that I am part of the O'Farrell Government which is giving carers the appropriate recognition that for too long they have gone without. They deserve it because they do so much on behalf of us all. I take this opportunity to congratulate Kerrie for the role that she has played in making our community and our State a better place. No challenge is too great for her and she has continued to care for Sean despite battling her own illnesses. I am proud of the work that Sean and Kerrie continue to do in our community of Hornsby and across the State and I look forward to continuing to support them in my role as the local member. They are an inspirational couple to whom we all owe a great debt of gratitude.

JINDERA VILLAGE GREEN

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.51 p.m.]: What is the place for small country towns in our modern global economy? The answer lies in one word—community. People leave the cities and move to country towns when they realise they want to connect with other people and live in a place that they can truly call home. They also want a place where they can make a contribution. A new generation is discovering the charm and value of country halls and governments are assisting with funding for their restoration. Following devastating natural disasters there has been an impetus to rebuild public assets in the affected regional areas. While the town of Jindera, near Albury, has been spared the devastation of recent floods and fires, there is a proud spirit there that is demonstrated in the willingness of its residents to get behind community projects, to raise money, to volunteer labour and to get things done.

I support those who carry on through the hard times and who get results. The Jindera Village Green is one of those wonderfully successful projects. Located adjacent to the community hall, the green was long ago the site of a pub. As I understand it, Jindera has never had a village green, as such, over its lengthy history. There was a recreation ground on Crown land but no simple common patch of earth where locals could sit to chat or to enjoy outdoor entertainment. The first sign of life emerged 20 years ago when the council purchased the land and demolished various structures. A group of residents then hatched a plan to turn this unloved site beside their hall into an outdoor meeting place for just these needs. The Jindera Village Green Committee had been formed.

Members of the community began using the spot as a meeting place. This is where they held their community Christmas carols. Informally it became known as the "village green". Trees were planted and minor funding was obtained from several sources. Volunteers held working bees to keep the site clean and cleared. However, the long drought took its toll there too and the project was in danger of slipping out of reach. A major turning point came when council's general manager, Steven Pinnuck, spotted a possible source of funding. He noticed that funding was potentially available under a program of the Australian Government's Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government. The catch was that eligible projects had to be worth more than \$2 million. Jindera's village green would never cost that much.

Undaunted by bureaucracy, the general manager took a bold idea to the Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils. They could apply as a group of regional councils for a number of projects under the theme Community Spaces. This initiative proved successful and more than \$2 million flowed through to these councils and their local projects. I understand that all the projects have now been completed. The Riverina Eastern Regional Organisation of Councils is developing a reputation as a great example of how smaller councils can work for their communities.

The Australian Government provided financial assistance of \$224,500 towards a total project cost of \$300,000 for Jindera's green. Council also assisted with funds and resources. Work now took off with renewed spirit and drive. On 30 October I attended the official opening of the Jindera Village Green by Greater Hume Shire Mayor, Councillor Denise Osborne. The mayor had firsthand experience of the project because she had also worked on site as a volunteer. This wonderful space has much to offer the community. There are well-shaded areas, barbecue facilities and amenities, including toilet facilities for people with disabilities. There is also a mound that will be used as part of a staging area for outdoor entertainment and events, including family celebrations and ceremonies. Established native trees and other plantings make this a true garden of recreation and refreshment.

As with all great community initiatives, there are too many people to thank individually. However, it is appropriate to acknowledge a number of people and organisations that played strategic roles in keeping the village green dream alive and moving past the inevitable hurdles. I acknowledge the long-term efforts of the Jindera Village Green Committee and, in particular, its foundation members Leanne Simpson and Dot and Ennis Hueske, who stuck with the project all the way. Greg Blackie, Director of Engineering for Greater Hume Shire Council, put in a lot of his time both as council's project manager and as a volunteer in his private capacity. Greater Hume Shire Council General Manager, Steven Pinnuck, had a major role in obtaining the bulk of the funds through his insightful initiative. Local nurseries and contractors all contributed to the project, either in kind or by doing hours of volunteer work.

Community projects are the lifeblood of regional towns, making volunteers of us all. They draw us out of social isolation and into community life. There is something very attractive about this kind of active volunteering, which delivers results for everyone. One short story provides the best way to end this tale of the Jindera Village Green. I am told that one of the delivery men who came to drop off a load of trees for the green was so impressed by what he saw happening that he got out of his vehicle and stayed to help—just another volunteer among many. Long may the Jindera Village Green continue to provide delight, welcome shade and sparkling entertainment to the community in which it nestles.

GRAFFITI

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [6.56 p.m.]: Recently I was contacted by a resident in my electorate of Riverstone, Mr Kerry McCombs, who reported an incident of graffiti vandalism. As members are only too well aware, the public is sick and tired of finding trains, schools, fences and buildings vandalised by graffiti. However, Mr McCombs reported that his truck had been vandalised, with both sides covered in graffiti and the advertising signage ruined. The truck was parked in a fenced yard on private property. The vandals either scaled the fence or broke through it to inflict the damage.

Mr McCombs uses the truck to transport his hobby race car to racing events. However, he also uses it to support children's charities such as the Children's Hospital at Westmead, CanTeen and Father Chris Riley's Youth Off The Streets. Over a number of years he has been able to donate a considerable amount of money to those charities. It took Mr McCombs days to clean his truck and he spent thousands of dollars to replace the damaged signage. If he had paid someone to remove the graffiti it would have cost him between \$4,000 and \$5,000, which he would have had to divert from the charities. My constituent's vehicle, which was parked on private property and which he uses to raise funds for a variety of charities, was attacked by selfish idiots who apparently think that doing such damage in secret, under the cover of darkness, is brave and daring. It is not brave and it is not daring; it is mindless damage that harms us all.

My constituents consistently raise graffiti issues with me. The people of Riverstone, like people elsewhere in New South Wales, want action taken to curb the ongoing problem of graffiti vandalism. That is precisely what this Government was committed to doing when it introduced the Graffiti Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. However, the Labor Party, The Greens and the Shooters and Fishers Party gave graffiti vandals the green light to continue defacing property when they blocked that important legislation in the other place.

I would like to see members from the other place who did not support the Graffiti Amendment Bill in full speak to Mr McCombs and tell him that the graffiti on his truck was not serious enough to warrant tough legislation targeting graffiti vandals.

I note the comments made by the Hon. Jan Barham in the debate in the other place on the graffiti bill in which she compared graffiti with art. Apparently the member believes that graffiti is art. As far as I am concerned, the only situation in which graffiti might possibly be considered art is when the painter puts graffiti on his or her own property. Yet that seems to be exactly what they do not want to do. They deface the property of others, they deface the property of the community and they cause others, including the taxpayer, enormous costs. The cost and effort involved in cleaning graffiti are significant, and it is often private individuals in the community who have to bear those costs.

The actions taken by Labor, The Greens and the Shooters and Fishers in the other place have consequences at the local level. Just in the past couple of weeks several incidents of graffiti vandalism have been reported in my electorate. I commend the Attorney General, the Hon. Greg Smith, for his recent announcement of graffiti removal squads, a collaborative effort involving the New South Wales Government, local Rotary groups and Dulux Australia. These squads will make an important difference at a grassroots level. Locally, in Riverstone we recently had a graffiti clean-up day that involved Rotary groups from Windsor and Rouse Hill, and the Riverstone Neighbourhood Watch group. The material and paint for cleaning up the graffiti were donated by the Hawkesbury City Council and Blacktown City Council, while the graffiti tracking website VandalTrak coordinated the location of the clean-ups.

The funding of graffiti removal squads, such as the one that worked quite well in my electorate of Riverstone, is another sign of the Government's commitment to continuing the fight against graffiti. Last Monday I had the pleasure of attending the launch of VandalTrak's reward program. Using VandalTrak's system, incidents of graffiti can be reported online, ensuring that graffiti vandalism is catalogued and held on record for subsequent use in prosecution. The reward program recently introduced by VandalTrak will provide cash rewards to people who provide information on graffiti offenders that leads to their conviction. The cash rewards will come from sponsors. I commend these efforts by VandalTrak and all the other volunteers who are involved in protecting the community from the scourge of graffiti.

OPERATION SMILE

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [7.01 p.m.]: Before I commence my private member's statement, I add my congratulations to the new Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, who I note is in the Chamber. I acknowledge her as the first female Clerk of the Assembly. Like the Speaker, she was appointed on merit, and I congratulate her on that appointment. Today I bring to the attention of the House the great work of Operation Smile, a non-government charity with an active branch in the Illawarra. Operation Smile is a well-known charity organisation that funds surgery for children and babies born in developing countries with cleft lip and cleft palate. Operational Smile in the Illawarra has placed a special focus on assisting children in Vietnam who are born with this tragic condition. For the past three years Illawarra volunteers have travelled to Vietnam as part of our community's delegation. There, they witness the miracle of surgery, and support the many Vietnamese families involved.

The 2011 Kiama delegation recently returned from Vietnam. The surgical mission took place in Long Xuyen Hospital in the province of An Giang from 28 March to 1 April. On that mission 80 children and babies underwent surgery due to generous donations made to Operation Smile. Those who were part of the Kiama delegation have returned incredibly motivated to continue their efforts and hope to raise a significant amount of money for their next mission. Every dollar raised goes directly to the cost of surgery—it costs only \$240 to give these children a chance at life, a chance to smile. All of the Operation Smile volunteers, supporters and medical staff are unpaid and pay for their own travel costs to Vietnam.

I had the great privilege of attending and speaking at the Operation Smile annual fundraising event "An Evening of Smiles" last Friday 4 November at Shellharbour Workers Club along with the Vietnamese Consul General, Mr Mai Phuoc Dzung; the member for Shellharbour, Anna Watson; the Mayor of Kiama, Sandra McCarthy; and Kiama Councillor, Lexie Wheeler. I also acknowledge the presence of my predecessor Matt Brown, who was a strong supporter of this important cause during his time in office. An Evening of Smiles was a phenomenal success and I am thrilled to announce that that particular event raised \$27,000 for Operation

Smile's next mission in March 2012. Every cent of these generous contributions will fund surgery for 108 children born with a cleft lip and a cleft palate in Vietnam. Tragically, every three minutes a child is born with a cleft.

The event entertainment included local artist Claire Foxton, whose live painting was auctioned for \$3,300, artist David Preston, Tatum Co Trio, stunning violinist Anna Da Silva Chen and the Kiama High School vocal group. I acknowledge the major sponsors and supporters of the event, including Mercure Gerringong by the Sea, Harvey World Travel Kiama, Siang Giftwares Gerringong, Greg and Paula Shanahan, Weston Print, the Kiama Lions Club, the Kiama Rotary Club, the Kiama Men's Shed and the Kiama Woodwork Society. I also pay tribute to the tremendous work and dedication of long-time Operation Smile advocate Andy Keating, event organiser Penny Newman and her team of volunteers Barry Wilson, who was emcee for the event on the evening and did a splendid job, Natalie Kelly, Renae Sharpe, Terri Rowe, Venessa Masima, Natasha Wood and Neil Campbell from Ray White Gerringong who did an outstanding job as our auctioneer on the evening.

Operation Smile improves the lives of disadvantaged children and provides them with hope for a brighter and promising future. Tonight I encourage all members of this House to support Operation Smile and see how they too can assist this important humanitarian work in countries less fortunate than ours. I look forward to continuing my support for Operation Smile in the years ahead and wish it every success into the future, and in particular, its next mission to Vietnam in March 2012. There is no doubt that the cause of supporting these children and giving them the chance of inclusion and the chance to smile is critical. We see around the world so many problems, but this touched me in a way that I need to express in these words tonight. It is important that this House support this humanitarian effort and these children. There are many causes worthy of support. I believe this is one worth acknowledging tonight.

ORANGE ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [7.06 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a very commendable goal set by a group of students from Molong Central School, in the Orange electorate. About 12 months ago the then year 9 students at the school decided that they wanted to experience the cultural, scenic and travel experiences that come with international travel, something not many people their age generally get to do. They set up an organisational arm for the project called MOVE, which stands for Molong Overseas Vietnam Excursion, to help with planning and raising funds to make their journey.

Their goal while overseas is to work as volunteers helping An Binh villagers in the Vinh Long Province in Vietnam, and in particular to build a traditional thatched-roof house. While at An Binh, which is in the Mekong River delta, the children will work on a rotational basis on a number of tasks in addition to the main focus of the house-building project. The students will work alongside local residents clearing the building site, helping lay the flooring and additionally helping their Vietnamese hosts improve their English language skills. While in Vietnam the children also plan to visit the Agent Orange hospital, near Danang. The gifts the children are taking with them include toys and books as well as the ponchos and blankets that have been requested.

The children have set a fine example in their desire to travel overseas to help people less fortunate than themselves. It has to be noted that the children raised more than \$22,000 over a 12-month period to make this trip a reality. As many as 22 local businesses provided sponsorship in one form or another, and to this end I congratulate Canobolas Eggs, Maranoa Haulage, SPAR Supermarket at Molong, Golden Cross Resources, MacSmith Milling, Molong Pharmacy, Molong RSL Sub-branch, Cumnock Progress Association, Molong Red Cross, Cabonne Shire Council, Molong and Orange Sunrise Rotary clubs, Cudal-Cargo and Molong Lions clubs, Molong Soccer Club, Molong Rugby Club, Molong and Manildra Probus clubs and the many private citizens who gave so generously to their cause.

What these children have achieved could not have been done without the support of the school teaching staff, and to this end I commend principal Janice Glasson for her leadership and teacher Barbara Adamthwaite, who is the tour organiser, for the encouragement they have given their students. The students are Somma Allcorn, Alex Ball, Patrick Ball, Georgia Brown, Ben Brown, Tyla Campbell, Braeden Colefax, Jessica Evans, Haylee Gallagher, Joel Goff, Annie-Rosie Hazelton, Emily Hogan, Maddy Kalanj, Bronte Mackay, Michael Mann, Tegan Nicholls, Emily Pepper and Merissa Reid. Prior to leaving for Vietnam these students will sit their year 10 exams. I wish them every success and trust that the trip to Vietnam will be a wonderful reward for all the effort they have put into their learning experience at Molong Central School. They will be accompanied on the trip by teachers Barbara Adamthwaite and Andrew Owen, and parent volunteers Kate Hazelton, Pam Mann, Ruth Pepper and Andrew Ball. I might add that these adults have totally funded their own trips to accompany the children.

Last Friday I had the privilege of representing the Orange electorate and the Minister for Education at the 150th birthday celebrations of Wellington Public School. The school was founded when the town had a total population of just 59 adults and children. Compared to the present day, that is quite extraordinary—there are currently more than 400 students. I congratulate the school on reaching this incredible milestone. Guests included past principals, teaching staff and students. Wiradjuri elder Joyce Williams, a very popular figure in the town of Wellington, gave a wonderful welcome to visitors to the school.

Principal Darryl Thompson was no doubt delighted with the students' dance performance, which they had obviously been learning for many weeks. Students, staff and visitors were treated to slices of a huge birthday cake, which I had the pleasure of cutting with Joyce Williams. On Saturday I attended the 150th birthday dinner at Wellington Civic Centre, which was a great night. I congratulate principal Darryl Thompson and his staff, Sheila Bryant of the Wellington parents and citizens group and her hardworking committee, and the students of Wellington Public School on making the celebrations such an outstanding success.

I also draw the attention of the House to a great development at Orange High School. The Minister for Education recently announced that Orange High School had been granted \$300,000 by the State Government, which will go towards the building of a new music and teaching facility at the school. Orange High School is famed for its music program, and the students have worked very hard over many years to raise more than \$150,000 to be added to this grant. The great thing about the timing of this grant is that the students who raised the money will be able to sit their Higher School Certificate examinations in this new teaching facility. The application was lodged in 2008 and I congratulate the Minister on making sure that it was part of the current budget and turning the dreams of these students into a reality.

THE ENTRANCE TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [7.11 p.m.]: It is good to follow the member for Orange when I am wearing Orange. I congratulate him on his tie as well. The Entrance is a township steeped in rich history. Since the early 1900s it has been a popular beachside holiday destination for families seeking a sun and surf escape. In more recent years, The Entrance has become a popular area for young families and retirees to live. Notwithstanding its beauty as a coastal region to live in, The Entrance remains a highly tourism-driven area and is continuing to thrive with the support of The Entrance Town Centre Management.

The manager, Paul Barnes, oversees and co-ordinates some of the biggest and best festivals and events on the Central Coast, and drives the tourism economy in the area very well. These events include but are certainly not limited to the Central Coast Country Music Festival, which is held on the second full weekend of March every year and includes more than 70 quality artists and performers, and in 2010 attracted a crowd of more than 45,000; The Entrance farmers markets, which are held on the first and third Saturday of each month and feature more than 120 stalls including fresh local produce; Paws and Claws, a community dog walk event that is held annually and raises funds for the RSPCA; Carols By Candlelight and New Year's Eve family festivities; Chromefest, an annual car show that is growing in popularity year by year and attracts crowds of around 30,000; and, of course, the great traditional Tuggerah Lakes Mardi Gras.

This year Chromefest was held on 21, 22 and 23 October. The event was blessed with warm and sunny weather, and attracted more than 550 show cars. The Sunday Show And Shine was particularly well attended. The enthusiastic crowds enjoyed rock and roll entertainment, and the checkerboard dance floor in Memorial Park was in constant use. Fifty-five stalls, from retail to food outlets, operated with great success and retailers were delighted with the best trading weekend. I note that while there I was happy to see my local Nationals selling sausage sandwiches, which I am particularly fond of. I was greeted by their president Barry O'Keefe, a very good man, who sold me a sausage sandwich, which I happily enjoyed. The Entrance Town Centre Management was praised by local businesses, stallholders, visitors and accommodation venues for its excellent organisation and professionalism throughout Chromefest.

Not to stop and rest on its laurels, The Entrance Town Centre Management is in full swing organising the upcoming annual Tuggerah Lakes Mardi Gras festival, which is celebrating its sixtieth year this year. The mardi gras is anticipated to be a great success, with a large street parade and 14 queen entrants. Returning to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary are 13 past queens. While its inception and early years were humble, the mardi gras has grown to be one of the largest parades outside Sydney and Newcastle. Originally conceived as a fundraiser for local charities, it has grown more sophisticated and is now managed by The Entrance Town Centre Management.

Traditionally perceived as the event that kicked off the tourist season in The Entrance, the mardi gras used to be held in late October or early November. However, it seemed to bring on the rain, so after consultation with a local weather guru it was deemed that the first full weekend in December was a better time, and there it has remained for the last 25 years. Filled with a variety of entertainment events such as Ball in the Mall, and of course the parade, the Tuggerah Lakes Mardi Gras is iconic to the area and a major tourist attraction. On 3 December, the street parade will start at Toowoong Bay Road and entertainment in Memorial Park will start at 1.00 p.m. Musical entertainment catering to all ages and tastes has been organised as well as the ever popular Ducks for Bucks race, a special visit from Santa and a massive fireworks display in the evening.

My thanks go to Paul Barnes and promotions and events co-ordinators Kellie Purcell and Donna Judge at The Entrance Town Centre Management, who I saw over the Chromefest weekend somewhat red-faced and rather hot and sweaty, running around getting things organised. Kellie and Donna do an excellent job in backing up Paul Barnes. I also thank all of the volunteers and committee members who work tirelessly to organise and run such successful events throughout the year in The Entrance and offer my best wishes for a successful sixtieth anniversary of Tuggerah Lakes Mardi Gras.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE AWARDS

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.16 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the wonderful work that the State Emergency Service does, not only in New South Wales but more directly in my local electorate. I also commend all members of Parliament—even the member for Heathcote who is wearing his orange tie—because the House was full of orange today in recognition of the great contribution made by the State Emergency Service. We all know that orange is the colour of the service, the colour of the overalls that its members wear when called out to jobs across the State.

The service is made up of volunteers. There are 228 units across New South Wales and more than 10,000 volunteers who give up their time. They cannot predict when floods, storms or other emergency events might occur. They are called out at all hours of the night and early hours of the morning. It is great to know that we have people who are available to assist our communities. I also note that the State Emergency Service has expanded beyond floods and storms and is also involved in searching bushland and vertical rescue. It might even be that its members assist at road accidents. In many cases, especially in regional and rural areas, they are the first respondents to emergencies that occur in our local communities.

On Saturday 5 November, which was very fitting as it was leading up to National SES Week, I attended an award ceremony in the Bathurst electorate. Nineteen volunteers from throughout the Central West region of the New South Wales State Emergency Service were presented with awards, which included the national medal, State Emergency Service long service medals and State Emergency Service long service certificates. The awards were presented by Mr Steve Opper, the Director of Community Safety of the New South Wales State Emergency Service, who was representing the Commissioner of the New South Wales State Emergency Service. I was pleased that my parliamentary colleague and neighbour the member for Orange was also in attendance representing the State Emergency Service workers of his electorate.

Some 360 years of service had been given by the volunteers who were presented with awards at that special ceremony. Those volunteers came from Blayney, Burruga, Central West Region Headquarters, Oberon, Portland and Sofala. I congratulate Mr Craig Ronan, the Central West Region Controller, on his efforts on the day.

I place on the record the names of those volunteers and the awards they received. In the Bathurst State Emergency Services unit, Benjamin Cox received the national medal, 15 years long service certificate and label pin. In the Blayney State Emergency Services unit, Christopher Chapman received first clasp to national medal. In the Burruga State Emergency Services unit, Anthony Press received first clasp to national medal, 25 years long service certificate and lapel pin; Jennifer Press received first clasp to national medal, 25 years long service certificate and lapel pin; Cheryle Booth received first clasp to national medal, 25 years long service certificate and lapel pin; and Leon Booth received first clasp to national medal, 25 years long service certificate and lapel pin. In the Central West Region Headquarters, Gavin Ellis received second clasp to national medal, 25 years long service certificate and lapel pin.

In the Oberon State Emergency Services unit, Lynette D'Arcy-Evans received the State Emergency Service long service medal, 10 years long service certificate and lapel pin; Geoffrey Gillard received first clasp to national medal, State Emergency Service long service medal, 10 years long service certificate and lapel pin;

and Matthew McMahon received first clasp to national medal. In the Portland State Emergency Services unit, Kevin Conaghan received the State Emergency Service long service medal, 10 years long service certificate and lapel pin; and Gary Wilcox received the national medal, 15 years long service certificate and lapel pin. In the Sofala State Emergency Services unit, Mark Tomkinson received first clasp to national medal; Lynette Lahey received first clasp to State Emergency Service long service medal, 20 years long service certificate and lapel pin; and Krishna Burns received first clasp to State Emergency Service long service medal, 20 years long service certificate and lapel pin. I congratulate all those people on their hard work. This week is a fitting way to thank them for their contributions.

ELLA CENTRE

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [7.21 p.m.]: I thank Mr Acting-Speaker Provest and the Government Whip's office for giving me the opportunity to make my contribution. Tonight I speak about the Ella Centre at Haberfield, which is an important community organisation in my electorate. The Ella Centre supports people and communities across Sydney's inner west. It provides vital programs, services and advocacy for older people, those with disabilities and dementia, as well as their carers. It plays a crucial, and often thankless, role in our community helping those in need. It enables many vulnerable people in the inner west to live fuller lives. It provides them with opportunities to make new friends, to engage in discussions and activities, and to participate in outings. It also takes some of the pressure off primary carers, by providing them with well-needed and deserved respite.

Efforts are currently underway to raise much-needed funds to equip the first purpose-built facility in Australia to specifically cater for the needs of people with younger onset dementia. The new facility, a project of the Ella Centre, will be built on vacant land at Haberfield provided by St David's Uniting Church. The facility will service clients from across Sydney's inner west. Younger onset dementia is defined as any form of dementia with an onset of symptoms before the age of 65. An emerging population of people are developing dementia at a younger age. Access Economics estimates that as at 2011 there are 5,266 younger people with dementia—that is, 6 per cent of the people in New South Wales suffer from dementia. That figure is estimated to grow by 13 per cent to 5,890 by 2020 and to 8,167 by 2050. In 2010 Ageing, Disability and Home Care recognised this growing concern and funded Alzheimer's Australia to undertake a two-year research project into appropriate community-based service models for people with younger onset dementia. At the same time it funded the Ella Centre to design and build a day centre to suit the specific needs of this group.

The NSW Dementia Services Framework 2010-2015 identifies people with younger onset dementia as requiring particular supports and as having needs that differ from those of older people with dementia. The framework identifies the Ella Centre as having developed a model of best practice in providing services to people with younger onset dementia. The Ella Centre is well placed to take its model of service delivery a step further and develop a model of centre-based care to suit the needs of this specific group. I recently attended a fundraising dinner organised by the board of the Ella Centre to raise awareness of younger onset dementia and to encourage the community to support the new centre. The Mayor of Ashfield, Lyall Kennedy, also attended the dinner.

In welcoming everyone to the dinner David Piggott, the chairperson of the board, acknowledged the generosity of local businesses that had provided support through donations of goods and services. He also acknowledged the incredible efforts of Christina Cleaver who had organised the event. The dinner raised \$7,300 for resources and equipment that will be needed when the facility opens. Media personality Richard Glover was the master of ceremonies on the night. He interviewed Jackie Taylor, who, for the past nine years, has been caring for her husband with younger onset dementia. When asked how the new centre would assist her, Jackie said:

... now that Peter's support needs have increased to the level where he can't go out with the mainstream social support program for people with younger onset dementia, it will be his only community based social outlet. I know he will be safe and protected and I feel happy to take him as he has stimulation and enjoys being out.

The Ella Centre Executive Officer Alison Easton said:

People with younger onset dementia are unsuited to today's traditional dementia day centres, which cater more for clients in the 75+ age group. They are still very fit and active and keen to be socially engaged and the new centre will provide age-appropriate services for these people.

The centre should be opened by December 2012. I congratulate all the hardworking staff members of the Ella Centre and I wish them all the best with their future plans. I also acknowledge the Ella Centre board members:

Chairperson David Piggot, Secretary Reverend Graeme Tutt, Treasurer Bob Matthews, Donna Bevan, Geoff Kerry, Dr Philip McCrea, John Read, Denise McNally, Christine Cleaver, Jeanette Sheehan and Nicholas Davidson. I also acknowledge the Ella Centre service management: Executive Officer Alison Easton, Operations Manager Will Russell, Financial Administrator Beryl Brown and Office Administrator Ann Mullins. It is organisations such as the Ella Centre, and the volunteers who helped to stage this event, that demonstrate the energy and vitality within our local community. That energy and vitality can help people with early onset dementia—some of whom are in their 50s. I particularly thank St David's Uniting Church and I wish them the best for the future.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.25 p.m. until
Thursday 10 November at 10.00 a.m.**
