

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Friday 25 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.

COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN AND THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

Membership

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Madam SPEAKER

The Legislative Council desires to inform the Legislative Assembly that it has this day agreed to the following resolution:

That the resolution of the House of 23 November 2011 discharging Ms Cusack from the Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission and appointing Mr Khan as a member of the committee in her place be rescinded.

Legislative Council
24 November 2011

DON HARWIN
President

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT (OCCUPANCY AGREEMENTS) BILL 2011

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Clover Moore.

Agreement in Principle

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [10.02 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

One of my first experiences as a new member of Parliament in 1988 was trying to help a group of boarding house residents who had been evicted onto the street in Kings Cross on a Friday night. They received no prior notice of the eviction, which left them on the street with no money or options. Their eviction was legal. Despite lobbying for reform since that time, boarding house residents continue to live with the risk of eviction without notice. Unlike mainstream renters, who are covered by the Residential Tenancies Act, boarding house residents have no specific legislative protections, leaving them with few options to enforce a range of basic rights that most renters take for granted, such as having urgent repairs done or getting bond refunds.

Residents often have problems getting basic things like receipts when rent is paid. Their only protection is common law, which has no fair and easy way to resolve disputes. These often vulnerable people have to go through the costly and time-consuming Supreme Court to attempt to get a remedy for disagreements. Neither tenants nor their landlords can access the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal [CTTT] if they seek to resolve disputes. And, with no rights or obligations, there are many disputes.

The difficulty in resolving problems is exacerbated given that many boarders have complex health needs and can sometimes be socially isolated. Recently a boarder reported to me that a person has more protection buying a toaster than being a boarder. The situation is unfair and unacceptable. It is similar for other renters, including residents of licensed residential centres for people with a disability, lodgers in private homes, some residents in residential caravan parks, and occupants of residential colleges, hotels, motels, refuges, crisis accommodation and share-houses not covered by a lease. Madam Speaker, this is an incredibly important bill about the most vulnerable people in our society and it would be appreciated if members could have their conversations outside.

People with a mental illness living in some licensed boarding houses are reported to suffer serious abuse and exploitation. The Tenants Union of New South Wales refers to these renters as marginal renters and earlier this year released a policy paper on needed reform to give them fair protection. The policy paper recommended the establishment of occupancy agreements that comply with basic non-prescriptive occupancy principles based on part 5A of the Australian Capital Territory Residential Tenancies Act 1997. Other organisations have joined the Tenants Union's call for occupancy agreements, including Bridge Housing, the Coalition for Appropriate Supported Accommodation, the Greater Sydney Aboriginal Tenants Service, the Mental Health Coordinating Council, the New South Wales Federation of Housing Associations, the Park and Village Service, People with Disability Australia Incorporated, the University of Sydney Students Representative Council, Uniting Care New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory, as well as a number of tenancy advocacy and legal advice organisations.

Occupancy agreements are also supported by the Eastern Area Tenants Service, the Marrickville Legal Centre and the Redfern Legal Centre, which I have worked with to develop this bill. The Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill would introduce rights and responsibilities for residents and landlords who are not covered by existing tenancy law based on the Australian Capital Territory model of occupancy agreements. Under the bill residents are referred to as occupants and landlords are referred to as grantors. Contracts between the two are defined as occupancy agreements. The bill would require occupancy agreements between occupants and grantors to comply with basic non-prescriptive principles, regardless of whether the agreement refers to those principles or not, or whether there is a written, verbal or implied agreement.

The basic occupancy principles identified in the bill are that occupants have the right to quiet enjoyment of their homes, which should be provided in a clean, secure and reasonable state of repair; occupants have the right to a written agreement and written receipts for any money paid; occupants can be charged for a fair share of their use of a utility; grantors can set rules but cannot charge penalties if they are breached or if there is a breach of a term of an agreement; grantors can enter premises on reasonable grounds to carry out inspections or repairs; reasonable notice must be given before rent increases or evictions, with occupants having the right to know what circumstances could lead to an eviction; and both parties must try to sort out disputes using reasonable dispute resolution processes.

Under the bill both occupants and grantors would have access to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal to resolve disputes arising from an occupancy agreement or the occupancy principles. The bill would require grantors who take bonds from occupants to lodge those bonds with the Director General of Fair Trading. This would be a big improvement as there are current reports of some grantors withholding a bond and using it to threaten occupants. The bill would provide basic flexible protections that can be applied to all rental situations not covered by any other legislation. Through establishing the regulations the Government would be able to build on these protections, working with providers, advocacy groups and occupants to tailor more prescriptive protections for different situations such as boarding houses, crisis accommodation and residential colleges. While the Government works through this process occupants will have access to basic rights such as a clean, safe and secure home as well as responsibilities such as following rules. Grantors will be able to set reasonable rules and carry out inspections of premises.

Unlike the situation in New South Wales, boarding house residents in Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory have some form of protection. This bill is based on the Australian Capital Territory model, which advocacy groups widely say provides the most appropriate protection, given it covers all types of marginal rental living arrangements and has the flexibility to ensure industry viability. Industry viability is fundamental. Boarding houses and other marginal rental arrangements provide an essential stopgap between homelessness and other low-cost accommodation. Without boarding houses, vulnerable people are more likely to become homeless and will find it even harder to access support services and get long-term accommodation. Indeed, people in boarding houses are generally classified as being in tertiary homelessness.

The Government has estimated that there are about 460 registered boarding houses and the Australian Bureau of Statistics has said that there are about 7,600 residents in New South Wales, but there has been a serious and continuing decline in boarding house numbers since the 1970s. Owners and operators say that their costs have continued to increase, and this means they will increase rents or sell up, particularly in the inner city, where old boarding houses can attract high prices. My 1993 legislation to reduce rates and land tax for boarding houses helped, but it needs updating and expanding. The 2007 Department of Housing Boarding House Accommodation Study report recommended simplifying land tax exemptions, extending the

Boarding House Financial Assistance Program, and better promotion of incentives to operators. I am pleased that the Government has updated the Boarding House Financial Assistance Program, which provides industry support.

The need for regulation has been reinforced by a number of submissions to the current social affairs committee inquiry into international student accommodation calling for better protection of vulnerable overseas students living in boarding houses. Indeed the New South Wales Ombudsman's submission notes that the current lack of regulation of unlicensed boarding houses is a significant concern. In response to my question in Parliament in June the Minister committed to reform to protect residents' rights while ensuring the boarding house industry is viable. I welcome the Minister's commitment in this field and his determination to move ahead.

The Minister's response referred to an interdepartmental committee on reform of the private residential services sector, and I note that the committee's December 2010 discussion paper supported law reform. Marginal renters deserve better than the current legal limbo and this bill will give them basic protections that the Government can build upon while providing flexibility to providers to ensure the industry's viability. I thank Chris Martin from the Tenants Union and Jacqui Swinburne from the Redfern Legal Centre, who have been working on this issue for a long time and have helped to develop this bill. I also thank the Eastern Area Tenants Service and the Marrickville Legal Centre for their contribution, as well as my parliamentary research officer, Tammie Nardone. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Geoff Provest and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.11 a.m.]: For the benefit of members I will clarify the order of proceedings for today. A motion is now to be introduced by the member for Auburn and then the debate will be adjourned. I will then suspend standing orders to permit the bringing on of the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011, which has come from the upper House. After all stages of that bill are concluded we will return to private members' motions.

The member for Auburn may then proceed with her motion if there is sufficient time between the conclusion of the police death and disability debate and lunchtime. This afternoon we will proceed according to the normal routine of business except that at 2.15 p.m. Chris Gulaptis, the new member for Clarence, will be sworn in. Seasonal felicitations will be limited today to the Leader of the Government, the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the House, the Manager of Opposition Business and the Whips. Thereafter private members' statements will conclude the Parliament.

HUNTERS HILL RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [10.13 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) condemns the decision of the Government to transfer radioactive waste from the old uranium smelter site at Hunters Hill to Lidcombe and Kemps Creek in Western Sydney;
- (2) recognises the strong opposition to the plan by Auburn residents and the wider community;
- (3) notes the work of the Suburban No-Nuclear Action Group in opposing the plan;
- (4) recognises the need for high levels of transparency with regard to the transfer, transport and storage of radioactive waste; and
- (5) calls on the Government to stop the transfer to Lidcombe and Kemps Creek and to develop a long-term plan for the appropriate storage of radioactive waste in the State.

I am pleased that yesterday the Government agreed to have this motion debated. There are many people from my community in the gallery. Many of these people live near the facility where it is proposed to store the

radioactive waste which is the subject of this motion. On behalf of my community I place on the record my strong opposition to the O'Farrell Government's plan for the disposal of waste from the former uranium smelter at Hunters Hill. This Government's plan has been hastily put together and—like all policy that is hastily put together for political reasons—it has come up as seriously flawed. The people who will pay for this haste are the residents of Hunters Hill, Lidcombe and Kemps Creek.

In 2008 a parliamentary inquiry looked into the former uranium smelter site at Hunters Hill. It examined a number of surveys of the site that had been taken over the years and sought the advice of a number of experts. It is important to note that none of the surveys has been exhaustive, and still much is unknown about the exact levels of radiation at the site. What is known is that the inquiry found that radioactive contamination varied across the site and was potentially also present at other sites around the area where material had been dumped. There were elevated levels of radiation and "certain areas of high activity soil". Some contaminated soils on the site had a specific activity that exceeded 100 becquerels, which, amongst other things, means it would be classified as hazardous waste. The 2008 Australian Radiation Services survey of 11 Nelson Parade, Hunters Hill, indicated there were "significantly elevated concentrations of radionuclides" in the soils and concluded that "the evidence suggests the site is unfit for long-term human habitation without remediation".

One can understand then why there has been such concern about the waste at Hunters Hill. Unlike radioactive waste from hospitals which contains radioisotopes that generally have short half-lives, the waste from Hunters Hill contains uranium-238, uranium-235 and thorium-232, which have half-lives of many millions of years. And the radionuclides from their decay series have half-lives ranging up to 80,000 years. It seems unnecessary to point out to this House that this radioactive waste is going to require a long-term storage solution. This type of waste does not belong in the suburbs. It does not belong at the Lidcombe facility of the Office of Environment and Heritage. That office is first and foremost an analytical laboratory that happens to house a small concrete bunker which happens to be near an office area and about 500 metres away from high-density residential housing.

There is no evidence that the Lidcombe facility is capable of handling this type and volume of radioactive waste and there is no information about the presence of appropriate groundwater, gamma radiation and other monitoring capabilities sufficient to manage this waste. It is a facility that has a small amount of stored hospital waste from over the years. It most definitely is not a "treatment plant" as the Office of Premier and Cabinet recently described it in a letter to one of my constituents who had written to the Premier about the matter. It was most definitely not upgraded to take the Hunters Hill waste as the Premier would have us believe. It, along with many facilities around New South Wales, was upgraded to meet Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency [ARPANSA] requirements. One of my constituents who is in the gallery today spoke at a local council meeting about the plan to bring the Hunters Hill material to Lidcombe and she said:

Before we moved to Lidcombe, we lived in an area where there was toxic waste that was supposedly "safe". During that time, I had my son, who is now four. My son was born with a birth defect, and also has autism. No one knows what caused it, other than it has an environmental trigger.

While we may think something is safe, for as long as we have illnesses, diseases and conditions, with unknown causes, we never really know what is "safe", and only time will tell. The health of the community of Auburn is not to be gambled with.

Those are wise words from my constituent. One can imagine how this woman felt when she heard that radioactive waste from Hunters Hill was headed her way. She lives within 500 metres of the facility. Like all of us, my constituents do not want to live with risk. In the light of the recent events at the Orica facility at Kooragang Island, one can understand that there are strained levels of trust with regard to monitoring of facilities near residential areas. The news that this waste will be housed in a residential area has caused an untold amount of anxiety in my community, as it did at Kemps Creek. It is something that our whole community has engaged with, together, in all its diversity. An action group called the Suburban No Nuclear Action Group, or SNAG, has been formed and is expanding by the day. Hundreds of petitions have been signed and brought to our electorate office in the last few weeks.

My office is fielding non-stop phone calls and emails about the plan. We have had residents letterboxing houses, organising meetings and working on translating the petition into various languages. Before I am accused of being a nimby let me be quite clear about the problem with this plan. Radioactive waste does not belong in the suburbs. It does not belong in Hunters Hill, it does not belong in Kemps Creek, and it certainly does not belong in Lidcombe. As many experts have pointed out, the Government needs to develop a long-term solution to the storage of radioactive waste in this State. Let me inform the House what the O'Farrell Government has decided to do with the radioactive waste at Hunters Hill rather than doing that. It is going to

make it disappear through the use of spin and the help of semantics. The O'Farrell Government is going to classify the radioactive waste out of existence. A media release issued by Minister Pearce on 31 October indicates how that will happen. The media release states.

The waste will be removed and tested at Hunters Hill. In the unlikely event of any hazardous material being found, it will be removed and separated from the rest of the soil and taken to a OEH facility ... The non-hazardous material will be sent to Kemps Creek.

It also states:

... all preliminary testing by independent bodies has indicated it is not anticipated that any hazardous waste will be found on site.

Abracadabra, problem solved. Suddenly there is no problem. Radioactive waste from Hunters Hill has disappeared into thin air, having been classified out of existence. The Government will not be sending "hazardous material" to Kemps Creek. But it will be able to send radioactive soil to Kemps Creek because it will be classified as "non hazardous". The process of excavation dilutes the radioactive waste into surrounding soil so it will not measure over 100 becquerels, which would, amongst other things, classify it as hazardous. If it is not hazardous then it can be sent to Kemps Creek—just do not mention that it is radioactive.

The Government has defined the problem to fit the solution: a small, low-security concrete bunker in the suburb of Lidcombe and a community at Kemps Creek that does not want the waste. It is a classic example of political scientist John Kingdon's garbage can model of political decision-making. But there is a problem with the logic. If the radioactive waste is being removed from Hunters Hill because it is a problem how then can it suddenly not be an issue? If all the soil were to be taken to Lidcombe there would not be enough space in the small bunker on site. Where is the consultation? Where is the information? What are the plans? Where is the independent monitoring on top of the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation's involvement? How will the Government ensure that no radioactive dust escapes in the clean-up, transportation and placement? Will there be long-term comprehensive monitoring of the storage available for public scrutiny?

Many State governments have struggled with this problem and it is a much bigger problem than what the Government is attempting to define. The plan has serious issues and it is time we got some answers. It is time to start again. It is time to adequately define the problem and find some serious solutions. When I gave notice of this motion yesterday I commented on how seriously flawed this plan is. This is not about a community saying, "We do not want this in our backyard." These are intelligent and informed people from my electorate and they are saying that radioactive waste, particularly waste containing uranium, should not be stored in suburban areas. That is the critical issue. The people in my electorate want the Government to come to the table. They want the Government to show honesty and respect to the community. They want the Government to tell them what the plans are and when and how they are to put them in place. But nothing will ensure that my community feels safe and they will oppose this plan with everything they have.

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

POLICE AMENDMENT (DEATH AND DISABILITY) 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

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.25 a.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to:

- (1) permit Government Business to take precedence of all other business up to 2.00 p.m.; and
- (2) provide for the following routine of business, should Government Business conclude before 2.00 p.m.:
 - (a) General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices); and
 - (b) at 1.00 p.m., Orders of the Day (Committee Reports).

I have given an undertaking to the Opposition that at the conclusion of debate of the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011, assuming that is concluded before lunchtime, the House will resume dealing with Notices of Motions (General Notices). The debate of the motion of the member for Auburn will then continue to its conclusion and, if time permits, the House may start debating the motion of the member for Wallsend.

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

Motion agreed to.

POLICE AMENDMENT (DEATH AND DISABILITY) BILL 2011

Agreement in Principle

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [10.27 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

I ask members to refer to the second reading speech which was given in the other place on 9 November for the major principles of the bill. I note that a number of amendments to the bill were made in the other place. I also note that the Government has been involved in extensive negotiations over the terms of the bill, and in this regard the efforts of the Christian Democratic Party and the Shooters and Fishers Party should be acknowledged. Indeed, it was the Christian Democratic Party that proposed the amendments that the Government agreed to support and which I will now briefly describe.

The first and second amendments deal with the respective contributions to the costs of the scheme by the Government and police officers. The amendments clarify that the 4.6 per cent of police salaries referred to in the bill represents the proposed long-term cost to government. The second amendment will, in effect, cap the contribution of individual police officers to a maximum of 1.8 per cent of their salary. The third amendment expands the transitional arrangements to capture those police officers who were on the path to medical discharge and who might have had a reasonable expectation of receiving a benefit under the old scheme. The Government has committed up to \$70 million extra to accommodate this amendment, which is over and above the \$240 million it has already allocated to fund transitional arrangements under these reforms.

The fourth and fifth amendments provided for the Government's tabling in Parliament of the current insurance proposal and the Government's commitment to enhance it in a number of ways. It will give effect to the Government's commitment to increase the proposed income protection benefit to 75 per cent for up to five years. The Government has agreed to invest up to a further \$10 million—that is roughly equivalent to another 1 per cent of salaries—into the proposed insurance to increase benefit levels. The fifth amendment provided an extension to the period of workers compensation top-up available under the transitional arrangements from six months to nine months. The ninth amendment extends this period outside the transitional arrangements. The sixth, seventh and eighth amendments provided a role for the Police Association in reviewing the costs of the scheme and providing advice to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Treasurer.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will have an opportunity to contribute to debate.

Mr John Robertson: I'll take it up.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure you will.

Mr GREG SMITH: The final amendment provides a clear role for the Industrial Relations Commission in helping to determine any disputes regarding the responsibility of the Police Force to offer injured officers appropriate and suitable duties. The death and disability insurance scheme for police officers is unsustainable, both financially and operationally, and is in need of urgent reform. Of greatest concern is that the scheme's design encourages officers to leave work due to injury rather than supporting their rehabilitation and return to employment either within or outside the NSW Police Force.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn visitors in the gallery that if they are not silent during this debate they will be removed from the gallery. I am sure all members will be interested in the full debate on this bill and

every member will have an opportunity to speak. I will not allow interjections during other speakers' contributions. I realise it is a controversial issue and highly emotive, but people will be removed from the gallery and members will be removed from this Chamber if they continue to interject and show off. Members will remain silent. The Attorney General has the call.

Mr GREG SMITH: In practice, the combination of entitlements has seemingly and perversely encouraged injured officers to stay off work and pursue a medical discharge rather than engage in rehabilitation and return to work. One cannot ignore the fact that, if left unchecked, death and disability and workers compensation for police will cost New South Wales \$4.4 billion over the next four years. Including the flow-on cost to the workers compensation scheme, the death and disability scheme is currently costing \$15 million a week—or \$12.5 million more than it should. It is a scheme that is unsustainable and requiring urgent reform, not just for the sake of the New South Wales budget or the operational strength of the NSW Police Force but also for the injured officers that this scheme is failing. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [10.32 a.m.]: What a sad and sorry day this is as we debate this latest instalment in the anti-worker manifesto of O'Farrell's Government. The Liberal-Nationals Coalition came to power in March and brought down a budget that has reduced real wages for workers across New South Wales. A budget measure got rid of the Industrial Relations Commission's discretion. This Government put up rents for pensioners in Department of Housing accommodation and increased childcare costs. This bit of legislative dross that it has brought to the Chamber today, after ramming it through the other place yesterday in a tawdry deal with the Shooters and Fishers Party, which crumbled at the first sign of any resistance, is an absolute disgrace. If you are a spiv in this town, Barry O'Farrell is your man. If you are a shyster, Barry O'Farrell is your man. If you are a snake-oil conman, Barry O'Farrell is your man. But if you are an ordinary worker in this State, Barry O'Farrell is in your pocket.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: I understand that this is an emotional and a difficult issue—

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

Mr Brad Hazzard: I ask that the member be asked to address other members in this place by their appropriate title.

Mr John Robertson: When you start we will. Your leader leads by example every day.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition is out of order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. I understand the point of order. The Leader of the House will resume his seat. The member for Toongabbie has the call. He is making appropriate introductory remarks at this stage.

Mr NATHAN REES: As I was saying, the member for Ku-ring-gai is in your pocket if you are an ordinary worker in New South Wales, part of an ordinary family that has done nothing wrong, who goes out to work each day, pays the rent, pays the mortgage and rears the children. If you are a shyster though, Barry O'Farrell is in your corner. We know conservative governments' form when it comes to industrial relations and related matters but this attack on the 16,000 men and women of the NSW Police Force who keep our streets safe, keep our homes safe and keep families safe across the State, is an absolute disgrace. There are 16,000 men and women and on average about 160 of them in each of our electorates.

The member for Oatley is sitting in the Chamber studiously avoiding eye contact because he knows that with a margin like his 160 police men and women in his electorate, their wives or husbands, their families and their mums and dads will make the difference between his winning and losing his seat next time round. He is embarrassed at this mathematical reality that exists not just for him but for the gentleman next to him, the member for Campbelltown, who as a former police officer ought to know better. It has taken eight short months for him to start garrotting his colleagues in the NSW Police Force.

In the event that there is an argument for reform of this scheme, the way to do it is by sitting down with Police Association representatives and negotiating in a sensible, adult and mature fashion. That is the way it has been done for more than a century in Australia. Instead we have this exercise of pushing legislation through the other place with the help of the Shooters and Fishers who talk a big game but who fold at the first sign of resistance. It is absolutely extraordinary. It is yet another reminder that when one changes a government one changes a State. Back in March the people of New South Wales elected a Coalition Government on the basis of openness, transparency and accountability.

We can all mouth the contract that the Premier put to the people of New South Wales. Instead he has gone about dismantling this scheme in a fashion that can only be described as underhand and entirely dismissive of the Police Force and its representatives. The hypocrisy is extraordinary. I will not labour the point but this is a Government that saw fit to arrange legislatively for one of its own member's disabilities to be accommodated so that he could sit in this place. It made arrangements for that without any drama whatsoever. But if you are a police man or woman keeping people safe across the State it is an entirely different story. I quote the following comments from police officers:

I have a recurring dream where I 'wake up' in the dream thinking that one of my young children ... is standing next to the bed. When I open my eyes, it's not my child, but one of the deceased children that I have dealt with, that I have carried, that I have placed into the morgue. They look like they did when I last saw them. Then I look at the end of my bed and I see the rest of them sitting there, exactly how they were. Some are dripping wet, I pulled them out of the pool. Some are crushed, as I removed them from motor vehicles, others have head injuries, only 18 months-old, because their mother caved their heads in. These are real, these are the jobs that I did. When I wake up I am crying. I have to leave the bedroom so my wife doesn't see me do this.

That is from an officer, Detective Inspector Jason Puxty, and is testimony to the extraordinary psychological impact that is potentially there every day for these officers.

[*Interruption*]

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn visitors in the gallery that there should be no noise from the gallery.

Mr NATHAN REES: Officer 35423, Daniel Danvers, said this:

I have made all available attempts to recover and return to my previous physical capacity. My journey has been a long and painful one, all with the end goal to return to full duties at work. I endure pain every single day. I can't sit for long. I can't stand for long. I am depressed. Only those who have suffered such injuries and been relegated from fit, active people to hobbling cripples can understand the damaging psychological effects that accompany the obvious physical ones.

Officer 41893, Simon Shannon, said this:

From the moment I was injured I have always intended to return to work, and did return to work on a restricted basis before my last two operations. But as my injuries have still not allowed me to recover to my pre injury health, the end result is still uncertain. If the worst case scenario happens and I am unable to return to work, where does that leave my family? This new system is simply a means of casting me aside without care. I have never felt so let down, alone and under pressure.

This document details in extraordinary depth the psychological and physical impact that arises from day-to-day events on the job for police officers in New South Wales and is recommended reading for all members before they vote on this tawdry bill. I have seen some pretty offensive assaults on workers in New South Wales, most of them in the past eight months by this Government. There are decent men and women on the Government benches who believe this legislation should not proceed. In the Government's own ranks are at least four former police officers—I see some of them here today—and on occasion that makes me feel safe in this Chamber. Those former police officers are the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Campbelltown, the member for Dubbo and the Minister for Police, who ought to know better. When it comes to looking after its own members this Government sees fit to make special arrangements for them but when it comes to the NSW Police Force it is an entirely different story. The hypocrisy of this Government is extraordinary.

What have we seen from this Government? In New South Wales workers will receive a 2.5 per cent pay rise if they are lucky, which is less than the inflation rate. This Government has stripped away the powers of the Industrial Relations Commission and increased rents for pensioners and battlers. The Government is now making an assault on the police death and disability scheme, which for injured or deceased police officers is the only thing that stands between destitution and a reasonable means of providing for their families and paying the rent or the mortgage. This is an outrage and this bill ought to be opposed. It should have been opposed in the other place by the gutless wonders otherwise known as the Shooters and Fishers Party. The Opposition will oppose it in this place because it is the wrong thing to do. It is morally objectionable. Labor will never support offensive legislation such as this that strikes at the heart of decency in New South Wales.

[*Interruption*]

The SPEAKER: Order! It is a rare opportunity for members of the Police Force to be witnessing a debate on a bill of this importance but I do ask visitors in the gallery to refrain from clapping, cheering or commenting. I understand that they are emotional about this bill, as we all are, but I ask them to refrain from doing that.

[*Interruption*]

The SPEAKER: You will be removed from the gallery if you continue to interject and I do not want to do that, but you will be removed from the gallery. You have authority outside, I have authority here and I do not want to remove you, but I will. Please let us all be fair during this debate and listen to each other, and have respect for each other.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [10.42 a.m.]: I support the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011.

[*Interruption*]

The SPEAKER: Opposition members were listened to in silence and the member for Campbelltown has that right as well in this Chamber.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: I served for 27 years with the police, first, with the NSW Police Force—which was known then as the New South Wales Police Service—second, with the New South Wales Police and, third, with the NSW Police Force. Having reached the rank of Chief Inspector, I am the highest-ranked police officer to have entered the New South Wales Parliament. I was awarded the Centenary Medal for services to policing in the community and I received a Commissioner's Commendation for my courage and devotion to duty during an affray. In fact, one of the proudest aspects of my police career was to initiate the Law Reform (Vicarious Liability) Act 2004, which prevented police from being sued directly by offenders. Police still enjoy that protection today.

Ms Noreen Hay: It was a Labor Government.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: It was initiated by me.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member not to respond to interjections and I ask the member for Wollongong to cease interjecting.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: I was also a proud member of the Police Association for over two decades and I am a published author in its journal. The bill before the House seeks to amend the Police Act 1990 to require the NSW Police Force to take out approved death and disability insurance for police officers who otherwise are not covered by the now closed Police Superannuation Scheme; in other words, officers who were employed after April 1988 and who now constitute the vast majority of the NSW Police Force. The bill provides that, with the concurrence of the Treasurer, the Minister can approve an insurance policy that provides death and disability benefits for our members of the NSW Police Force. Any proposed insurance policy needs to provide fair and adequate financial support for police officers who are injured on the job. The Government believes this bill will provide such coverage.

The proposal is to take out commercial insurance in order to replace the current scheme and the workers compensation top-up entitlement. To ensure the viability of the new system, the Government will contribute an additional 1 per cent over and above the original commitment of 3.6 per cent of salaries, as well as an additional 1 per cent over 12 months, to take benefits to 75 per cent of salaries for up to five years. Neither the bill nor the Government seeks to make any changes to death benefits and a lump sum benefit for total and permanent incapacity will still be made available through these provisions. As a result of negotiations with the crossbenches and the Police Association, the total and permanent incapacity benefits have been significantly improved from what had been initially proposed under the package. It is proposed that income protection benefit will be paid instead of the partial and permanent incapacity benefit and unlimited workers compensation top-up.

The bill includes a power to make a regulation to provide for additional provisions that may or may not be included in any improved insurance policy, in addition to participation in injury-management initiatives and other transitional provisions not specified in the bill. A draft regulation was tabled last night in the other place, which would require an approved insurance policy to incorporate the improved total and permanent disability benefits scale. In relation to the transitional provisions included in the bill, new section 199K includes a provision for transitional coverage to officers during any period when no approved insurance policy is in place. The additional coverage provided for will be equivalent to any payments made to officers covered by the approved policy. The bill will also establish a framework under the existing State Authorities Superannuation Act 1987 for regulations that allow police officers to relinquish their additional benefits cover, which provides death and total disability cover, and to be covered by the new scheme being proposed today.

It is important that we get this new system right and that is why the bill provides for ongoing reviews of the costs of the scheme and for the independent Auditor-General to undertake a performance audit of the new provisions within 12 months of the new arrangements coming into place. Indeed, it is timely that this bill is being debated in this place only a day after the Auditor-General released volume seven of his 2011 report to Parliament. This volume focused on law and order and emergency services, including a particular focus on the police death and disability scheme. In tabling his report, the Auditor-General had this to say about the existing scheme:

The increase in the number of claims is concerning, not only from a financial perspective, but also from the impact on the New South Wales Police Force more generally.

He added:

Actions taken to address the unfavourable trend in claims have had no impact to date.

That is why the Government introduced this bill. Put simply, the current death and disability scheme is just not sustainable from an administrative, operative and financial point of view. As has been extensively outlined, the current design of the scheme is leading to increases in officers remaining on long-term sick leave for significant periods. During the past financial year, over 1,100 officers took long-term sick leave. Indeed, at any one time there can be between 600 to 800 officers away from duty on long-term sick leave. That equates to approximately the number of officers in three or four large local area commands who are not available for service. Clearly, the current scheme is broken. This year, if nothing is done the scheme is expected to cost the people and taxpayers of New South Wales a total of \$762 million.

With no signs that the long-term sick leave problems are being resolved, as highlighted by the Auditor-General's report to Parliament, and with advice to the Government that the costs associated with the scheme could grow to as high as \$4.4 billion over the next four years, it is only responsible that the Government act, and act now. There is no question that members opposite had ample opportunity to address these issues, but they failed to act for at least the past four years when the advice clearly articulated that the scheme was failing. Indeed, this year is not the first year that the Auditor-General has outlined the problem. It was first raised as an emerging issue in 2007. Again, in 2008 the Auditor-General outlined:

... the financial benefits are likely to discourage return to work and may make medical retirement the preferred option for some who wish to leave the Force.

Yet again, in 2009 and 2010 the beleaguered scheme was raised in the Auditor-General's reports to Parliament as one of the most significant issues facing the NSW Police Force. And members opposite still failed to act. They were privy to actuarial advice that clearly showed the scheme was out of control. Only yesterday, in volume seven of his report to the Parliament, the Auditor-General stated:

The Force's liability for the Death and Disability scheme is based on an independent actuarial assessment. The Death and Disability liability has grown significantly by \$169 million or 147 per cent since 2007-08 and by 49 per cent in 2010-11. The partial and permanent incapacity (PPI) claims paid, a component of the Death and Disability scheme, has increased by 47 per cent to 415 claims in 2010-11.

These observations are not myth; they are facts—facts that members opposite chose to ignore. This Government is taking decisive action.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: The new arrangements will focus on getting police officers back to work, fix the detrimental impact on operational activities and in turn reduce costs. I commend the bill to the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind all members that I require respect for speakers this morning. All speakers will be listened to with respect and in silence.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [10.53 a.m.]: What a sad day. On the last sitting day of Parliament this year we are dealing with a bill that was pushed through the upper House in the cover of darkness. The Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011 was rammed through without consultation by a Government with one of the most appalling track records of backflips when it comes to the way it treats the people of New South Wales and, in particular, the people we rely on to protect us every day. This is a bill of deception, and this is a Government of deception. In the 7½ months it has been in office the

Government has deceived the people of New South Wales. Worse than that, the Government's first act was to protect one of its own members to ensure that he could keep his benefits; seven months later the Government is sticking it to the police. That is the deception.

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

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The second deception in this argument is that the Minister is a former police officer, and the Premier spent at least four years trying to convince the people of New South Wales, and in particular serving police officers, that he would stand with them. I have lost count of the number of times I heard him say—and the number of times the police would have heard him say this—that he would be a Premier who stands beside them. Last night the Premier got up and walked away. The Premier walked away from the people we rely on every day to keep our streets and communities safe, although he had spent so much time trying to convince them that he would stand with them. The deception does not end there. The deception is the argument that the scheme is unsustainable and that the only people who acknowledged that the scheme was unsustainable were Government members. I have followed this debate closely and at no stage have I heard the Police Association or rank and file cops state that the scheme is sustainable or that it does not need change.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will come to order. He will cease interjecting. The Leader of the Opposition has the call.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The deception and one of the lowest acts is to paint the police and their association as somehow being in denial. They all knew that there needed to be change but the argument is about the basis upon which that change occurs. The changes should not be snuck or rammed through the Parliament but a proper package should be negotiated that ensures we look after those on whom we rely each and every day. The Government is now beholden to an insurance company rather than looking after the New South Wales police. The Government said, "We've got to get this bill through the Parliament now or the insurance company will walk away." What a disgrace. Government members claim leadership but they are being led by an insurance company that will offer a premium for only 12 months and that could walk away and leave our police in limbo again.

The Government claims that it wants to look after cops, but all this bill does is rip out the heart of police officers. The shame and disgrace is that no doubt we will hear pathetic contributions such as the one we heard from the member for Campbelltown, who talked about himself and who sits in this Chamber while being protected by police out on the street. Someone once told me that people who get up and talk about themselves have nothing constructive to say, and we have all seen evidence of that today. All I heard was the member for Campbelltown talking about himself. He deceived this place by saying that he was a member of the Police Association when in fact he resigned from the association while he was still on the job. So he should not come into this Chamber and make out that he has a track record of which he is proud.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Leader of the Opposition about making personal reflections on other members. I ask him to return to the leave of the bill.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Why do we see—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition does not need the assistance of the member for Wollongong. He is doing quite well on his own.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: This week we saw an historic event in Macquarie Street. For the first time ever 5,000 police officers marched on Macquarie Street. But the historic aspect is that they were 5,000 uniformed police officers. Five thousand police officers took the unprecedented stand of marching while in uniform. They did so because they are concerned about the way the Government is treating them and the contempt being shown by the Premier and the Minister for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their families. Police officers confront some of the ugliest circumstances and people in our society on a daily basis. They find themselves at road traumas, at house fires and in domestic violence situations that most of us cannot even begin to comprehend. They do it because they believe in this job. But they also do it because, up until now, governments of both persuasions have been prepared to look after them; to make sure that they and their families are properly looked after if some tragic event occurs to them in the workplace.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of meeting with Stephen de Lorenzo's mother here in Parliament House. Stephen De Lorenzo was shot in circumstances where people were being held hostage. He went in, did not know

where they were and was shot. Two and a half years later he wants to come back to work, but he cannot. Under the Government's scheme he is going to find himself left hanging in limbo, much worse off. Those men and women on the highways every day are the first at road trauma incidents. I have friends who work in the highway patrol. They have told me some of those stories. I know, just from what they tell me, they are not telling me the full story, but I can see in their eyes the effects that those incidents have on them. Those people, more than anyone else, deserve to be treated with some decency and dignity.

They should not be treated in the appalling manner that the Government proposes to deal with them—by smashing legislation through and being unprepared or unwilling to negotiate a settlement on these issues. This Government will continue to deceive the police. The Government has done a massive disservice to the people we rely on, who wear a uniform every single day. This Government, by doing what it is doing, is making them and their families suffer, under the guise of saying, "This is unsustainable and the Police Association will not help us out." One of the real tragedies here is that if the Government was fair dinkum, it would also be dealing with the staffing arrangements that local area commanders find themselves faced with. Local area commanders deal with the staffing issues when a police officer wants to come back to work on partial duties. The problem is that someone coming back on rehabilitation is included in the staff numbers. No allowance is made for those local area commanders to manage that situation appropriately.

If the Government were fair dinkum, it would not be ramming this legislation through and not addressing that issue. Members on the Government side are saying that we did it. We never would have done this to these people. Government members can say whatever they like about us. They can try to blame us. But everyone sitting in the gallery and everyone else who puts that uniform on every day knows that we would never have done this to them. The Government has stuck a knife into them with this bill. It has ensured that, when they go to work, their families will not know what is going to happen to them and how they will manage. This will hang around the Government's neck like a rotting carcass until March 2015. It will get worse and worse. On 20 January this year Barry O'Farrell as Opposition leader said, "My team unashamedly backs our cops."

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Not even here.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: He is not even here—but he is not backing out cops. On 27 July 2009 our current Minister for Police and Emergency Services said, "I believe that police perform an extraordinary role in our communities and their benefits should reflect the dangerous work they do." The thing that everybody is discovering about you lot—apart from deception—is that you will say anything to get yourselves elected.

The SPEAKER: Order! I suggest the Leader of the Opposition direct his comments through the chair.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: But when you land in office, you do the complete opposite. Whether you are a police officer, whether you work in national parks, whether you work in transport, wherever you work in the public sector, this Government says nothing of its reform plans. It lands in here and just takes to workers with a knife. What it has done to the cops in New South Wales will forever be the most disgraceful and despicable act by any government in the history of this State when it comes to looking after our front-line cops. That is why 5,000 police marched outside this place. Those sitting in the gallery know a Labor government would never have done this to them. A Labor government would never have done this to our front-line cops. I hope from this day until March 2015 our front-line police never forgot what this Government is doing to them and their colleagues—people who stick their necks out every single day in some of the most dangerous circumstances.

Police officers, unlike most other workers, cannot simply say, "I am not going into a particular work area because it is not safe." It does not work like that for them. If they started doing that, we would all be very concerned. But this Government is making them think twice. Every time they are confronted with a dangerous or unknown situation, they have to think twice. They do not have to think only about what is going on in there and what they might confront; they have to think about what might happen when they walk in and if something terrible happens to them, what is going to happen to their family, to their kids, and who is going to look after them? The one thing they know for certain after today is that the Government will never look after them and it will never look after their families.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [11.07 a.m.]: I support the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011. At the outset I congratulate the Hon. Michael Gallacher, MLC, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, on his strong leadership in addressing the misdirection and financial blowout of this current death and disability scheme. This policy was originally designed to protect and rehabilitate police, but it is now costing

police by driving up sick leave and providing a financial disincentive to remain in the Police Force. It is putting extra strain on existing officers who need to pick up the workload of those officers on sick leave. Regrettably, the current trend of claims and financial incentive to leave rather than rehabilitate has seen the original budget of this scheme breached by \$2.5 million per week—until it is now costing the New South Wales taxpayer \$15 million per week.

The whole scheme is now costing \$780 million per year. This exponential growth in the scheme's cost is simply unsustainable, and that was confirmed by the Auditor-General in 2008. The cost of the scheme will soon be equivalent to 50 per cent of police salaries. The necessary changes to this policy were made clear to the former Labor Government, but it chose to do nothing and allowed the problem to keep growing. Once again those opposite have left a mess for the Liberal Party and The Nationals to fix—and we will. Let me highlight to the House some of the scary numbers we are talking about here. A \$762 million cost is anticipated this financial year—a potential \$4.4 billion cost over the next four years.

Mr Guy Zangari: Not as scary as what they have to face every day.

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

Mr Geoff Provest: Why didn't you fix it rather than just sit there?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Tweed will cease interjecting. The member for Mulgoa has the call.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: There is a 152 per cent increase in the number of officers taking long-term sick leave since the commencement of the death and disability scheme. Our Government is committed to fixing this scheme in an endeavour to get injured officers back into the workforce. The new scheme will be the most generous for police officers in our country. Originally, the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill was introduced as an affordable—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong will cease arguing across the Chamber.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: Originally, the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill was introduced—

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

Mrs TANYA DAVIES:—as an affordable, appropriate and respectful process to recognise genuine and permanent injury, disability or, more devastatingly, the death of police officers. While the financial blowout of this scheme must be brought under control, more essential is the support and retraining of injured officers to retain their knowledge and skills within our Police Force. Under Labor's scheme we heard of stories where officers were encouraged to take a payout and retire rather than to be rehabilitated, retrained and retained in the Police Force. It is proposed that the new scheme will provide 100 per cent of salary for nine months after injury, followed by income protection at 75 per cent for up to a further five years; lump sum payments for officers who are totally and permanently disabled; and death benefits, which remain unchanged from the current scheme.

In addition, the Government has committed an additional \$70 million to extend transitional arrangements that will now capture more than 300 officers currently on sick leave. Furthermore, we have committed a record \$15 million over three years to improve injury management practices within the NSW Police Force. Police are aware of the plans that were in place under the former Government's management of this scheme, yet funding and resources were not available to implement those plans. However, our Government will make funding available from the fourth year onwards to allow for the most successful trial initiatives to be funded on a long-term statewide basis. We value the livelihoods of our police officers and want to ensure that, wherever possible, rehabilitation and retraining are available so that these valued members of our public service are gainfully employed.

In the 2011 June quarter, 67 per cent of police who left the force did so for medical reasons. We simply cannot afford to lose so many experienced and skilled officers when we could be rehabilitating and retraining them. Recently the Minister announced several changes to the original scheme following consultation with stakeholders. Our Government will invest another \$70 million to ensure that officers already booked for an independent medical examination will be covered under the current partial and permanent disability benefit

scheme. This will ensure certainty for the 302 officers currently awaiting medical assessment. We have introduced also a safeguard to the system by allowing the Commissioner of Police discretion to provide additional financial support to injured officers in extraordinary circumstances.

The Government also will invest an additional \$10 million into the proposed insurance scheme for a 12-month period to bring benefits up to 75 per cent of salaries over five years. The Government has introduced this bill to establish a new scheme that is financially and, more importantly, operationally viable. Under the new measures an insurance policy will be purchased that will provide our injured officers with a lump sum benefit should an officer die, and I stress that the amount is unchanged from the existing death benefit; a lump sum benefit if an officer is totally and permanently disabled due to an injury, with the regulation now providing the scale of benefits; and an income-protection benefit that begins after a nine-month waiting period following injury, during which time an officer's salary is maintained at 100 per cent by the NSW Police Force. This will provide 75 per cent of salary for up to a further five years.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Leader of the Opposition has made his contribution.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: The cost blowout of this scheme is another example of the inept financial management of those opposite when in government to manage complex budgets and to make tough decisions for the benefit of this State. Those on that side of the House left a financial mess for the Liberal Party and The Nationals to fix. We will fix the mess.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wollongong will have an opportunity to contribute to debate.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: For a number of days the Government has been involved in lengthy negotiations on the bill with the Police Association, and a number of concessions were made. These include transitional arrangements from the old death and disability scheme to the new one. The Government has committed an additional \$70 million package to capture more than 300 police currently on long-term sick leave. Police officers will receive a 100 per cent workers compensation top-up for a period of nine months. At the completion of this period, they then will receive 75 per cent of their wage for a period of up to five years.

The total and permanent disability benefits for police officers will be enhanced by an additional \$10 million to increase benefit levels. I congratulate the Government on making the tough decisions necessary to get New South Wales back on track. The amendments to the police death and disability scheme will deliver a financially sustainable scheme that is focussed primarily on seeing injured police officers rehabilitated to return to work. These changes will ensure that a death and disability scheme remains available for our police officers for the long term. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [11.16 a.m.]: What a day of contrast for me. This morning I rose early and joined the Leader of the Opposition and others from all political and community cross-sections to walk in the inaugural White Ribbon Day Walk in Coogee organised by Superintendent Gavin Dengate from the Eastern Beaches Local Area Command. I congratulate him on that wonderful gesture. Shame on this Government! From 14 September 2009 until the March 2011 election I had the privilege of serving as the Minister for Police in this State.

On many occasions I said that I wished all New South Wales citizens could fulfil that role if only for a day because of their various conceptions of what the police do: the tough stuff they encounter, the good things they do, all their deeds, protections and gestures, and all things that go hand in hand with policing. I ask all citizens to imagine their conceptions of the police and multiply them many times over. It was a privilege for me as the Minister to see what our police face. Often it is said that society can be judged by various measures. Some people say society can be judged by how it treats its old people. Others say that measure is how society treats its animals. A government can be judged by how it treats its workers. By that measure this Government is a disgrace.

Mr John Sidoti: You talk the talk but you don't walk the walk, my friend.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: You will be walking the walk out the door when this mob gets hold of you. Do not sit there and brag to me, big mouth.

Mr John Robertson: He's in Drummoyne. Just remember Drummoyne.

Mr John Sidoti: Fancy politicising it.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: One of the first acts of this Government—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order. The behaviour of the member for Maroubra and the member for Drummoyne is unparliamentary. I remind members that interjections are disorderly at all times. Members will be heard in silence.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: One of the first acts of this Government was to attack workplace safety laws. It then attacked cuts to real wages. Then it emasculated the Industrial Relations Commission. But this one absolutely takes the cake. We can forget about the detail in this tawdry bill. We know the scheme had issues, which the police and their association acknowledged. All they wanted was to have serious negotiation on the matter. There is no compelling reason why we should be here at this moment debating this bill on this day. There is no reason why the Government could not have sat down with police and the Police Association over the Christmas break and come back with a mutually acceptable conclusion on the first sitting day of Parliament next year. This is just sneaky and disgraceful behaviour. In his introduction of the bill this morning the Attorney General said that there was negotiation, and there was. There was negotiation over the last two days in this place with politicians but no real negotiation with people sitting in the gallery, and that is the real shame with this bill—forget the detail.

Police are used to being hit, even sometimes from behind; it is part and parcel of their duty. But they are not used to being hit from behind by their Premier, by their Minister and by people like the member for Campbelltown, one of their own, who today signed his own political death warrant. Thankfully for all of us, one of the attributes of police is that they do not back down from a fight. They will not back down on this one. They said the other day and this morning—and I believe them—that they will not forget and they will not forgive. The police, the Opposition and the citizens of New South Wales who care about police will lose this battle today but we will not lose the fight. I say to the Government that is already swaggering around, drunk with its own arrogance because of the distorted nature of numbers in this place: forget about the numbers in this place; there are 16,000 police, 4,000 unsworn officers and 300,000 public servants who have absolutely no trust in this Government any longer. That is the real story inherent in this bill.

When a Government loses the confidence of its most outstanding citizens, that is not only a demonstration of its lack of moral compass it is a judgement drenched in shame. I like to think that for 16 years when officers pulled on their uniforms in the morning they knew they were supported by their family, the police family internationally and by the citizens of New South Wales and, despite our difficulties from time to time, they knew they had the overwhelming support of the former Labor Government. That has all been destroyed forever today. It is a sad indictment of this Government that when officers pull on their uniforms in the morning they know they do not have the support of the Premier, the police Minister or any Government Minister, despite all this "BS" rhetoric today. Actions speak louder than words. If members opposite want to support police, they should vote with the Opposition when the division is called. Because of the distorted nature of the numbers in this place it will take some time but today is the beginning of the end of the O'Farrell Government. Police will make sure of it.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.22 a.m.]: I speak in support of the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011. Not a single member in this place can deny very real issues are posed by the current scheme both from an operational and a financial perspective. Clearly the current scheme is not working. Should the scheme remain unchanged, this year it is expected to cost the taxpayers of New South Wales some \$762 million. That is, \$299 million on the scheme, which is more than 10 times the original cost estimated in 2005; workers compensation premiums of \$273 million, a 742 per cent increase since 2005; and a workers compensation hindsight adjustment of \$190 million.

This is not a new problem by any stretch of the imagination. The former Government admitted it was aware of the problem but it did nothing. Under the former Government there was financial mismanagement, abuse of power and a lack of services. What we have heard from Labor is sheer hypocrisy. Members opposite stuck their heads in the sand, ignored the problems yet now seek to take the high moral ground. On 26 March 2011 the people of New South Wales sent a clear message to Labor that they had had enough of financial mismanagement and the Government not delivering services. Those opposite are the very same members who, when in government, were responsible for ignoring the warning signs and creating the crisis we face today, whether it is the now shadow Treasurer who was Labor's last police Minister, or two former Labor Premiers.

The Opposition has known for some time—it could be argued they have known for years—that the current scheme, as it presently operates, provides a disincentive for officers to return to work. The scheme does this by topping up the statutory rate salaries and making lump sum death and disability benefits payable on medical discharge. I highlight some of the large and scary numbers involved. A \$762 million cost is anticipated this financial year and a potential \$4.4 billion cost is anticipated over the next four years. There has been a 152 per cent increase in the number of officers taking long-term sick leave since the commencement of the death and disability scheme.

The Government has introduced the bill to establish a new scheme that is financially and, more importantly, operationally viable. Under the new measures an insurance policy will be purchased. It will provide our injured officers with a lump sum benefit should an officer die. I stress that the amount is unchanged from the existing death benefit. It will also provide a lump sum benefit if an officer is totally and permanently disabled due to an injury. The scale of benefits will now be provided for in the regulation. The income protection benefit begins after a nine-month waiting period following injury, during which time an officer's salary is maintained at 100 per cent by the NSW Police Force. This will provide 75 per cent of salary for up to a further five years. Finally, in the event of total and permanent disability, the insurance policy will pay both the lump sum benefit and the income protection benefit, which can be commuted to a lump sum at the insurer's discretion.

This package is not just about reforms to the design of the current scheme. I am pleased to highlight that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has announced a recent injury management fund comprising a \$15 million investment over three years. It is critical to fund those injury management initiatives, as prioritised by the NSW Police Force, to be trialled and evaluated over an initial three-year period. The Government has acted on the facts and is addressing the crisis created by members opposite. It has presented a long overdue package of reforms. These important reforms not only will bring the costs of the scheme down to sustainable levels but also will do more to support injured police officers. This bill is about standing behind our police officers.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [11.27 a.m.]: I join my colleagues in opposing the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011, which is being debated in this House following its passage through the Legislative Council last night, a most disappointing result in my view. I acknowledge all the communications sent to my office by way of phone calls, emails and letters from not only my constituents but serving police officers and their families across the State. They have asked me and other members of Parliament to reject the bill.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I note, too, the demonstration held outside Parliament last Tuesday by thousands of uniformed police officers. As a member of this Parliament for 28 years and prior to that a policeman for 13 years, I have never seen a demonstration by so many police officers opposing a Labor or Liberal government. I was very surprised at the strident and passionate way that police officers in uniform spoke about the Government and the commissioner. In the 1970s era nobody would have been game to talk publicly about senior management. An interesting point was raised by some members of this House, particularly those on the Government side, about the politics of this debate and the bill.

I will not take up too much time of the House as I want to give other Labor members the opportunity to say a few words. Over the years debates between Labor and the Coalition have always involved somewhat of a bidding war. I argued both in the Parliament and during my time in the Police Force about which side of politics was best for the force. I recognise the fact that even when the Labor Party won an election by a landslide the majority of the Police Force voted with the Coalition. When Sir Robert Askin was Premier he was passionately supported by the Police Force. As a serving officer, I found it hard to win a debate in the meal rooms of the police stations I worked at when I said that perhaps a Labor Government would be better for the Police Force.

When Labor came to office in 1976 and through to the 1980s I think governments of both persuasions did the best they could for the Police Force. Some months after I came to this place Pat Hills, the then Minister

for Industrial Relations, added an interest component to the superannuation contributions of members of the Police Force. It is surprising that until 1983 when officers left the Police Force they received what they had contributed but no interest. I was very proud to talk about the fact that we introduced that bill. I give credit to the Coalition for changing when it came to office in 1988 the law about how police gave evidence in court. Before then every policeman who gave evidence in a not-guilty court matter had to remember every word of their statements and recite them parrot fashion. Police officers would study their statements for weeks, committing them to memory, which created a lot of anxiety and stress. I raised that issue in a private member's statement in the early 1980s, and I give John Dowd, the then Attorney General, credit for changing that practice so police can now present signed statements.

The point is that there has always been a battle between both sides of politics as to which party has done most for the Police Force, and the beneficiaries of that battle have been the serving members and those who leave the force through injury. Government members claim that the Labor Party was tossed out of government because we mismanaged this or that—fair enough. I was successful in that campaign and I cannot remember a single Liberal candidate or any member sitting opposite saying, "Elect us because we are going to change the police death and disability scheme." Those opposite might rewrite the reasons that we lost the election but this policy and this bill were not mentioned once by the Coalition before the election in March.

Mr Michael Daley: Just the opposite.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: As the member for Maroubra says, it is exactly the opposite. Government members made detrimental comments about Labor's campaign and claims about what would happen if a Coalition Government were elected. Many superannuation schemes, workers compensation schemes and pension schemes lose their viability from time to time. Down through the history of this place and in various public service areas changes have been made. Either existing rights were preserved and the new rules applied to new members or changes were made following protracted negotiations. But this Government announced as part of its budget—this is the sad thing—a policy that caught the police, and everybody else, off guard.

The speeches today by Coalition members were drafted by the New South Wales Treasury. My speaking time is limited but I make this point: Policing is not only a difficult profession but a dangerous one, as many members of Parliament recognise. I can also tell the bean counters in Treasury that it is an expensive profession. It does not come cheap to equip the Police Force with the correct vehicles, police stations and refurbished facilities. It is the nature of their job that officers sustain injuries. That is expensive for the taxpayer. But in my 28 years as a member of Parliament not one taxpayer has walked into my office and asked, "Could we do something about the money we are spending on the Police Force?" Not one.

I reject this bill. Studies in New South Wales, in Australia and throughout the world recognise the very difficult and special attributes of policing. Every overseas study has examined the physical and emotional risk to police officers. Perhaps the current scheme needs some reform, but I reject the claims that Labor did nothing. We addressed the campaign of the Police Association over many years and considered the physical and emotional damage caused to police officers. That is why the scheme was introduced. If the scheme requires reform then it will happen, but I urge the Government to talk to the Police Association because it will probably have some solutions. The shenanigans surrounding this legislation—ramming it through on the last sitting day before the Christmas break—are an appalling indictment on the Coalition Government. It has lost the trust of the police for many decades.

[Interruption]

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Visitors in the public gallery have been warned by the Speaker about their behaviour. I ask that they observe the debate with the respect that the community has for this place.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Not any more.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I ask the member for Macquarie Fields to repeat his comment.

Dr Andrew McDonald: I said, "Not any more."

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I place the member for Macquarie Fields on a call to order.

Mr John Robertson: Oh!

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [11.37 a.m.]: I am pleased to join my colleagues on this side of the House and to stand with 16,000 police across New South Wales to oppose this deplorable bill. Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011 should not be before the House in this form. I recognise that all governments face many challenges: balancing a wide range of competing demands with limited resources is always a challenge. Meeting the community's expectations to provide hospitals, schools, roads, transport and police requires making choices and setting priorities. The State's resources are limited and choices need to be made about who gets a new hospital, which kids will get new classrooms, which community will get its road upgraded, and what pay and conditions our public servants will enjoy. All governments are faced with these challenges, but it is its response to those challenges that a government will be remembered for.

The former Government made a conscious decision—a choice—to protect the wages and conditions of public servants in New South Wales. The Labor Government regarded those who heal our sick, those who teach our children and those who protect our communities as worth defending. The former Labor Government, like the current Government, had the choice to cut wages, neuter the Industrial Relations Commission and hack into the benefits of our public servants. But the former Government said no. When it comes to our men and women in blue, Labor recognises the nature of their work, the risk they take, and the important role they play in protecting our community. When it comes to their protections and their confidence that they will be looked after in the event of an incident or accident at work, we believe our police deserve a system that gives them certainty and real protections.

As a Labor member of this House, I am naturally predisposed to protecting the conditions of employment for the men and women of our State, so I was naturally concerned about the bill before this House. But it was not until I sat down and talked with two local police from my community that I fully understood their concerns and the ramifications of this bill. One of the officers I talked with shared their story and it hardened my resolve to oppose this bill. That officer had attended an incident where gang members had shot dead a fellow police officer. He was shot in the head and died. The officer whom I talked with witnessed the incident and was caught in the gunfire. Even worse, the officer who died was related by marriage to the officer I talked with. Not surprisingly, this incident traumatised my constituent.

As a result, the officer received compensation through the scheme. The payout was modest but it is expected to support this officer—who is unable to work in any capacity—for the remainder of their life. This person is only 28 years old and has a six-year-old son. Under the provisions of the bill, that officer will no longer have access to this payment. They will be left to fend for themselves or to try to find work, despite their disorders and health problems. I was moved by that story. It highlights the human face of this bill and reminds us that governments have choices about the decisions we make. By deciding to hack into the conditions and protections of those who protect our communities, this Government has made the wrong choice.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [11.41 a.m.]: I support the Opposition in opposing what I consider to be an absolutely disgraceful bill. The fundamental change outlined in the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011 will move death and disability benefits from an award under the Industrial Relations Act to a commercial insurance scheme. I say to the member for Campbelltown, "You should hang your head in shame; you are backing an insurance company and keeping"—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wollongong will direct her comments through the Chair and not across the Chamber.

Ms NOREEN HAY: He should hang his head in shame. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Michael Gallacher, revealed that he is trying to force through these changes to police death and disability scheme entitlements because the insurance company has given the Government a deadline. Who is governing this place? Who is making the rules? Who is listening to the decisions? This is about getting in with the insurance companies as quickly as possible. What is the wrong with the Industrial Relations Commission?

[*Interruption*]

I suggest the member for Coffs Harbour should not get personal. That was a staggering admission by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on the day that 5,000 police officers marched in front of

Parliament House—which was a first. I have been a member of Parliament for some years and heard some strange arguments but I find it amazing that today Government members blamed every man and his dog—particularly the dogs—for the changes that are taking place without due consultation. Will they explain why, at a couple of minutes to midnight, the Government rammed this legislation through the Legislative Council before sending it here? A couple of days ago I made a contribution to a debate about mental health—it is appropriate that the member for Vacluse is at the table. I referred to police with mental health problems and to the effect on them when their lives and those of others are threatened. I have seen police attend a shocking suicide in a car in a park and they were visibly shaken. I do not know how they cope with and get over such events. I will never know how they do the jobs they do and face what they face.

When officers are trying to recover from such an event, they and their families—we must remember that their families live constantly with the risk of losing them—are under duress, dealing with shock, hurt and pain. They should not be pressured and forced back to work before their time just because they will be at a financial disadvantage if they do not. It is a disgrace. The member for Campbelltown took credit for the changes that the Labor Government made in 2004. He said he initiated them, but nothing goes through this place without the party having the numbers. This Government has the numbers, with a great majority, and it is just taking the mick. Government members are not arguing their case. Leopards do not change their spots; it was always going to be thus, as I said during the election campaign. This Government has established a pattern of deceit second to none. The Coalition told the unions and the Police Association that they had nothing to fear from the election of an O'Farrell Government. Have a look now.

I said at the time that it would always be thus because leopards do not change their spots. This is what that lot opposite does: attacks public servants whenever possible. I am also interested in how the Government will save all this money. I have heard from Government members only how much money the scheme will create and how the police will be so much better off. Where will the Government make the savings? It will make the savings by removing the involvement and the existence of the Industrial Relations Commission. The Government is preventing the Police Association from arguing the case for officers before the Industrial Relations Commission. It is doing the same to teachers, to nurses and to all those public servants who trusted and voted for the Coalition. I can say only that this Government is doing what traditionally people who know politics tell you to do: hurt the electors early and they will forget by the next election.

I congratulate the member for Mount Druitt on pointing out what was not said during the election campaign. Before the election the Coalition told the unions and everyone else they had nothing to fear. Yet it has been anti-union since forming government. The Government has attacked unions, the Industrial Relations Commission and the public service. That is the established pattern of deceit from this Government—not to mention it blames everyone but itself. I argue that, along with hanging their heads in shame, Government members should apologise to every single police man and woman in this State.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [11.47 a.m.]: A couple of months ago we debated the Library Amendment Bill 2011 in this Chamber. Fifty-two Government members spoke to the library bill and now those gutless wonders are not in the House. Their leader has not shown his face and the gutless wonders opposite will say nothing to the police men and women who are in the public gallery today, to the 5,000 who marched on Macquarie Street and to the thousands across this State who protect us day in, day out. New South Wales police have delivered 17 out of 17 crime categories that are stable or falling. The Government came to power with a massive majority. The lot opposite came to this place with law and order in New South Wales the best it has ever been. It is an absolute disgrace for the Government to treat this place with such contempt.

As I say, 52 Coalition members spoke about the stupid library books they read when they were kids yet today they will not defend the men and women who protect their wives, husbands, children, extended family and communities by doing one of the most difficult jobs people can do. It is an absolute disgrace, and they should hang their heads in shame. Today is a dark day for police men and women, for those who want to join the NSW Police Force and for our community because the people who sit on the green leather benches in the comfort of the Parliament cannot protect those who protect us. It is an absolute disgrace. Every single one of them ought to hang their heads in shame. When they go back to their electorates they should apologise to their local area commanders. They should move from that side of the House to this side before this debate concludes.

I want to acknowledge some people in the gallery with whom I worked when I was chief of staff to a former police Minister. I acknowledge Peter Remphrey, Scott Webber, Greg Black and from the southern region Jason Hogan. As I said, I worked with these men when I was chief of staff to a former police Minister. Did we always agree? Of course we did not. But I will tell the House what we did differently from what those opposite

do. We sat around a table and talked, and we talked in a spirit of cooperation and understanding. I never once said to these men and women that I understood what it was like to walk in their shoes. I did my very best, with the then police Minister, to bring forward policies and initiatives that enhanced the NSW Police Force and recognised the work they did.

That is what being in government is about. It is not about ramming through ideologically-based legislation. It is not about listening to Treasury buffoons every time they pull out their stupid graphs and say, "expenses high, income low". Fools—we have all seen them. Government members should wake up to themselves. I say to Government members that when they get a speech written by a ministerial staffer, especially one who has been vetted by the Treasurer's office, for heaven's sake, do not read it—or at least go through and scratch out half the stuff that those buffoons have written. They are not the types of speeches that members should make in this place. Members are here to represent their communities; they are not here to represent a North Shore accountant sipping a gin and tonic. This place is about members representing their communities, and there can never be a more important group to represent than those on the front line who protect our wives, our husbands and our children.

Let me also tell the House about the time I spent this year inside a police station working alongside officers in the Wollongong Local Area Command. I took the opportunity one Saturday night to accompany police in the police truck. We started at 10.00 p.m. and finished at 3.30 a.m. I did it quietly and without any fanfare. I did it because I wanted to get an understanding, albeit slight, of what these men and women experience every day. For those who have not done it—and it is pretty obvious that lot opposite has not—I urge them to spend some time with those men and women on a Saturday night between 11.00 p.m. and 4.00 a.m. Police life is very different from that of people in a cosy, three- or four-bedroom home, air conditioning or blanket on. Police experience the very worst of society and they carry out their job with dignity and respect. They do it because, until today, they had a sense that governments backed them. They had a sense that this place protected them as much as they protected us.

On behalf of this Parliament, I am very sorry that the police officers present today have witnessed one of the most disgraceful attacks on the men and women who protect our community. I say to the men and women in the public gallery today, to the 5,000 who were outside Parliament the other day and to all those across the local area commands: the Opposition may be small in number but we are determined to work and fight for you and with you to ensure that this Government is held to account. On a day in March 2015 police officers will have an opportunity across Campbelltown, Myall Lakes and every other electorate in this State to send a very clear message to the Government that this is not the way to treat people who protect our wives, our husbands and our children. I thank each and every one of the police officers who have come here today. They are witnessing an attack on their basic rights. On this side of the House we will stand with you and fight this every single step of the way.

[Interruption]

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Again, I remind visitors in the public gallery that clapping is not tolerated.

Mr Nathan Rees: If you don't like it, remove them.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I will remove the member for Toongabbie if he does not behave appropriately.

Mr John Robertson: Oh, that's a turn-up right there.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! That shows the reverence and the respect that the Opposition has for the House.

Mr John Robertson: That's a bit harsh.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! My comments were directed to the visitors in the gallery. The Leader of the Opposition should know that clapping is unparliamentary behaviour.

Mr John Robertson: I do know.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! If that is the case the Leader of the Opposition should respect the rules of this House.

Mr John Robertson: I do.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The Leader of the Opposition should lead by example.

Mr John Robertson: I am; I am following theirs.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! All Opposition members should hang their heads in shame at the disrespect they are showing to the House. Clapping is not tolerated. I ask the visitors in the public gallery to respect that.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.58 a.m.]: I oppose the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011. The O'Farrell Government, with the help of guns and Moses, has truly done the dud deal of the century with this legislation that slashes entitlements for police officers who are injured and disabled while on the job protecting the community. I speak on this bill as the elected member for Fairfield and to stand up to this Government on behalf of the hardworking police of Fairfield, Holroyd and Bankstown, and of course all other local area commands across this great State of New South Wales. In the history of this State we have never seen so many rallies and protests in front of this Parliament in the short space of eight months. No group has been untouched by this callous Coalition Government. On Tuesday 22 November 2011, 5,000 police officers were outside Parliament to rally against this Government's cuts. This Government should hang its head in shame at its disgraceful plan to rip apart entitlements for police officers who are injured or disabled in the line of duty.

If this Government—which is only eight months old—has not sunk low by cutting entitlements for our local police officers who are seriously injured or disabled in the line of duty, then I do not what low is. To highlight the harshness of this legislation, under the Government's changes the total and permanent disability lump sum payment for a 44-year-old officer would be reduced from 8.5 times that officer's salary to a paltry 1.64 times the salary. This equates to a 44-year-old senior constable from Fairfield, Holroyd, Bankstown or any other local area command who is made permanently disabled whilst on the job having the total entitlements cut from \$766,000 to \$147,600 for the rest of his or her working life. That is \$147,600 to pay off the mortgage, to send the kids to school, to put food on the table and to pay the bills until reaching retirement age.

The Premier and the police Minister earn more than \$147,600 per year. Yet the Premier and the Minister do not go to work with the very real possibility that they may not come home in the same physical state as when they walked through their front doors in the morning. Police officers do. It is part and parcel of the vocation they have accepted to keep the community of New South Wales safe. Why does this Government expect police officers who are injured or permanently incapacitated whilst doing their jobs—and their families—to survive for the rest of their working lives on a package that is less than the Premier's and Minister's yearly salary? This has been a constant theme in the policies from this Government. It is a complete separation from the realities of everyday life. Members of Parliament know how tough it is for the working families of this State. I know that many families in Fairfield are under significant financial stress. Police are not excluded from the pain of financial stress. One can only imagine what the introduction of this legislation will do to families of police officers who are hurt in the line of duty.

I ask my parliamentary colleagues from the neighbouring electorates of Smithfield and Granville to stand up to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and oppose this legislation. They call themselves community advocates; they are merely politicians. How will the member for Smithfield be able to look police in Wetherill Park, Holroyd and Fairfield directly in the eye tomorrow and say to them, "I am standing up for you"? How will the member be able to talk to Superintendent Lennon and Superintendent McFadden knowing full well that he cannot get proper results? The Premier knows that. He even said when he came out to Smithfield during the election campaign, "Is this the best we've got?" Shame on the member for Smithfield—shame. The member for Smithfield is letting down the community and putting many lives at risk. Those are the lives of the hardworking people in the local government areas of not only Fairfield but Holroyd and Penrith as well. The O'Farrell Government has blindsided police officers across New South Wales with this unprecedented legislation, slashing the entitlements of injured officers.

I call upon the Minister to withdraw this legislation immediately and return to negotiations with the NSW Police Association. We cannot expect our local police officers to go to work each and every day and put

their lives on the line for our community if there is no guarantee that they will be looked after should something go wrong. The O'Farrell Government's attack on the death and disability compensation entitlements of police ultimately will harm the community. If the O'Farrell Government does not come to its senses and dump this unfair proposal, it is a very real possibility that local police officers will vote to commence level four industrial action. It is unfortunate that police will have to resort to level four industrial action. That will mean that police officers will respond to only emergency calls such as violent incidents, urgent car crashes and domestic assaults. It is time for the Coalition Government to take care of the hardworking men and women of the NSW Police Force.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.02 p.m.]: I spent most of yesterday preparing a speech for this debate. Quite frankly, I do not think it is necessary to deliver it. I have been listening to the debate and I know what is going on. It is really simple. At the moment we have in place a scheme that has problems. The police recognise that, those opposite recognise it, and we recognise it. Everyone is on the same page. This is a matter that requires some conversations and people coming together at the table to fix the problem. Everyone agrees on that.

I was out the front of Parliament House on Tuesday and I listened to Scott Weber tell us about the process that has taken place: how the police were invited to participate in conversations up to a point, but were then shut out, then all of a sudden they were slapped over the head with this monumental disaster. Those opposite tell us the Police Association has been involved in the conversation right along. So I am torn on the question of who to believe—those opposite or the police. I am backing the police. I think the police are telling us the truth. I think the police have been shut out of this conversation. All they want and are asking for is to be able to return to the table and have discussions with the Government to try to find a solution. That is what this debate is about.

I have insurance. When I look for insurance I normally get a piece of paper that says, "This quote is valid for 28 days," or "14 days". The Government has a quote for an insurance policy, and the quote will be valid for a certain period. Clearly, the end of that period is approaching. Instead of having the conversation with the police, the Government has looked at its insurance quote and said, "No, this State is more important than a conversation with police." Let us be clear about how simple this problem is. The Government has an insurance policy and it has a chance for a conversation. Those opposite are choosing the insurance policy instead of the conversation. It is as simple as that: they are choosing to meet an insurance deadline instead of having a conversation with the Police Force.

I wish that police work was safe. I wish that police did not have to go to accidents in which people died, to suicides, or to incidents such as children being abused. I wish they did not have to see and hear these terrible things. I wish they did not have to attend the scenes of crimes, but they do. But that is not the reality. We will always need police to do that. If we are to keep calling on our police to do that type of work, we have to keep talking to police about the resources they need to do that. This is a chance to have such a conversation. We should be talking to police about the resources they need to enable them to continue to do their duties and feel safe and supported, and confident that things will be all right no matter what happens on the beat.

The Government has either an insurance scheme or a conversation. Those opposite are choosing the insurance scheme, and in doing so choosing to neglect our hardworking men and women of the Police Force. Those opposite do not deny that they are hardworking, and we do not deny that they are hardworking. Those opposite do not challenge the fact that police do terrible and dangerous work, and we do not debate that they do terrible and dangerous work. There is so much that all in this Chamber can sensibly agree on. But what we cannot agree on is that the Government has chosen the insurance policy over a conversation. We on this side of the Chamber are saying to the Government: Please take the conversation path. We ask the Government to put this legislation on pause, hold it over, go and get a new insurance quote and spend the three months until February next year having the conversation. The Government has an insurance quote today, so it can definitely get another one tomorrow, or another one in December, January or February. Take the time to have the conversation, please.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [12.07 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of The Greens in opposition to the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011. Before I do so I recognise the work of the Police Association and the officers who have worked diligently to highlight the huge problems and impacts that the bill will have on the members and serving staff of the association. I recognise also the efforts of The Greens in the other place and the Labor Party for standing firm, despite the inconsequential amendments moved in the upper

House by the Shooters and Fishers Party and the Christian Democratic Party. Those amendments, though not opposed by The Greens or Labor, do not go far enough to address the issues that have been legitimately raised by the association and its members. I will not speak at length, but I will highlight a few key issues. The bill does three things. First, it terminates the existing industrial award-based scheme for death and disability payments—the rights of police will be terminated under this bill.

Secondly, it replaces that scheme with entitlements to death and disability payments that are in accordance with an insurance policy, but the bill does not establish what those rights will be under that insurance policy. The bill acts in only one direction: it takes away rights, but it does not establish rights. Third, and the important point in terms of future action that the association will take, the bill amends the Industrial Relations Act to remove the jurisdiction of the commission to deal with any death and disability award entitlements in the future. It removes the ability of this independent umpire to set a future fair scheme for death and disability entitlements. It takes away rights, and in their place establishes a regime that has no guarantees and removes the right of police to go to the independent umpire to establish a fair scheme. This is a three-pronged attack on the rights of police, the rights of workers in this State, and the rights of police to a fair and just scheme.

The Greens accept that costs have gone up under the death and disability scheme, and we acknowledge that the former Government did little to address that. We also accept that the number of police claiming death and disability benefits under the scheme has clearly increased. We note, however, that neither this Government nor the previous Government has taken any concrete steps to address the key issue. A slashing of benefits should not be the Government's first step in reducing the costs of compensating injured police. The first thing the Government should have done at the beginning of this year was consult with the Police Association to work out new ways to deal with injured police and to work out ways to change the culture in the NSW Police Force so that police officers with a psychological injury are treated with respect from day one and in such a way that they can remain on duty.

The Government should have examined the appalling figures and considered the fact that only a fraction of injured police return to suitable duty. The Government should have considered the existing award provisions that allow the Commissioner of Police to approach police officers and have them placed in the many hundreds of suitable and available duty positions in the NSW Police Force. Those award provisions have almost never been used. If the Government had turned its mind to finding decent jobs that give injured and partially incapacitated police respect and decent pay and that allow them to use the skills and attributes developed while in the Police Force it could have used the existing provisions of the current award, but it failed to do so. Instead, the Government has sought to address the symptom—the large payouts—rather than the cause, which is how we manage and support our police in their jobs.

We all recognise that police perform dangerous work in the interests of all people. As a councillor on my local council for the past 12 years and as a former mayor I have been privileged to work with an outstanding number of front-line police officers who do fantastic work throughout my electorate, often with insufficient facilities. Everyone knows that Leichhardt Local Area Command uses Glebe police station because Leichhardt has insufficient facilities. But the officers' work in that command is consistent and they do a sterling job. This Government has not committed to engage in good faith with the Police Association. Instead of sitting down and negotiating with police and their representatives the Government negotiated with a private insurance company. The Government came back with a scheme that might fit its budget, but it most definitely does not fit the priorities of injured officers.

In a scenario provided by the Government in its own modelling—and I thank Mr David Shoebridge, who has carriage of justice issues in the upper House and has done a lot of work in analysing the numbers—under this scheme a psychologically injured police officer who can do a modicum of work outside the Police Force when he or she is discharged will see their benefits cut from \$569,000 to just \$76,000. This scheme slashes the benefits available to police officers. Will police who exit the scheme realistically find other meaningful employment? There is an undertone in what we have heard from the Government that the police have been rorting the system and that is why the cost has increased so much—that these people may be trying to scam the system to get a lump sum payout. Let us look at the facts.

The statistics tell the truth. On average these police officers are 40 years of age, they often have a young family, and they have served an average of 15 years in the force before they are medically discharged. Effectively, they are professional police officers who have developed their careers, and when they are medically discharged because of a psychological injury very few of them find any kind of meaningful employment. The

figures are very clear. Only 2 per cent, or one in 50 of those people who exit the scheme, obtain full-time employment. When part-time employment is taken into account—for example, stacking shelves in a supermarket or some other such task—only 15 per cent have found that kind of part-time employment. These are officers who are not rorting the scheme and they are not shirkers; they are officers who have been genuinely injured and have suffered serious debilitating injuries, and 85 per cent of them cannot find any form of employment after they leave the Police Force. These officers need help and support and the Government should be working at the front end of this problem to support the injury management process and the occupational health requirements of police.

I have received many emails and letters, I have visited my local police station in Glebe and I have heard stories from officers about the impact on them of their work. This Government should be negotiating with the Police Association. The insurance policy expires on 23 December, so the Government has until then to take up this policy—that was revealed yesterday. The Government could have kept negotiating, it could have recalled the House to discuss this after another month or so of negotiations, but the Government is not interested. We must ensure that this Government is held responsible for these issues, and I believe the Police Association should take further steps now because the right to go to the Industrial Relations Commission has been taken away from them. I look forward to working with the Police Association and I call on the Government to withdraw this bill.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Cabramatta will be heard in silence.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [12.14 p.m.]: I oppose the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011. As other speakers have said, this is a dark day for New South Wales and for New South Wales Police. It is also a dark day for the Liberal Party because of its despicable act of going to an election promising not to touch anything, saying that everything would be fine, that they would look after all the workers in the State and that they would not touch the Police Force, yet within seven or eight months they whack a bill on the table that is taking away the rights of police to go to the Industrial Relations Commission and argue their case if needed. This bill is a blatant attack on our police and an attack on our community. My electorate of Cabramatta is served and protected by two local area commands—Cabramatta and Fairfield—that have great police officers and great commanders.

The hardworking officers at those two commands front up for work every single day, fearlessly confronting situations when the rest of the community call on them for help. The police on our streets are a symbol that during times of chaos order is present and that order will confront chaos and restore peace and civility. Our police protect us and our community, and they do a damn good job of it. As a local member I have always made a commitment to address any concerns of our hardworking men and women of the NSW Police Force and to do everything that I can to support them. For this O'Farrell Government to terminate the existing industrial award-based scheme for death and disability payments and replace it with a weak, watered-down version is not on. The Police Association will not stand for it, the Labor Opposition certainly will not stand for it and at the next State election the Premier will find out that the voters will not stand for it either.

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

Mr NICK LALICH: I was proud to stand beside my Labor colleagues on Tuesday and applaud and cheer what was reported to be more than 5,000 uniformed police men and women as they marched on this Parliament in protest against these laws. It was unprecedented in the history of Australia that police have marched on Parliament House in protest—5,000 uniformed officers of the NSW Police Force were forced to take a stand against their own disgraced Government. Their anger was palpable that day, and that anger remains strong amongst our brave men and women of the NSW Police Force. They have the support of the community. New South Wales Labor left office in March this year with the NSW Police Force at its highest-ever level—we left more than 15,300 police officers to protect our community.

The scheme that the former Labor Government introduced recognised that the occupational health and safety risks to police officers are both latent and active. Our legislation recognised that police work is dangerous and that police officers put their lives, their bodies and their minds at risk every time they pull on their blue uniform. New South Wales Labor understands the great commitment and sacrifice made every single day by our brave serving officers. We protect our police, we take care of our injured and we take care of the families of those who, sadly, make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

I do not want to mention the officer's name but I refer to the booklet entitled "Police Association of NSW" and police officer 25701. That gentleman has been in the Police Force for about 23 years. In 1995 he injured his knee while on duty. He had to have a knee operation and after surgery and an extended period of rehabilitation he returned to full operational duties. Unfortunately, 12 months later, he injured the same knee and had to undergo the same operation. He returned to full operational duties after some rehabilitation. In 2010, the same knee was injured again. This time he was told he could not work. He tried to return to work, but the medical profession indicated that he could not, so he was going to be put out to pasture. What got me was the last paragraph that he wrote. He recently had to front an independent medical examination and he writes:

The results of the IME [independent medical examination] I don't know. What I do know is that I believed that if I ever found myself in this position, I would have the peace of mind of knowing that my interests would be looked after by my employer and that my family's future would be secure. Instead I find myself emerging from one nightmare into the uncertainty of another. I don't expect sympathy or charity. I do expect to be treated in a fair and just manner. The proposed changes to the D&D scheme will further punish and penalise those members of our police force who have sacrificed their health and well-being, along with their quality of life as a direct result of their service to their community.

The result of the new legislation from the O'Farrell Government will be a reduction in the benefits available to officers, particularly those who have suffered psychological issues. In this day and age society understands that psychological injury and strain can be just as bad as physical injury. Our mental health is a key factor in our overall health and this fact must be recognised as we move forward. This bill significantly reduces entitlements available to police officers in almost every scenario, including spinal injuries, major psychological trauma and permanent physical injuries. By removing the Industrial Relations Commission from the equation, the O'Farrell Government is taking out the independent umpire in the hope of saving a buck. Its members are telling injured police and all other serving police men and women that they do not need a fair level of protection.

As a community, we ask our police force to protect us from danger every day, to pound the pavement and fight the evils of crime. We arm police officers with batons, guns and tasers, recognising the danger of the situations that they are likely to encounter, and now the Government wants to take away their benefits when injury occurs. Policing is dangerous—there can be no argument about that. There will always be, as unfortunate as it is, an element of society that brings danger to the ordinary community. That element of society must be faced and the community must be protected. That is why we have more than 15,000 men and women doing their duty of serving and protecting the community. We expect our police officers to protect us, but this Government will not protect them. The New South Wales Labor Opposition will continue to stand up for the rights of those who protect us. Five thousand uniformed cops made a statement in a sea of blue on Tuesday. The O'Farrell Government will find that the community sends a strong statement at the ballot box at the next election. I oppose the bill.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [12.23 p.m.]: I speak in support of the police, particularly inner-city police, and oppose the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011, which will cut workers' compensation benefits to police officers injured at work as part of a restructure of the police death and disability scheme. Currently, police officers injured at work are entitled to their full wages until they return to work or leave the force. Under the bill, this full payment will only be paid for the first six months, after which entitlement will drop to 75 per cent and then 65 per cent for the rest of a five-year benefit period.

The police do a difficult job in an extremely stressful environment. In the inner city they are at particular risk of violence on weekends and late at night, and when dealing with massive crowds of intoxicated people. They are subject to violence, assaults and abuse—I know of one young police officer who had her teeth knocked out by a drunken patron—yet our police never hesitate to break up brawls or intervene in violent situations. Police officers are the ones who attend scenes that most of us do not even want to hear about—gruesome, distressing scenes of neglect and cruelty that show human nature's darkest and ugliest side. They are there when people experience unbearable pain and suffering. Examples of stressful situations that police officers in my electorate have recently been exposed to include attending and informing the family of a 16-year-old boy who had hanged himself and then, within days, attending a 72-year-old woman who had also hanged herself.

Another incident involved attending to a woman who had accidentally run over her young child. I understand that this was very traumatic for officers, particularly those with young children. I remind the House of the Kings Cross police officer who was brutally bashed while walking to work in the early hours. After two years of treatment and rehabilitation, she returned to work. Some years ago, in Surry Hills, a public housing tenant got a gun and shot four of his neighbours at close quarters. I was there when the police had to enter the premises and deal with the bodies, and I watched them being carried out in body bags. This regular exposure to violence and stress creates serious risk, over and above most other occupations, of injury at work, be it physical

or psychological. We also need to be very aware of the stress on families. The only other areas in the same league are the work of firefighters, ambulance workers and our armed forces. We ask these people to go far beyond what most people in the community are asked to do in terms of earning a living or making a contribution.

Police officers know the risks that they will face when they join the Police Force. They also know that their work is not particularly highly paid when compared with other areas. They do their job because they want to protect the community, and this work can be really rewarding. They carry out extraordinary public service and I have great admiration for them. I have worked with the police in my electorate and in the City of Sydney for many years, and I admire what they do. We ask them to take risks that we do not ask other people to take in their working day. It is therefore only fair that we guarantee that if something goes wrong in this high-risk environment and it prevents them from working, they and their families will be looked after.

Our police agree that the compensation scheme must be financially viable, but they want it to be fair and they would like to work with the Government to achieve that. The NSW Police Association reports that under this bill New South Wales police will have the least protection in the country. I think that is shameful. I understand that the Government hopes that a reduction in benefits will encourage more police officers currently on disability benefits to return to work. Police officers and their families consider this a cynical approach, and I share their concern that before reducing benefits the Government should improve support, prevention and rehabilitation programs. I also point out that firefighters and ambulance workers who have similar income protection benefits in their compensation schemes—and deservedly so—are quite concerned that this change in policy will soon be extended to their schemes as well. I oppose the bill.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.28 p.m.]: I contribute to debate on the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011. I condemn the O'Farrell Government for this gutless attack on our police. I say to this anti-worker Government: These workers will never support or trust you again. The lot opposite just cannot help themselves when it comes to cutting the throats of workers. It is in their DNA. It was the first thing they did when they got into government. Since being elected, the O'Farrell Government has systematically attacked nurses, then teachers and then TAFE. It has capped wages, which in real terms is a cut in pay. This Government removed the independent umpire and then had the hide to say it was Labor policy. For the record, Labor has never removed—and would never remove—the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission. This is a sad day for the hardworking, brave men and women who are our police officers. They are the very people who, day in and day out, night in and night out, protect and maintain the security of our community.

Our police deserve better treatment than this treatment from the Government. Government members should hang their heads in shame. I have had conversations with police within my electorate and I have the highest respect for their work. The Lake Illawarra local area commander, Superintendent Wayne Starling, provides a professional, competent and highly efficient command. More than 300 police officers work in that area command. These men and women chose their career largely because of their commitment to the community. They attend fatal accidents, and often know the victims. They bravely attend domestic violence sieges and they place the lives of the general public ahead of their own. The psychological injuries that police suffer can be simply soul destroying. They often require ongoing counselling and medication. The effects of these injuries have resulted in suicides of police officers and breakdowns of family units due to post-traumatic stress disorders. This has been well documented and well researched.

With the introduction of this bill our brave police officers will be forced to return to work carrying both physical and mental injuries. The financial security of these workers has been destroyed. I believe that the people of New South Wales are realising that this anti-worker O'Farrell Government will do all in its power to ensure that our most valued workers—such as nurses, teachers and now our police—have no protections whatsoever. I believe that we will lose workers in New South Wales due to these types of bills being rammed through at midnight. I believe that our police deserve better. They should have protections that ensure their health and wellbeing and their financial security should they be injured on the job. The work that our police undertake is not ordinary: policing is not an ordinary profession. The work our police undertake is dangerous and their families cannot be sure that they will return home each night.

I am so strongly opposed to this attack on our police that I will continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with them in relation to any future actions that they would like to proceed with. I give that commitment to all police across New South Wales. This Government obviously has no idea about the dangers that police face every day. Police may be working smarter to reduce the crime rate but that does not mean that the crimes they encounter are any less awful or any easier to deal with. Police officers still get hurt in their pursuit of bringing

criminals to justice. A survey conducted among the New South Wales Police Force has found that 63 per cent of officers believe that policing has become a more dangerous job over the past five years—an argument in itself as to why the death and disability scheme should remain. Interestingly, the survey also found that a whopping 94 per cent of officers believe that the current protections under the death and disability scheme should be maintained.

Our police are expected to put their own safety at risk every time they put on their uniforms. However, this Government is more concerned about cutting costs rather than protecting the lives and livelihoods of our police officers and their families. Where is the Premier while we are debating this important bill? I call on Barry O'Farrell to come into the Chamber to face these workers and tell them why he is cutting their death and disability scheme. If the Premier is watching this—and he should be—he should come down here this minute to face the police officers in the gallery.

Mr Richard Amery: He will probably do that.

Ms ANNA WATSON: Don't hold your breath. The unprecedented attack on the death and disability scheme that is being rammed through this House is nothing short of disgraceful. It is a gutless attack. There is no question that this scheme—like most schemes—needs to be adequately reviewed and finetuned to ensure that it is financially sustainable over the long term. Workers, especially our police, deserve more from Treasury. We cannot simply compare costs versus people. We need to focus on rehabilitating officers, helping them to manage their injuries and ultimately assisting them to return to work.

[*Interruption*]

I would expect a comment like that. That says more about you than it says about me.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Shellharbour will refrain from responding to interjections. The member for Baulkham Hills and the member for Keira will cease interjecting.

Ms ANNA WATSON: The death and disability scheme recognises that the workplace occupational health and safety risks to police officers are both latent and active. It provides for those officers who are killed or injured in the line of duty and it provides for their families. The bill significantly reduces entitlements available to police officers in almost every scenario, with the exclusion of death, including spinal injuries, major psychological trauma and other permanent and ongoing injuries. Removing the scheme from the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission and eliminating the death and disability scheme status as an industrial entitlement will mean that police will have no capacity to argue to an independent umpire for a fair level of protection.

It would be more appropriate for this Government to focus its energies on injury prevention measures for our police, thereby reducing the number of officers who are confronted with serious physical and psychological injuries in the first place. That seems to be a commonsense approach, but there is nothing common sense about this Government. The bill being rammed through this House today is all about slashing costs and has no regard for the very men and women in whom we entrust the safety and protection of our communities and our families.

We will be faced with a workforce of injured officers who will be forced to return to work before they are ready. Those who are unable to return to work will simply be thrown onto the scrapheap. This legislation is a disgrace. The way this Government has handled negotiations on this bill is the overriding reason that our police feel so aggrieved by the process, as demonstrated by their presence in the gallery today. A week before the bill was introduced to Parliament the Police Association was handed a copy of the bill—before the negotiation process had even reached a conclusion. I strongly oppose this bill. I apologise to police officers and their families for the treachery of this Government.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.36 p.m.]: I oppose the Government's proposed changes to the police death and disability scheme. Many speakers have eloquently and passionately expressed their opposition to this scheme, so I intend to keep my comments brief. Nonetheless, in all the time I have been a member of Parliament I cannot recall seeing anything like the scene that we saw earlier this week in Macquarie Street. It was a sea of blue uniforms. Police turned out in their thousands to protest the Government's changes to the death and disability scheme. As members of Parliament we are familiar with the men and women who work for our local police commands. All of us know that police take their commitment to serving their local

community extremely seriously. We know that by their nature police are cautious—even conservative—when it comes to industrial action. Yet what we saw earlier this week demonstrates the level of anger and the sense of betrayal felt by police in New South Wales. It was momentous for the police to come out to protest in such huge numbers.

The fundamental changes outlined in this legislation to move death and disability benefits from an award under the Industrial Relations Act to a commercial insurance scheme represents a major change to how these matters are dealt with and will lead to a reduction in benefits available to police officers, particularly those who have suffered psychological injuries. The bill significantly reduces entitlements available to police officers in almost every scenario, including spinal injuries, major psychological trauma and other permanent physical injuries. In removing the scheme from the jurisdiction of the Industrial Relations Commission police will have no capacity to argue to an independent umpire for a fair level of protection.

There is no doubt that the Government's handling of this issue has been appalling. A week before the bill was introduced into the Parliament the association was handed a copy of the bill—before negotiations had even reached a conclusion. Whether it is police or teachers or public servants, the O'Farrell Government does not seem to understand and does not even try to understand the importance of consulting, negotiating and working with the organisations that represent employees. There is a need to consult on and negotiate changes that impact on employment conditions. The police men and women of New South Wales deserve no less.

When the current death and disability scheme was introduced by the Labor Government it was recognition that police work by its very nature places officers at risk of injury or death over and above any other type of employment. Every single day police officers take risks that most of us would not be prepared to take. They see society at its worst. They witness scenes of terrible trauma and bloodshed and they put their personal safety on the line so that we can all be safe. If police are injured on the job, the very least they can expect is that they and their families will be adequately looked after. They should not have to fear, if they can no longer look after their families, that the State will not step in to do it for them.

I admire the dedication and commitment of our police force. I work closely with the Marrickville, Newtown and Redfern local area commands. I have great respect for the police men and women who work in those commands—people such as Inspector Eddie Billet, who earlier this year was awarded the Australian Police Medal. But it was during my time as Minister for Community Services that my eyes were opened to the traumatic and dangerous nature of police work and the ongoing impact of that work, particularly the psychological impact, on the health and wellbeing of those officers.

For most of us the abuse of children is too horrifying to contemplate, but police in the joint investigative response teams are at the front line of such investigations. Police who work in child protection, and Community Services caseworkers, deal with cases of the most awful physical and sexual abuse of children daily. They interview the children, they witness the injuries and they make sure that those who commit those types of offences are brought to justice. They do some of the toughest child protection work, but it also affects local area commands right across New South Wales. When Community Service caseworkers have to knock on the door of a dangerous household to remove a child, they ask the police to accompany them. When domestic violence occurs, the police attend. When people do really awful things to children, the police attend to pick up the pieces—and sometimes they literally pick up the pieces.

It is unacceptable that police who suffer psychological injury as a result of their responsibilities will not have a death and disability scheme to appropriately look after them and their families. It is unacceptable that police officers may now think twice before going into dangerous situations. It is also unacceptable that police officers now feel that the Government does not respect the job they do. Police must be confident that the community and the Government respects and understands their important work. This situation could have been different. The Police Association has said on many occasions that it accepts that changes need to be made to the way in which police injuries are managed; it simply wanted changes to occur as a result of consultation and negotiation so that police officers and their families are adequately protected. Surely that is not too much to ask for the police men and women in this State who do so much to keep us all safe. I urge members to vote against the bill.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.42 p.m.]: Along with other members I will soon be voting on the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011. I feel an obligation to comment on the bill but no-one should be under an illusion that anything that could be said in this debate, no matter how compelling or how right, will change the inevitable outcome that this bill will be passed. The election in March gave the

Government a broad mandate for change. Whilst I acknowledge the need to reduce the cost of the police death and disability scheme, I cannot accept the extent of change that will flow from the passing of this bill nor the timing of the appearance of the bill before this House.

In recent weeks I have had communications from a range of police ranks and I have heard a range of views on this matter. Obviously there will be a range of views because this complex matter deals with peoples' lives—not just the lives and wellbeing of police officers, but of their families as well. As the member for Lake Macquarie I am proud of the service police provide to our community, even under the duress of longstanding understaffing of the local area command and barely adequate provision of facilities and workplaces. As Mayor of Lake Macquarie, from time to time I am pleased to host the presentation of police awards in the council chambers. I am reminded at those times of the great service given by our dedicated officers, who are loyal to their communities and to each other. Where would we be without them?

Today almost every member of this House has acknowledged the sorts of situations faced by police. They go to work every day not knowing what they will face, but they do know whatever they face it may be something that most of us would not even care to think about. I acknowledge that there is a genuine need to address the growing costs associated with the death and disability scheme. From what I have heard, not only from every speaker in this debate but also from police, almost everyone agrees on that. The term "mortgage buster" has been coined. That term is used for compensation claims that would not be condoned by any fair-minded person because they are an unjustifiable cost to the community. It is a generalisation and sleight against the vast majority. Police officers perform a job that can be unsavoury and one that entails a greater risk than most occupations. Anyone would expect a range of self-interest and dedication to duty among our police, but that does not justify removing or reducing a fair level of protection against workplace injury.

The bill is typical of the most problematic of matters to be raised in this House over many years. It is an unholy marriage of something that is supportable and something that is not. The public have made it clear that police deserve adequate compensation for injuries suffered at work, yet that protection is to be slashed in the quest for financial savings. I do not question the need for those savings but I am unconvinced of the extent of this bill's response to the problem. I applaud the intention of supporting injured officers returning to work, but I do not believe the bill has arrived at a workable solution to the financial problems of the current scheme. I repeat my disappointment that we are discussing the reduction of protection for genuine hardworking police officers who take risks on behalf of the public every day. The bill should not have been pushed through as the last order of business for this year, and certainly not when it is clear that the Police Association is aware of the need for reform and has indicated that it wants to work with the Government to resolve the matter. I oppose the bill.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.45 p.m.]: The O'Farrell Government has pulled another policy from the bottom drawer. Surprise, surprise, this proposal was not signalled before the election. When the scheme was first introduced in 2005 the then shadow Minister, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, described the legislation as "long overdue" and a "significant leap forward". In 2005 Mr Andrew Constance, the member for Bega—who is suspiciously absent from the Chamber today—also described the bill as "long overdue". In fact, he said:

The [then] Opposition recognises the importance of this legislation in supporting the efforts of New South Wales Police ... Not having an appropriate scheme in place over the last 17 years has been an enormous frustration for New South Wales Police. It is therefore pleasing that through the association and its lobbying that an outcome has been reached that is satisfactory to all parties involved.

I ask the member for Bega: Why the change of heart? Once again the O'Farrell Government has proven itself all too willing to say one thing in opposition yet do another in government. The changes to the death and disability scheme join a growing list of broken promises, including the disastrous public sector wages policy, the solar bonus backflip and the upcoming sale of the electricity industry. The O'Farrell Government has declared war on the New South Wales Public Service and the latest casualties in this ideological onslaught are the brave men and women of our police force. I am, and always will be, a strong supporter of my local police officers. As I have informed this House on several occasions, police in Bankstown face a number of unique demands and pressures that add to the immense stress of their job—tragically last year we lost one of those officers.

Once again the Government has introduced major legislation, which has significant consequences, without providing time for proper consideration. It argues that it needs to pass this legislation by the end of the year. Why then was it not introduced sooner? The Parsons review was certainly introduced very quickly. The Parsons review, which undertook an audit of police resources across the Sydney metropolitan area, could

potentially result in police officers being moved from greater western Sydney, for example, to local area commands on the north shore. Surprise, surprise, Mr Gallacher has refused to make the Parsons review public but he gave that review plenty of time. He is allowing no time whatsoever for the review of this scheme. He has pulled out a whole range of misleading figures, but rather than explaining them and taking a good look at the factors that might be preventing injured police officers from returning to the work force he has run a misleading media campaign. He has fed information to various media outlets in an attempt to soften the ground for the Government's announcement. The Government has disgracefully implied that the system is being rorted by police who are seeking exorbitant mortgage buster payments. That is absolute fiction. We on this side of the House know that.

The Government has acted deliberately to attempt to outmanoeuvre the Police Association rather than working with the association to reach a better outcome. The Government is desperate to strip away the entitlements of public sector workers and avoid the scrutiny of the independent industrial umpire. This is at the core of the Government's industrial relations policy—removing the oversight of independent bodies in order to consolidate power with Ministers. I note that under proposed section 199B the police officers contributing to State funds under the Police Regulation (Superannuation) Act 1906 or the Superannuation Act 1916 are excluded from this amendment, as are those officers who are contributors to the State Authorities Superannuation Act 1987. Unfortunately, once again newer officers within the Police Force will suffer while older officers receive the support they deserve. It is important to note that the scheme is not fully funded by the taxpayer. Police officers contribute 1.8 per cent of their salary to the scheme. I ask the Minister in his reply to advise the House what will happen to the funding that has been taken directly from police to date.

It is also likely this proposal will impact adversely on the force's ability to recruit new officers. Police have a tough job and the death and disability scheme provided prospective officers with the reassurance that if the worst did happen they would receive the support they deserve. The O'Farrell Government is ensuring that new police officers will not get a fair deal. I do not know how the brave men and women of the Police Force get up in the morning and go to work when they know that that day could be their very last. Until today they at least had a scheme in place that gave them some assurance that their families would receive the financial support they need to pay mortgages and bills and raise their children when they are not there so see them grow up. It is an absolute disgrace. Shame on you, Barry O'Farrell. Shame on you, Mike Gallacher. Shame on all members opposite. The member for Campbelltown should hang his head in shame because this is an absolute disgrace. The bill itself deserves only one fate—to be dumped in the bin, and that is where I will put it.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [12.53 p.m.]: I oppose the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011. I acknowledge the police in the electorate of Northern Tablelands: the New England command, part of the Oxley command and part of the Barwon command. I openly acknowledge those hardworking men and women and say thank you for the work they do. It is disappointing that this bill is before the House at this particular time. I have looked at the issues in detail. I will not be using emotive language against members. I spoke with the Police Association and the association opened its contribution to the discussions by saying it was prepared to negotiate. The association acknowledged, as I do, that the previous scheme needed changing. It is important that we acknowledge that.

I then applied the fairness test because I think that is the best way to go: What would the community say is fair and reasonable in the circumstances to support police officers given what they do and what they see? I will tell the House what the community said to me. It said the Government clearly was attempting to speed this up because it has the numbers, particularly in this Chamber, and it wants to ram this legislation through before the end of the session. I agree with that observation. It is disappointing given the willingness to negotiate. Some of the comments I have heard that have drawn comparisons with other professions are offensive to the Police Force.

I say that because although some members have worked for the Police Force, I work closely with the police officers in my electorate. I have seen firsthand many of the incidents that would be reported to us as local members of Parliament. They make me very sad. I have not brought notes today because I did not want to speak from notes. I recall an incident where a police officer in the heart of my electorate—I will not say where—attended a fatal accident in which his son was killed, and he did not know that had happened until he arrived at the scene. I can assure members that there are not too many professions whose members are exposed to that situation. There are not too many professions whose members are exposed on a daily, weekly and monthly basis to the most difficult and challenging circumstances that face members of the Police Force.

To recognise that a system needs change without acknowledging the special circumstances that our front-line police and their families endure is in my view to look at things from purely a budgetary perspective.

We need to see the people perspective that the police have to deal with in the front line on a daily basis. There has to be recognition of that difference. I listened to the debate in the other place and I have listened to some of the debate in this place. It is disappointing to hear members use terms such as "thugs" and "frauds". That is offensive in the context of a debate about our police. The most important thing to me, given the contribution I have made, is that in many respects the police and the public service had every right to expect there would be proper consultation and that they would be looked after because that is the commitment they were given prior to the election. Also, a number of members of this place signed pledges to say, "We will support the Police Association and we will support our police."

Mr Ryan Park: Name them.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: I have previously named them in debate and I can assure the House I am looking forward to seeing how they vote when a division is called. Some of them have indicated to their communities that they intend to cross the floor. From my perspective it is important that we honour the commitments we make to people so that they are aware they can trust this place and the people in it. Once that trust is breached, anything goes. That is not the way to run a democracy and it is not the way we want to be perceived. I know there are many members who wish to speak and I indicated that I would speak for only five minutes.

This bill should be rejected. The opportunity should be taken for further negotiation, given the goodwill that exists to do that. There is no need to rush the bill through today; it could be dealt with in February after proper negotiation has taken place that recognises the need to change the old system. I make that point because that change should have occurred previously. The Government cannot have it all its own way. It cannot argue that when it does not agree with something, such as the Federal Government's carbon tax, we should survey the community and listen to what the community says and not rush legislation through, and then attempt to ram a reform like this through the Parliament. That is utterly inconsistent and unfair. Supporting the police requires us to do what is fair. This is not fair. I urge members to reject the bill.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [1.00 p.m.]: Before I begin speaking on the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011 I acknowledge Prue Burgan in the public gallery. When the rally took place on Tuesday—an extraordinarily powerful rally and something I will never forget—I stood on the verandah of Parliament House and watched the thousands of police officers who attended, bravely wearing their uniforms and making a clear statement to members and to the Premier that they would not accept being treated in the disrespectful manner in which this Government is treating them. It was extremely powerful and I wanted to share that with you. I will never forget Prue's words—and I feel quite emotional saying that. I will never forget the description she gave and the picture she painted of the daily life of a police officer. She described her commitment and the sorts of things that police experience that stay with them for every waking moment. I will never forget her description of the house fire and the effect that attending that fire had on her personally. I want to put that on record today, Prue.

Picking up the remarks of the member for Northern Tablelands, the distasteful haste with which the bill is being debated shows the disrespect that the Government has for our Police Force. I have been a member of this place for almost a decade. Although members take part in banter to and fro, at the end of the day we are here for one reason and that reason is to make society a better place. I make a prediction to the Government: The decision you are about to make will hang around your necks heavily for the rest of your time in this place and beyond. The police of this State are asking to be treated with respect and to be given the opportunity for meaningful and proper discussion on this bill. The member for Strathfield may raise his eyebrows—and I put that on record—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Strathfield will come to order. The member will direct her comments through the Chair. I advise her not to respond to interjections.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Police are asking for something very simple: proper discussion, proper consultation and to be respected for the role they play in society. Think for a moment what our society would be like without the dedication, professionalism and the daily operations of the police. Our society would be lawless, with many people being hurt and their lives broken. What the Government is doing today in this debate is bringing on such a society by not treating the good people who care for us with the respect and decency that they deserve. Police just do not go out and deal with crime. We all attend community fairs and other community events and the police are there with stalls, showing kids through the police cars and doing the things that help to build our community.

I want my remarks today to be remembered for drawing to the attention of members that the police are part of the fabric of society and one of its main building blocks. Our police also set an example for young people, and that is really important. This bill shows the Government's total disdain for our police officers who work so hard to keep our streets, homes and loved ones safe. This bill is about taking away protections for police who are injured on the job. It removes protection from police who are stabbed, beaten, shot or otherwise injured or who are killed in the line of duty. I cannot understand why there cannot be a pause button pressed on this in order to allow for the proper discussion of this important issue to take place.

This bill takes away the independent process set up to ensure police are protected. It puts police at the mercy of a private sector insurance scheme. I was the Minister for Fair Trading and I assure people that private sector insurance schemes are not always secure. We do not need to think back far to remember how insecure they can be. On Tuesday I joined with people on the front verandah of this place to see an amazing show of strength and solidarity. I say to the Premier that the Government is foolish if it cannot see the strength and solidarity of the police. I am proud that the police on Macquarie Street were in their uniforms, demanding to be heard. They called for Barry O'Farrell to tell them to their face that their welfare does not matter, because that is what the Premier's gutless bill tells them.

The Opposition recognises the vital role of police in our society. I always do what I can to support police in the Canterbury electorate. My electorate has the Campsie Local Area Command and the Ashfield Local Area Command, and I know the work our local police do. Not so long ago I was at the Canterbury police station and I was told that one of the main duties the Canterbury police undertake is attending domestic violence incidents. We heard about that the other day. I was also the Minister for Community Services and I know the havoc that domestic violence causes, particularly to the children involved.

I know what it does to those little people. It destroys their trust in society and takes away their capacity to imagine a future. Think about that—that a child's capacity to imagine a future is taken away by this dreadful scourge. It is police such as those in the gallery that front up to such situations before anyone else. I take my hat off to the New South Wales Police Force for doing that. The police attend homes that are chaotic and put their lives on the line every day to protect us. They are the first on the scene of road accidents, domestic violence incidents, brawls, robberies and murders. They do a wonderful job for our community and support young people and victims. It is of concern that the Government has pushed the police to the point where they feel they are forced to take extreme action. This is not a random act where the police are going to be a bit difficult. It is only when police are pushed to the limit that they take action.

The police are angry and hurt at the Government's total disregard for their welfare. They feel that they are being sacrificed for the sake of a dollar—and they are being sacrificed for the sake of a dollar. The community also feels betrayed. Police have told us that if this bill goes through they will feel fear every time they put on their uniform and that they will hesitate before they place themselves in dangerous situations, because they have families too. We should remember that. Up till now all police officers knew that they and their families would be taken care of if anything happened to them. That security has been taken away by this bill. They will no longer be sure that they or their families will be financially or emotionally supported if they fall whilst carrying out their duty to keep us all safe. It is a low act—a really low act. It is a cowardly act that, as I said, will hang around the necks of Government members for the rest of their careers.

All members have said that changes are needed. The Police Force wants open and honest negotiations because police deserve to be heard. But, true to form, the Government decided to rush this cruel bill through without any consultation. It has refused to deal with the issue properly. As other members have said, there is no reason for the bill to go through today, yet the Government is pushing it through. The Opposition opposes the bill: we will oppose it until our last breath. We will not support any changes unless they are supported by the Police Association. I urge the House to vote against the bill. The police deserve our support and respect. They put their lives on the line for us every day. The least we can do is ensure that they and their families are taken care of when they are hurt and injured. The Government is foolish to take this action. I say for the third time that this will hang around the Government's neck forever.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [1.10 p.m.]: Today I will give the House six reasons for strongly urging Government members to vote against this draconian bill titled the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011, and I will elaborate briefly on them. The six reasons are: first, the law and order platform on which the Government was elected in 2011; secondly, the importance of attracting quality staff to the profession of this worthy New South Wales Police Force; thirdly, my personal experiences; fourthly, our moral

responsibility to ensure that we protect our comrades in the public sector and in the Police Force in particular; fifthly, the bill will reduce the fair dinkum, existing industrial-based award scheme to one involving an insurance policy; and, finally, acknowledgement of all members of the Police Force, including those in the public gallery today.

First, before the March election the Liberal-Nationals campaigned on a law and order platform. Indeed, during the last Government they produced community newspapers weekly to show that they had been out with the police that week and that they were arguing on the essential quality of law and order. I wonder how they now feel about this bill, which is so important to the Police Force, and whether they will support it. My second point is about attracting quality staff to this worthy profession. It is something I think about when we talk about the difficult job police do in such a large State as New South Wales. The pay is not high and the work is extremely hard and dangerous. I wonder how this bill will attract people to this worthy profession when they are being told that they will not be protected if they get hurt.

I was made aware of this through my experiences during my first appointment when I was sent to teach in a public school in Walgett. During my first two weeks of teaching in an isolated, remote and poverty-stricken town I spent the time crying because I felt far removed from my family. However, I felt more sad for another group of people in Walgett. I got to know the police in Walgett as well as my fellow teachers. Most of us were in our early twenties. In the first week I went home crying because my job was difficult: I saw the kids coming to school and the conditions in which they lived. A few tears were cried by many of the police when they first started working in Walgett too. We were isolated in the area and there was nowhere for a copper to go to have a social life in a town like Walgett.

The young teachers and police officers worked hard every day. The police witnessed alcoholism, domestic violence, poverty, isolation and generational unemployment every day. I also saw the effects of such things in the school every day. When the police were off duty where could they go in Walgett? The next town was 115 kilometres away. The police had absolutely no social life, and they endured the hardships forced on them in Walgett. During my time in Walgett I learnt to respect the police and the hard work they do, as well as what they had to endure when they were not at work.

My fourth point is about the Government's moral responsibility to ensure that it protects our comrades and workers. What is a democratically elected government in New South Wales if it does not protect the livelihoods of the people who are sent out in a dangerous job on a daily basis? My fifth point is that the bill reduces a fair dinkum industrial award to an insurance policy scheme. I am sure that, like me, many people have had experiences with insurance policies. I know how the insurers treated the business owners and the community when they made claims after the flood in Wallsend in 2007 and the reluctance of the insurance companies to provide benefits for those who had paid their insurance premiums. I wonder how this change will affect the Police Force and how the insurance policy will protect the workers.

Finally, I acknowledge all members of the New South Wales Police Force. Members of the community have extremely high expectations of what they want the police to do for them. I acknowledge also the stoicism of the police in the public gallery today. They have sat and listened to us for 3½ hours and they have shown their best manners, although they must be very angry about what is happening. To me, that reflects the dignity with which they go about their jobs, and I pay my greatest respects to them.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [1.17 p.m.]: First, I acknowledge each and every person in the public gallery—the brave men and women of the New South Wales Police Force. Today will go into history as the saddest day for the men and women who wear the blue in this State. Only a brave and foolish person would take on the hardworking and brave police, as we saw on Monday. The police are not taking the actions of the Premier and the Government lightly; and nor should they. I totally support the brave stance of the police. I acknowledge also the hardworking men and women of Flemington Local Area Command. It is a difficult command. The police in the gallery today know the challenges that exist in my local community. I thank them.

As I drove into the city this morning I was thinking about the hard work of the local police that resulted in finding the person who allegedly killed the beautiful man who was going to his mother's home to deliver some groceries in Graham Street, Auburn, a few months ago. They not only supported a family that has been grieving for all these months but also found the alleged perpetrator of that offence who will now face justice. Today I thank all those who were involved in that case as I know how much it means to that family.

The former Labor Government introduced the death and disability scheme in recognition of the fact that police upholding public safety often are subjected to risks that sometimes have long-term detrimental

effects on their lives. Police officers often sustain injuries that result in them never working again. I have a document from the Police Association of New South Wales that paints a picture of the day-to-day lives of those who work in the NSW Police Force. It is filled with many heart-breaking stories of the risks faced by police officers as a consequence of serving our community. All sorts of assertions have been made about the difficulties inherent in the death and disability scheme, including increased claims and issues regarding financial sustainability

No-one, including the NSW Police Force, has shied away from the fact that consideration must be given to the affordability of the scheme. An independent umpire must achieve a negotiated settlement. We do not need a knee-jerk reaction, especially in light of the fact that police officers indicated clearly at the outset that they are prepared to negotiate. Since its election the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has proven to be no fan of the Industrial Relations Commission or independent arbitration. I note that a number of amendments were negotiated in the other House. That negotiation should have taken place at the commencement and not at the conclusion of this process.

This Government should have negotiated with those who will be most affected by any changes to this scheme. Having said that, these amendments do not go far enough; they do not deal adequately with the issue before us. How do we support police officers and their families and, in particular, police men and women who literally put their lives on the line every day in the service of our community? The uncertainty around that issue in itself is an added burden to those who are already suffering from a fate that they did not wish for themselves or anyone else. I will quote from the booklet I received from the Police Association of New South Wales as the statements made by police officers in this document are more powerful than any argument I could ever make. Daniel Danvers states:

My journey has been a long and painful one, all with the end goal to return to the full duties at work. I endure pain every single day. I can't sit for long. I am depressed. Only those who have suffered such injuries and been relegated from fit, active people to hobbling cripples can understand the damaging psychological effects that accompany the obvious physical ones.

And now I am in limbo. ... I have been paying into the NSW Police Death & Disability fund since its inception in 2005. Now, the NSW Government is immorally rescinding it and replacing it with a much inferior model. What am I supposed to do? ... I'm at a crossroads and I need the Government's help, not their derision.

Dave Llewellyn wrote about suffering an injury on the job, as well as dealing with major depression—something about which I know not only in my past life as Minister for Mental Health in this State but also from my family circumstances and from those close to me who suffer from depression. Dave Llewellyn had this to say:

What I do know is that I believed that if I ever found myself in the position, I would have the peace of mind of knowing that my interests would be looked after by my employer and that my family's future would be secure. Instead I find myself emerging from one nightmare into the uncertainty of another. I don't expect sympathy or charity. I do expect to be treated in a fair and just manner.

We owe Dave Llewellyn and every police officer no less than to treat them in a fair and just manner. There was talk earlier by Government members about police officers seeking government assistance, which is an issue of justice. Last night the Hon. Charlie Lynn subjected the Legislative Council to stories about soldiers who suffered trauma and went back to battle. We owe them a great debt of gratitude. However, the Hon. Charlie Lynn totally missed the point and showed a complete lack of understanding about these complex issues. If the Hon. Charlie Lynn read the document that has been supplied to all members of Parliament he would realise how simplistic he has been. I strongly oppose this bill on behalf of all police officers and their families in New South Wales.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [1.26 p.m.]: I will speak only briefly in debate on the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011, which quite simply is a disgrace. This is a day of shame for the New South Wales Parliament and for all those who vote for this bill whose names will be recorded in *Hansard* forever. Their body language as they read their Treasury-written speeches said it all. Their backs were turned to the gallery, the Chamber was empty and no other Coalition members were present. Coalition members spoke on 15 occasions about the carbon tax—an issue for which they have no carriage. This is all about money. Government members described the police death and disability scheme as being out of control but Opposition members have described it as fair. The former Labor Government would never have introduced it if it was not fair.

The proposed scheme is government by insurance company. Clearly those opposite have no idea what it is like to be a police officer, how dangerous and tough it is and the unique risks faced by police officers, which is why the death and disability scheme was introduced in the first place. In reality nobody dies in a shift in politics. The injuries to police can be acute but they can also be cumulative, such as those faced by highway patrol officers who deal daily with the deaths of a number of people. The knowledge that a fair safety net is in

place when they go to work would give them some comfort. This disgraceful bill has been rammed through both Houses in the dead of night with unseemly haste. This ambush without negotiation is a disgrace. It condemns injured police to poverty while rich and powerful members of Parliament can make a decision about whether to have the chicken or the duck for lunch.

Members of the Shooters and Fishers Party who observed the recent police demonstration outside Parliament House deserve a special mention. They said nothing as 5,000 police officers walked past Parliament House and they sold them out for 30 pieces of silver. I guarantee that their bill will be sent to Barry O'Farrell. We do not know when and we do not know where but we know that it will not be cheap. This Government, which has no morals, ignored our serving police officers and the people of this State. It had no mandate to do so and it made no mention of its intentions prior to the election. If we had a conscience vote this legislation would not get through the party room. When Government members vote on this bill we will observe how many of them look you in the eye. They will not do so as they know that this legislation is unjust and unfair.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the member to direct his comments through the chair.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The worst thing about today was witnessing the little kids in the gallery which this Parliament has failed. This is a disgraceful day in the history of New South Wales. I apologise on behalf of this Parliament for what we are doing to our serving police.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [1.29 p.m.]: I oppose the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011, which is a bad bill. Because of the way in which the Government has dealt with this bill it is not only bad legislation but also shameful legislation. I am delighted that I am able to speak in debate on this bill as one of the core responsibilities of members in this place is to ensure proper and adequate conditions of employment and consequent schemes. If the Government is not doing that it is not doing its job properly. In that context it is important for members to make a contribution to debate. It is extraordinary that, on my count, only four Government speakers have contributed to debate on this bill, and that from a Government that is always prepared to tell us the size of its margin. This Government has a massive margin and many members but where are those members when it matters—when they have to face a gallery filled with police officers who have taken an entirely reasonable position and who are opposed to what this Government is doing? Thirty-two Government members spoke in debate on the library bill—a 28-word bill.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Liverpool does not need the assistance of Opposition members.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: I understand the importance of libraries, but to have 32 members speak in debate on the library bill and only four on the police death and disability bill shows the complete lack of moral courage and integrity of current Government members. I am astonished that the member for Dubbo has not made a contribution to this debate.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order and restrain themselves.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: We have heard a lot about and by the member for Dubbo, except in this debate. It is all right for him to grab the media coverage, but what about coming into this Chamber and doing his job? What about speaking in debate on this bill? That degree of courage and integrity seems to be completely lacking not just in the member for Dubbo but in most Government members. This bill is typical of Tory behaviour. Before elections they get their conga line of candidates and drape themselves in law and order policies. They love also surrounding themselves with police. But not when it comes to looking after workers' conditions because their DNA prevents them from doing that. The essence of this Government is in destroying the Industrial Relations Commission and in doing over death and disability schemes. That is the essence for which it stands. This is a shameful bill. It is shameful in its substance and in how it has been dealt with. The words on which I shall conclude are simple: Shame, Barry, shame.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [1.31 p.m.], in reply: On behalf of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services—

Mr Michael Daley: Where is he?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: He actually is in the upper House.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The debate is almost concluded.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank members for their contributions to this debate. I specifically thank the members representing the electorates of Toongabbie, Campbelltown, Blacktown, Mulgoa, Maroubra, Tweed, Mount Druitt, Lakemba, Wollongong, Keira, Fairfield, Cessnock, Balmain, Cabramatta, Sydney, Shellharbour, Marrickville, Lake Macquarie, Bankstown, Northern Tablelands, Canterbury, Wallsend, Auburn, Macquarie Fields and Liverpool. I acknowledge their contributions, particularly in light of the fact that this clearly is a difficult issue for members broadly. Obviously, the Government's concerns include that the current scheme provides a significant financial disincentive to return to work, either within the NSW Police Force or in outside employment. Ultimately, this disincentive is not in the best interests of individual police officers or the community. The recent review of police injury management practices recommended that the scheme be reviewed urgently to remove the significant financial disincentive for officers to return to work. The Government understands that the proposed replacement scheme remains the most generous scheme for police officers in Australia.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Through this legislation, the Government is extending its support to injured officers beyond their medical discharge.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Some unkind observations were made regarding the member for Dubbo. I point out to members on both sides of the House that the member for Dubbo currently is representing the Minister responsible for water resources at the major Federal meeting in Canberra, which has been underway for two days.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind Opposition members that this morning I ensured to the best of my ability that all speakers were listened to in silence.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Again, I thank all members for taking part in what has been a difficult debate. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided.

[In division]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will restrain themselves for this division. We all understand the emotion involved but we will refrain from insulting each other across the Chamber. I will remove members from the Chamber and their names will not be recorded as voting on this bill if they continue with this appalling behaviour. I will remove one member from each side of the Chamber. Visitors in the gallery have been patient and restrained. Members will act likewise and take their seats quickly. I inform visitors in the gallery that the taking of photographs is not permitted. Members will cease arguing across the Chamber.

Ayes, 59

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

Noes, 23

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

Pair

Mr Grant

Ms Burton

Question resolved in the affirmative.**Bill agreed to in principle.****Passing of the Bill****Bill declared passed and returned to the Legislative Council without amendment.***[Interruption]*

The SPEAKER: Order! I am about to adjourn the House until 2.15 p.m. I make the observation that the behaviour of visitors in the gallery does them no justice. I suggest that they leave the gallery and the building. I do not like threats being made against me. It does the member for Keira no credit for inciting such behaviour either. I suggest that he too leave the Chamber.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Routine of Business**

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [1.46 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit:

- (1) The moving of a motion "That the House take note of Christmas felicitations" prior to the commencement of General Business Notices of Motions with the following speaking time limits:
 - (a) Premier—10 minutes;
 - (b) Leader of the House—10 minutes;
 - (c) Leader of the Opposition—10 minutes;
 - (d) Deputy Premier—5 minutes;
 - (e) Deputy Leader of the Opposition—5 Minutes;
 - (f) Member for Wagga Wagga—5 minutes;
 - (g) Member for Mount Druitt—5 minutes;
 - (h) Member for Lismore—5 minutes; and
 - (i) Member for Penrith—5 minutes.
- (2) The House to continue to sit after 4.30 p.m. until 12 private members' statements have been given.

I apologise to members who had private members' matters ready to proceed, including the member for Auburn, but no doubt that matter will be dealt with in the next term. I indicate to members that this afternoon the House will deal with the usual order of business, notices of motions and private members' statements. I move the motion to facilitate Christmas felicitations.

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

[The Speaker left the chair at 1.49 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF CLARENCE**Election of Christopher Gulaptis**

The SPEAKER: I inform the House that my writ issued on 28 October 2011 in accordance with section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 for the election of a member to serve in the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Clarence in place of Steven Rhett Cansdell, resigned, has been returned with a certificate endorsed by the Electoral Commissioner advising of the election of Christopher Gulaptis to serve as the member for the electoral district of Clarence.

PLEDGE OF LOYALTY

Mr Christopher Gulaptis took and subscribed the pledge of loyalty and signed the roll.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**Referral**

The Speaker reported receipt of the following letter from the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption:

The Hon Shelley Hancock MLA
Speaker
Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Madam Speaker

The Commission has received your letter of 23 November 2011 advising referral of a matter to the Commission pursuant to a resolution of both Houses of Parliament.

In accordance with its duty under section 73 (2) of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*, the Commission will fully investigate the matter referred. At the conclusion of its investigation the Commission will prepare a report on its investigation in accordance with section 74 (2) of the *Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988*.

Yours faithfully

The Hon David Ipp AO QC
Commissioner

QUESTION TIME

[*Question time commenced at 2.24 p.m.*]

POLICE AMENDMENT (DEATH AND DISABILITY) BILL 2011

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that 90 police officers sat in the public gallery to listen to debate on the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill 2011, why did the Premier deem it not important enough to speak to?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition—and to save him another question—there was no meeting of The Nationals today. I want to make that clear in case the member for Maroubra has been giving him questions again. I have to say it is fantastic to see Mr Gulaptis here. He scored a 56 per cent primary vote in the Clarence by-election last Saturday—a by-election that the Leader of the Opposition said was, amongst other things, a referendum on the police death and disability changes.

Ms Noreen Hay: Why didn't you say that when the police were here?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That is precisely what the Leader of the Opposition said ahead of the by-election but he did not repeat it from Saturday night onwards. I have said twice this week that the people of Clarence and of this State understand that, thanks to the changes that those opposite made to the police death and disability scheme when in government, it became financially unsustainable. The scheme was meant to cost taxpayers \$2.5 million a week and it had blown out to \$15.5 million a week.

Ms Linda Burney: They just want a bit of respect, Barry.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Canterbury does not know the meaning of the word "respect", as evidenced by her service in this Chamber. As I have said repeatedly in Parliament and outside Parliament, this is but one of the tough but fair decisions that this Government has had to take. This is one of the messes that we have had to clean up after those opposite.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It still means that we have the most generous police death and disability scheme in the nation. It still means that those police who are unfortunately and disgracefully murdered or killed on the job have their current entitlements. It means those who are permanently and totally disabled get their lump sums.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Importantly for the others, including those who the Auditor-General this week said went out with psychological claims, those people for the first time as a result of this Government will be assisted to get better, to recover from their injuries—psychological and physical—because we will not do what those opposite did, which is simply give them a cheque and push them out the door and not think about them again. The police deserve better than that. It is a tough decision; there is no doubt about that. It is a tough decision but it is a decision that had to be made by the police Minister, who, other than the member for Mount Druitt on the other side, knows more than anyone about what police are going through. We have two police on this side of the House; there is only one opposite. I do not believe the police Minister made lightly the decisions that he took. I thank him and the Treasurer for their work in ensuring that we have a financially sustainable police death and disability scheme for those people who join up this year, and those people who join up in the future.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: My question is directed to the Premier. What progress has the Government made in delivering changes to the police death and disability scheme and other reforms during the first parliamentary term?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The House will understand that, as I outlined during question time earlier this week, the Auditor-General's findings on the police death and disability scheme made clear that it was financially unstable and we were determined to press ahead with our reforms. *Hansard* shows that while I was speaking the Leader of the Opposition interjected, "And you can't land the deal." I am delighted to say that that package passed the upper House last night and passed through this Chamber before lunchtime, which means that the changes being made to the death and disability scheme that are so desperately needed to ensure its ongoing sustainability have been made.

That means instead of having police officers thrown on the scrap heap with a big payout we can encourage them to seek rehabilitation and get them back on the job where they want to be, and where frankly they belong. We can also bring the costs of the scheme under control. As the Auditor-General said in the report on Tuesday, the cost has increased by 147 per cent to \$284 million over the past four years. We said we would fix the scheme and that is precisely what we are doing. In our first parliamentary year we have paved the way for the lease of Port Botany, the lease of the desalination plant and the sale of the electricity generators. It is an enormous achievement by any standard. We have also taken important steps to bring the budget under control. Our public service wages decision—

Ms Tania Mihailuk: Show me the money, Barry.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I ask the Leader of the Opposition: Will the Leader of the Opposition reverse the police death and disability changes?

The SPEAKER: Order! That question will not be answered.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We heard speech after speech from Labor members today, but did they put it on the line? Did they commit themselves to repeal the legislation? No—hypocrisy thy name is Labor.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will stop arguing across the table. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We have taken important decisions under the leadership of the Treasurer to bring the budget under control.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Our public service wages decision will save almost \$2 billion over the next four years. It is a decision that the Minister for Transport shows can be acceptable to public sector workers. It is not the unconscionable policy of those opposite, which paid over and above inflation for assumed productivity gains but productivity gains were not made. It is about realisable productivity gains and rewarding good behaviour. We have abolished Labor's public service unattached list, a system that allowed public servants without a permanent job to stay on the payroll—in one case, a public servant who had not had a permanent job since 1995. That is for a start.

We have started work on the North West Rail Link to ensure it is underway by the end of this term. We have reduced fares for periodic rail travellers and cleaned up the lobbying industry. We have scrapped Labor's homebuyers' tax. We have eliminated Labor's revenue-raising speed cameras and have given police greater powers to deal with drugs and louts. We have scrapped Labor's contemptible and corrupting part 3A and planning laws. We have started the process of providing 10,000 new homes. Under the leadership of the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts we have introduced a new "three strikes and you're out" law for licensed premises.

We have introduced payroll tax rebates for companies that are employing people and we have committed \$62 billion in our budget to a new infrastructure spend. We inherited a mess from Labor—\$5.2 billion—but that has not stopped us getting on with the job of delivering on our promises to the people of this State. Yet what we have seen from the bloke who said he would be the most hardworking and constructive Opposition leader in the State's history—a bloke who is never seen when Parliament is not sitting, a bloke who is yet to show any constructiveness in his job—is simply opposition for the sake of opposition. Is it any wonder that his popularity percentage is in the low teens? Is it any wonder he tries to pretend—and this will come as a shock to the member for Clarence—that the 28 per cent Labor vote in Clarence was allegedly a victory?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: After seven months in government and following this session of Parliament we will have done more than those opposite did in 16 years.

INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. Other than putting out his hand for Federal funds, what plans does he have in place to pay for his unfunded promises to build the North West Rail Link and the M5 and M4 East projects?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Maroubra has asked a fascinating question. Not only has the member opposed every single measure that we have introduced to get this State moving again, but already he has said that he is against the leasing of Port Botany, the desalination plant and the sale of the generating assets, supposedly. All those initiatives go toward delivering infrastructure that this State desperately needs. They are part of a raft of decisions that we have made to get on with the job of building infrastructure. At the same time, bearing in mind the mess that was left behind by those opposite, we needed to get our budget under control. They have no basis to talk about infrastructure decisions. When they made infrastructure decisions they produced projects such as the CBD Metro.

If anyone wants an example of how to build infrastructure, the Opposition does not have the answer. The CBD Metro is an example of a project that was supposedly politically popular. The O'Farrell Government

had enough of that nonsense and indicated that we would put in place a process for delivering infrastructure with priorities determined by experts, not by Labor's election campaigns. Labor's election campaign in March this year was not successful because those opposite let down the people of this State. The member for Maroubra knows better than anyone that if the work is not done properly the goals set will not be achieved. He has a lot of work to do in caucus before he gets that message across. The O'Farrell Government is getting on with the job of building infrastructure.

In the budget not only did we establish Infrastructure NSW but we announced \$62 billion in infrastructure spend. We announced that at the same time as a record health infrastructure spend. We have put \$2.5 billion into the North West Rail Link. We did not just make speeches or release brochures, as the previous Government did. We put in money. That is how to get infrastructure going—put money into it, and that is what we have done. Also, there has been a record maintenance spend from the good Minister for Education, who is looking after our schools from one end of the State to the other. We have looked after regional New South Wales, putting a record amount of money into the Pacific Highway. The Pacific Highway upgrade is going forward. Whenever Labor members talk about infrastructure, we know they cannot be trusted. We cannot believe a word they say because their record speaks for itself.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The last person who ran the infrastructure program for the former Labor Government was my good mate the former Treasurer—the MasterChef. We all remember him.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Wollongong to order for the third time. I call the member for Oatley to order. I call the member for Kiama to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The view on his tenure and record on economics and infrastructure was best put by the member for Toongabbie. When speaking at a campaign rally for Trish Doyle, he commented, "You can roll yourself into a foetal position and sit in a dark corner, as arguably Eric Roozendaal should." The Opposition members are laughing; they all loved that one. The Opposition tries to tell us how to build infrastructure and run the economy. The O'Farrell Government is proud that the State finally has a government in Macquarie Street that is building infrastructure properly. We have put in place a process, we have allocated the money and we are getting on with the job.

The SPEAKER: Order! I realise that members are excited about being here this afternoon as it is the last sitting day before next February and we have a new member in the House. I ask all members to restrain themselves for the rest of the afternoon. I do not want to eject any member.

REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier.

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

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: How has the Government delivered for regional New South Wales this year, and related matters?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The part of the question "and related matters" is out of order, according to standing orders.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields should check *Hansard* for the past eight years that I have been a member of this place. It is not out of order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: That is a very good ruling, and a very good question—the first of many—from the new member for Clarence. Welcome to the New South Wales Parliament. The past eight months under the Liberal-Nationals Government in New South Wales has been good news for the one-third of our population who live in regional New South Wales. It is good news following 16 years of neglect from a Sydneycentric Labor Government, as exemplified by the member for Blacktown, who seems to think that Kempsey is right next to Grafton, apart from the small matter of 200-plus kilometres in between. It is good news because there has been a Jobs Action Plan delivering 40,000 payroll tax rebates for regional businesses; there is money from

the lease of Port Botany and the desalination plant; at least one-third of the proceeds from the reform of the State's power assets is going towards infrastructure in regional New South Wales; and we have regional relocation grants to encourage people who want to make a tree change or a sea change and experience life in our wonderful regional communities to make that change.

We have begun a process of decentralisation beginning with Fisheries Research moving to Port Stephens, Coffs Harbour and Nowra. The Treasurer just touched on some of the investment we are putting into country roads, including the Pacific Highway and the Princes Highway. I note that the NRMA's *Open Road* magazine gave the Government a high pass mark, acknowledging that road spending in our September budget included the single biggest funding increase in the State's history. In relation to roads we have seen common sense on issues such as speed limits, speed cameras, wool bale and hay transport rules, and now our very good Minister for Roads and Ports in the other place is looking to increase productivity on cattle transport and in so doing reduce the number of trucks on the roads.

We have also changed investment migration criteria to get more business people and funds into our regional communities. All this has come from a Government with more than half of its Cabinet and many of its members coming from regional New South Wales, including the new member for Clarence—and what a great victory that was at the weekend, despite the Leader of the Opposition throwing everything, including the kitchen sink, at the by-election. The Leader of the Opposition organised union protests, like the old union bovver boy that he is, up there in the Clarence; he pumped another \$50,000 into Labor's campaign in the past two weeks—he told a lot of porkies about things like coal seam gas while he was up there; and he even had his members push-polling on their parliamentary phones. I have got the files.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: As reluctant as I am, because I enjoy so much the dulcet tones of the dull Deputy Premier—

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

Mr John Robertson: The Deputy Premier is making an allegation that is completely unsubstantiated and I ask you to request him to withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order and ask the Deputy Premier not to make personal reflections on other members in this place.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I will not, but we may revisit that issue. The Leader of the Opposition visited the Clarence eight times, and I am told that our polling indicated that our vote went up after every visit. The Leader of the Opposition handed out how-to-votes at the Grafton High School booth, where passersby were heard to say, "Good luck, Peter"—a reference to his similarly follically challenged candidate. Then he tried to spin a 28 per cent primary vote as a win. To quote an impartial observer—Paul Murray on 2UE on Monday afternoon:

John Robertson was out there saying, "This just proves the base is coming back to us. Robbo please, you got your backside handed to you, there was no comeback for the Labor Party in Clarence.

I suppose to Mr 13 per cent, 28 per cent seemed like a big win. But congratulations to Chris Gulaptis with a 56 per cent primary vote—the second best ever in Clarence. [*Time expired.*]

POLICE AMENDMENT (DEATH AND DISABILITY) BILL 2011

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that 32 Government members of Parliament spoke on the Library Amendment Bill earlier this year, why could only five of them bring themselves to debate the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill, and why were 10 Government members absent on the division?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I understand that an arrangement was made between the Government and the Opposition to sit last night to debate the bill, but the preference was to debate the bill today and finish it by 1.30 p.m. If the Opposition wants to talk about the programming of this House it should look to its own members. None of my members has made any bones about their views: they support the Government's tough, but fair, decision to enforce these changes—changes that are required to deliver sustainable police death and disability arrangements into the future.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The last time I counted—

Ms Noreen Hay: Where were you, Barry?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: She speaks. The seat of knowledge speaks. I know it was the table of knowledge but she only brings the seat in here.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: If the member for Wollongong had taken her head away from the kebab she would have seen me sitting here voting in the division.

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

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: Again I am reluctant to take a point of order, but this is White Ribbon Day and we have copped so much—

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the member's point of order? Government members will come to order; I would like to hear the point of order.

Mr John Robertson: The point of order is that it is not appropriate on White Ribbon Day to be talking to another member—

The SPEAKER: Order! No standing order has been breached and it is not a point of order.

Mr John Robertson: No, but it is something he ought to think about.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has the call. I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the third time.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: You know an Opposition leader is struggling when he tries to politicise White Ribbon Day. As people in the gallery know, White Ribbon Day is about physical and sexual violence against women.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. I need to hear the point of order rather than just an argument across the table.

Mr John Robertson: It is also about psychological violence, not just physical and sexual violence.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not need to be distracted when I am trying to listen to a valid point of order that is being raised by either the Leader of the House or by any other member. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The comments of the Leader of the Opposition will speak for themselves. I have never had any problem dealing with the member for Wollongong across the Chamber, nor has she ever had any problem dealing with me—ask the member for Murray-Darling about that, who is so distressed he is not even here today. He apparently preferred to see Princess Mary in Broken Hill. The fact is that this is a Government that made the tough, but fair, decision to change the police death and disability scheme to guarantee that scheme has financial sustainability for the future. Those opposite number 22. Part of the reason those opposite number 22 is that—

[Interruption]

It is only 20. What is 10 per cent amongst friends? I was better at numbers in opposition. Those opposite have learned nothing from their election defeat. The Leader of the Opposition, who may not be the Leader of the Opposition in February, has a rating of 13 per cent, largely because over this term of Parliament he has demonstrated that he has learned nothing.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I take one point of order under Standing Order 129 and another under Standing Order 76. The question was very specific: Why were 10 of their mob missing from a division? It is a very simple question. Where were they?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier answered that question at the beginning of his answer. He is being relevant.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The point I make is that the Leader of the Opposition will languish in the polls. The Leader of the Opposition will have the member for Maroubra jumping up with his faux defences of the Leader of the Opposition for as long as he continues to be the Leader of the Opposition for the union movement of New South Wales and not the Leader of the Opposition for the people of New South Wales. It is about time that those opposite represented the broader public interest instead of their own sectional interests, despite that wonderful 20-point plan put out by the New South Wales Right that says the first thing Labor needs to do to recover its fortunes is to get closer with the union movement.

HEALTH SERVICES

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research. How has the Government worked to deliver better hospitals and health services to the people of New South Wales?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I acknowledge the work of the member for Hornsby, who has been a champion for the people of his electorate when it comes to health care, and who has been working very closely with doctors, allied health professionals, nurses and NSW Health to make sure that he gets the services and the facilities that are needed in his electorate. I have been the Minister for Health for the past 236 days. Why do I count the number of days? I compare it to the 5,000 days that I spent as shadow Minister, and I can tell you that much has changed. We have re-engaged front-line clinicians. We have delivered 526 more beds and 970 more nurses so far.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The Minister is misleading the House. They have actually opened 63 new beds.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. There is no breach of standing order. The member will resume his seat.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I find that interjection extraordinary. We have delivered 526 more beds and 970 more nurses so far. We have started a \$4.7 billion infrastructure program to rebuild hospitals. As the former Minister for Health, the member for Marrickville, said in this Chamber—and she knew I would quote her:

I know only too well the demands placed on the Health infrastructure budget.

She went on to say:

Therefore, I am pleased for those hospitals and communities that will receive upgrades. The Minister has done very well to achieve them.

I thank the former Minister for Health for those comments. We have also secured more than \$3 billion in extra funding from the Council of Australian Governments. We have established an office for medical research and boosted the budget in support of medical research to \$32.3 million each year for the next four years. While those statistics are revealing, I will talk about what they mean in human terms because being the Minister is about improving people's lives. Today I received a message from Gaye Marlin. The member for Penrith may remember that we met Gaye during the by-election and again during the election campaign.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would have thought all members might be interested in the subject matter about which the Minister is speaking. If not, they should leave the Chamber.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Gaye told me that she needed knee surgery. She had been told that she had to wait until August 2012 to have that surgery. Yesterday she rang to tell me that she had just had the surgery and asked me to pass on her thanks and gratitude. That makes everything worthwhile. On 30 September I announced an allocation of \$1.33 million for 38 deaf children on a waiting list to have surgery for cochlear

implants. That means that 38 deaf children can now hear. On 28 October Daniel Flanagan, who is now 17 months old, had his implants turned on. I was with his mum, Joanne, and his dad, Roddy, when that occurred and I can tell you that we all cried—and I make no apologies for that. I cried, Daniel's mum and dad cried, the seasoned journalist from Channel 10 cried and my staff cried because it was such a moving moment.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am glad to see that Opposition members are amused by this answer. I am not.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: If you ever see the face of a deaf child when he hears his mother's voice for the first time and acts startled because of that voice, you will know you have done something worthwhile. I was advised today that Daniel is doing well and is starting to mimic his mum's and dad's voices. I have been interested in cochlear implants for a very long time. What makes everything worthwhile as Minister for Health is seeing what you can do for individual patients—the Daniel Flanagans of this world, the mums and dads, and the Gaye Marlins who have had knee surgery—and the doctors and nurses glowing about their ability to get on with clinical innovation. I met with the chairs of the boards this morning. They say there is a whole new climate out there. People feel that they are empowered again. They can make suggestions and know that they will not be howled down or stopped by central bureaucracy. They love their new environment and I am grateful to all of them for their achievements in Health over the past eight months.

GIRRAWEE VEGETATION DAMAGE

Mr NATHAN REES: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. When will the Minister prosecute those responsible for the deaths of hundreds of trees in Girrawee?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I take the question on behalf of the Minister for the Environment, who is absent due to ill health. I will get back to the member with an answer.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: My question is directed to the Treasurer. What challenges does the Government face in managing the New South Wales economy and the budget over the next 12 months?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question—a member of the fabulous four from the Central Coast who are giving that community new leadership, new perspectives and a new direction. The Government faced many challenges when it came to office in March this year. We inherited a budget with a \$5.2 billion black hole—a black hole that those opposite have gone very Marcel Marceau about, because we have not heard from them since the budget. We also saw that over the previous few years they had hidden deficits. They used the Federal stimulus to hide underlying deficits. We also learned that they were effectively borrowing to pay wages over that period and the projection was to do that into the future.

We also learned that the triple-A rating was going to be lost by 2013. That is what the O'Farrell Government saw when it came to power. We also saw global economic conditions that were and continue to be a concern and a Federal Government that, for some reason, appears to have something against New South Wales. The O'Farrell Government has taken steps to get the budget back under control, to get finances back under control, so it can improve services and build the infrastructure we definitely need. Members have seen some tough decisions.

We have a wages policy, which is the Opposition's policy, but it is actually enacting the savings. We have made a tough decision on voluntary redundancies. We have gone through the tough reform of the police death and disability scheme, a reform that is about ensuring that we can look after our police long term. If a scheme is not financially sustainable, that cannot be done. No-one here has said that they are going to bring that scheme back—no-one has had the ticker to say that. We are looking after our police officers. We are also releasing capital for infrastructure through the desalination plant at Port Botany and now the electricity generators.

We have looked across the Asia Pacific to find new capital. The Premier has been to China and India, and I have been to Tokyo and Korea looking for new capital. We have had confirmation of the triple-A rating, as we have heard from the Premier and Deputy Premier. With the jobs action plan we created stimulus to attract jobs back into the economy. There have also been housing measures. We put new lots on the ground and got rid of the homebuyers' tax. This Government is getting on with the job and we are starting to see—I say this cautiously—some positive signs across the New South Wales economy.

Mr Nathan Rees: Green shoots.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am not saying green shoots. Consumer confidence is improving. We are seeing small improvements. Housing finance approvals were up 11 per cent through year to the September quarter, private residential building approvals are up and State final demand is up higher than budget. There is some improvement, but—and I say this to the House so that it is clear—we do need to be wary of what is going on around the world. We have heard from the current chief of the International Monetary Fund, Christine Lagarde, who said:

There are dark clouds gathering in the global economy. Countries need to prepare for any storm that might reach their shores.

I assure the House that we are taking that very seriously. Part of the reason for some of our decisions is to get our budget in order so that not only can we improve services and build infrastructure but we can be prepared to deal with whatever economic storms may come. That is what it is about—responsible government. At the same time, we have had other challenges. Probably one of the biggest challenges we had is the Opposition itself, because it is determined at every single turn to block the reforms needed to get this State back on its feet. That is what the Opposition is doing with every single reform we put up. I thought, in the spirit of Christmas, it was about time that I gave the member for Maroubra a gift. I thought it was about time I did that because I am trying to help the Opposition.

I went to a gift store and walked down a few aisles, having a look. I went past the Donna Hay cookbook and thought that would be perfect, but no, I do not think it would be in his interests to do that. I also saw *The Best of The Office* in the DVD section. I got two hands on that before I remembered that he already has it. I then began to reconsider whether I should buy him gift, but since everyone in this House likes him—no, I should not mislead the House. Everyone in this House does not like him, but we do want to give him a present. He is not that good with numbers—he has not been able to get one costing correct—so I thought I would help him by buying him this calculator. Merry Christmas.

STRATEGIC REGIONAL LAND USE POLICY

Ms CLOVER MOORE: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. Will the Government's strategic land use policy identify iconic nature areas that sustain life for threatened species, such as the Pilliga Forest and the Gardens of Stone, where mining and gas expansion should not occur?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member for Sydney for what I think is her second question this session regarding strategic lands issues. I appreciate her highlighting both the opportunities and the work that has been done to try to safeguard our strategic lands across New South Wales.

Ms Linda Burney: That's not what the farmers say.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The farmers do say that and they take part in our stakeholders meetings. I am glad the member for Canterbury has raised this issue because—

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The stakeholders who are taking part in the reference group to develop the strategic regional land use policy represent a broad spectrum of groups that need to be consulted. I do not think this was ever done by the previous Labor Government. The reference group includes representatives of the New South Wales Minerals Council and the New South Wales Farmers Association. Fiona has regularly been at those meetings, which I have attended. The reference group also includes representatives of the Total Environment Centre, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union—which shows it is very broad brush—the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, the Association of New South Wales Mining Related Councils, the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association, the Nature Conservation Council, the New South Wales Irrigators Council, the Hunter Valley Wine Industry Association, the Thoroughbred Breeders Association and the Catchment Management Authority.

[*Interruption*]

If the Labor Party wishes to raise the issue of how it made decisions about strategic lands and coal seam gas, I will remind the House of a few words: Tuscany, Ian MacDonald, four bottles of red wine.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank members opposite for their interjections. I used to love *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, but the visual image of breakfast at Tiffanie's with Ian Macdonald has put me off those words for life. But we are not going to make decisions the same way Labor made them. Returning to the question of the member for Sydney, we are undertaking serious work in this regard for the first time in the history of this State.

[*Interruption*]

I know the member for Maroubra has been at Tuscany because I have the list of people who were there and he was one of them.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will answer the question and not cast personal reflections on other members.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I am not sure what that was, but if the Minister is attempting to slur me I ask him to withdraw it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to withdraw the comment.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I withdraw the comment if it was taken to be in the context of Ian Macdonald. With regard to the issue of strategic land management, this Government is working hard, unlike Labor. In 16 years of Labor Government no effort was made whatsoever to try to address the issue of how the lands of our great State should be strategically managed. We have seriously set about a major task. If it can be achieved in a short time that would obviously be fantastic. We are working toward that together with the stakeholders reference group. We obviously understand the impact of mining and of coal seam gas exploration. In regard to coal seam gas we have implemented a moratorium on fracking. This Government has issued no new licences for coal seam gas, nor has it extended or modified any existing licences. But the former Government handed out coal seam gas licences willy-nilly and this Government now has to try to bring together a strategic framework for protecting our lands.

It is the general consensus that good progress is being made. I met with the stakeholders reference group for nearly two and a half hours the week before last. There was a good feeling in the room. They are working hard to try to achieve their outcomes. We are not only trying to protect our strategic agricultural lands, our vigneron lands and our equine land; we are also trying to ensure that our high conservation lands are protected as well. In her question the member for Sydney mentioned the Pilliga Forest and the Gardens of Stone, which are both amazing areas of high conservation value. I can assure the member that we intend to protect all areas of high conservation value through the process that we are developing. This is a serious effort by a government that is trying to ensure that this State is properly managed.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: I seek an extension of time for the Minister.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has an additional two minutes to provide further information.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I will take the House through some of the efforts that members of this Government have made. For the first time in the history of this State we have brought together all of the various government agencies that were otherwise operating individually. It has been a problem for years—particularly under the former Government—that the silos of government were doing good work in the sense of each individual officer and each individual government department working hard, but there was a failure to coordinate or to mesh those departments. At the Premier's direction we now have meetings taking place with Planning and Infrastructure, Primary Industries, Resources and Energy, Trade and Investment, Environment and Heritage, and Premier and Cabinet. It would appear from the noise that the Labor Party remains uninterested in trying to come up with—

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: We are achieving some positive outcomes through those agencies working together. Working together with the stakeholders reference group which, as I said, has a very broad base, we are aiming to try to develop strategic plans particularly in the lower Hunter and the Liverpool Plains in the shortest possible time frame. We will then sequentially target other areas where there are lands of high strategic value.

As part of that every necessary step will be taken to ensure that areas of high conservation value are protected. A lot of work has already been done in relation to Dharawal National Park. This Government is committed to achieving the sort of balance that should have happened in the past 16 years but about which the former Labor Government failed to do anything.

EDUCATION

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. What innovative education ideas have been suggested or implemented this year, and other related matters?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I acknowledge in the public gallery Chairman of the New South Wales Nationals, Christine Ferguson, State Director, Ben Franklin, and Deputy State Director, Greg Dezman. It is lovely that they have come here to survey their good work. There are many more effective Nationals members than Labor members in this place, perhaps not in number but certainly in quality. Since forming government on 26 March this year we have made some amazing achievements in education in New South Wales. The member for Lake Macquarie will recall from my visit to Port Macquarie in June that TAFE launched its tertiary pathway to accounting, helping people in regional New South Wales complete further education.

This is a strategic alliance between industry, TAFE NSW and universities working together to develop and deliver a tertiary pathway to accounting to help address skill shortages across New South Wales. I hope to see a lot more of those alliances in education in New South Wales. The Minister for Sport and Recreation and I launched Australia's first ever online diploma of sport and recreation during a visit to TAFE NSW Sydney Institute's Sutherland College in July. This is an innovative way of filling the growing demand for skilled workers in sport and recreational facilities. Those are some of the many things that are going on in education. We are constantly looking at ways of doing things differently and of course we always accept good ideas. I had a good idea from the member for Wollongong.

Mr Andrew Constance: That's not possible.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bega will not incite the member for Wollongong.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It is called the "lice ladies". It is about getting rid of lice with hot air. There is one organisation in New South Wales that had a good delousing—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: It has been a long year—

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

Dr Andrew McDonald: Standing orders 129 and 73. The Minister's answer is clearly not related to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. The Minister will return to the leave of the question and refrain from making personal comments about members in this place.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It is a genuine representation. Lice are a serious problem for schoolkids. I do not have the same problem—my head is the Sahara for lice. It was a very good suggestion from the member for Wollongong and of course we will look at it. TAFE offers a course called "Accounting for non-accountants". I suggest there might be some members in this Chamber and perhaps the other Chamber that need to do this course. Perhaps they could do a summer course. I have to apologise for turning up a little late for question time. I was ordering my lunch in the cafeteria and it took a little longer than usual because the guy in front of me took ages. He ordered lunch; it was \$17.40—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! I asked the Minister to return to the leave of the question and he did. However, he has again strayed from the leave of the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It was \$17.40. He went to pay but instead of getting his wallet out in the traditional way, a guy from the Cayman Islands rang the guy behind the counter. Then he got a call from a bloke calling himself Steady Rusheed and then another call from someone called Flo Shimody—very much like Eddie Obeid and Joe Tripodi—

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Then he wandered over and picked up his lunch. It was Eric Roozendaal.

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! I agree with the member for Fairfield. I have asked the Minister four times to return to the leave of the question. I would appreciate it if his answer was at least relevant to the question that was asked.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We offer all kinds of courses, particularly at TAFE. I notice the member for Mount Druitt is interjecting. There is a certificate II course in basic internet and email. I saw the member for Mount Druitt take his computer down to IT. He could not see the screen anymore because it had stamps all over it. Richard, they have already got sticky stuff on them; you do not have to lick them anymore. [*Time expired.*]

POLICE AMENDMENT (DEATH AND DISABILITY) BILL 2011

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I have a supplementary answer to a question about members who were not here for the vote on the Police Amendment (Death and Disability) Bill. Firstly, the number is nine, not 10. One of those is you, Madam Speaker, because you do not get a vote. One was on parliamentary business, two are absent due to ill health, one is at meetings with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, which I understand is run these days by a former Labor Minister from this House, the Minister for Citizenship and Communities was representing me at an RSL function, one was at a constituency event, another Minister was at a ministerial event and, of course, the member for Broken Hill wins the race because he was at a royal visit function.

Question time concluded at 3.14 p.m.

VARIATIONS OF PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2010-2011

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the Receipts and Payments Estimates and Appropriations for 2010-2011 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of Specific Purpose Payments and National Partnership Payments below the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates—Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure Services.

PETITIONS

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

Gosford Public School Relocation

Petition requesting the House to stop the relocation of Gosford Public School to Henry Kendall High School and offer Gosford Public School parents and teachers a suitable alternative site that meets the educational and personal security needs of the students and protects the occupational health and safety of teachers, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

Mulgoa Electorate Industrial and Commercial Waste Recycling and Dump Project

Petition opposing the commencement of an industrial and commercial waste recycling and dump project in rural/residential zoning in the Mulgoa electorate, and requesting an appeal be lodged against any finding by the Land and Environment Court that approves the project, received from **Mrs Tanya Davies**.

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:

Eurobodalla Shire Rural Land Zoning

Petition requesting that rural lands in the Eurobodalla shire be changed from the old rural zoning to the new rural zoning, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

Ausgrid Pole Installation

Petition requesting that the proposed installation of an Ausgrid pole near Lyons Road Five Dock be positioned in an alternative location where there is minimum impact on citizens and is sensitive to the environment, received from **Mr John Sidoti**.

Companion Animals Travel

Petition requesting that companion animals be allowed to travel on all public transport, 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**.

Bowraville Murders Retrial

Petition requesting the Attorney General to exercise his powers under section 115 of the Crimes (Appeal and Review) Act 2001 and submit an application to the Court of Criminal Appeal for the retrial of the person acquitted of the murders of three children in Bowraville 21 years ago, and for the three cases to be tried together, received from **Mr Andrew Stoner**.

Container Deposit Levy

Petition requesting the Government 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:

Pambula District Hospital Services and Public Hospital Management

Petition opposing the centralisation of public hospital management through the local health network approved for southern New South Wales, and requesting the restoration of all health services at Pambula District Hospital, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

Windsor Road Pedestrian Bridge

Petition requesting that a pedestrian and advertising bridge be built over Windsor Road Baulkham Hills adjacent to Oakland Avenue, received from **Mr David Elliott**.

Moruya Roundabout

Petition requesting funding for the construction of a roundabout at the intersection of South Head Road and the Princes Highway at Moruya, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

Linley Point Bus Service

Petition requesting a direct bus service to the city from Linley Point and areas surrounding Burns Bay Road, received from **Mr Anthony Roberts**.

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**.

Woolloomooloo Housing

Petition requesting that Housing NSW take positive action to improve housing conditions in the Woolloomooloo area, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

The Clerk announced that the following Minister had lodged a response to the following petition signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Smoke-free Areas—lodged 19 October 2011 (Mrs Jillian Skinner)

DAYS AND HOURS OF SITTING

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.17 p.m.]: There will be new sessional orders as a result of the change in sitting days next year and they are still being worked through. The first day back is Valentine's Day. That is great. On the first day, Tuesday 14 February, the House will sit at 1.00 p.m., which is the same arrangement as the first day in the current cycle. On the Wednesday we will in all likelihood commence at 9.30 a.m.—I will clarify that on the Tuesday—and sit until 9.30 p.m. or 10.00 p.m. Members should be aware that they are the proposed sitting hours on the second day of each sitting week next session. We need to make up an appropriate amount of time as we are not sitting on the fourth day. On the third day I expect we will commence at 10.00 a.m. and finish in the late afternoon. I expect that the sessional orders will be available on the first day, Valentine's Day—that will be a gift to all of us when we come back.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

STATE AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Membership

Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:

That:

- (1) Christopher Gulaptis be appointed to serve on the Legislative Assembly Committee on Economic Development in place of Andrew Robert Gee, discharged.
- (2) Andrew Robert Gee be appointed to serve on the State and Regional Development Committee in place of Geoffrey Keith Provest, discharged.

SEASONAL FELICITATIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.20 p.m.]:
I move:

That the House take note of Christmas felicitations.

I wish all members of the House and their staff the compliments of the season and thank them for everything they have done for the people of this State over the past nine months since the election on 26 March—obviously longer than that for some. This was an election year. Every four years we see the great exercise of democracy by 4.5 million people across the State, which has a population of 7.3 million. We have access to elections—local government, Federal and State—in a way that people in certain parts of North Africa and other parts of the world can only dream about; or if they agitate for elections they lose their lives. On 26 March 4.5 million voters went to polling places to choose their representatives, choosing 94 members to come into this place to represent communities across the State from Tweed to Bega, and from Vaucluse to Broken Hill.

Each of us comes into this Chamber to ensure that we give voice to those people who send us here. Underneath all the party masks and the chacking that goes on in debates members have the interests of their communities at heart. Forty-seven new members from all parties entered this place after the election on 26 March. For the first time a Greens member was elected to this House, and we have new Labor members, Liberal members and Nationals. I thank them all for their contributions. I congratulate them on the way they have settled in and are representing their communities and constituents. I am particularly grateful for those who

represent the Liberal-Nationals. No-one, whether it is the Leader of the Opposition, the Premier of the State or a local member, has any illusion that they can fulfil their role without the support of their colleagues, and I thank them for their support.

In addition to the new members we have a new Speaker. Madam Speaker, I am particularly grateful for the job you have done. It is a difficult job, as we saw in Canberra yesterday. Whatever happened in Canberra yesterday, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, because of the great job he has done, particularly since last year's election, is the only person who came out with any goodwill. Madam Speaker, you have assumed the role with dignity; you have exercised the role with both levity and firmness. I wish you well as you get a break until Valentine's Day next year. We have a new Deputy-Speaker and new Assistant-Speakers, and I thank them for their efforts as well.

A new Clerk of the Legislative Assembly was appointed late in the piece. I congratulate her and thank her for the job she has done. I also thank the table officers and those who sit behind them on level 8 for everything they do. We have some new Whips and some recycled Whips. I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for everything he does. I keep saying that experience counts, and the member for Wagga Wagga has experience as a whip. This year he has been joined by the member for Penrith, who is doing very well as the Deputy Government Whip. In a classic case of poacher turned gamekeeper, the member for Murray-Darling has been appointed as The Nationals Whip. I do not miss being on the Opposition benches, but I miss having the member for Murray-Darling sit behind me in the Chamber. The good news, thankfully, is that people hear only half of the things he says, because the other half that people do not hear are the funniest of all.

I thank the Hansard staff, who at times make the ramblings of those of us in this place read beautifully. If that is not the result at times it is our fault, not their fault. I thank those who work in the library. I thank the Chamber attendants here and across the building who make it easy for us to function. No army can march without its stomach being attended to, and I know that better than most. I thank all those involved in catering. I thank also the cleaners, whom I meet as I come to work early in the morning, whether down on level 2 or arriving at my office. They are always happy, optimistic and polite when they talk to us.

I thank—they are the opposite of the cleaners at times—the media on level 6, the president of the press gallery, Mark Tobin, and his colleagues, without whom we could not operate even if we wanted to. There is no point talking into the ether. Whether in opposition, in government or on the crossbench, it is important to ensure that our messages are reported. Indeed, while we might be frustrated by the headlines and the way we are reported at times, I thank Mark and all his team for everything they do. I missed the press gallery party this week, but I understand that the tape was as good as ever. The Minister for Health has told me what to say if I do not think it is any good.

I thank members in another place, in particular the Hon. Melinda Pavey, and Mark Tobin for the introduction this year of the spring ball, which was perhaps the highlight on the parliamentary calendar. It is fantastic when members across this place equally support an event that ultimately provides funds to charity. It was a great night. Many of us who attended the ball said it was probably the best thing we have done: I have been here 16 years, and it was fantastic. I thank all those who were involved.

We head towards the Christmas-New Year period. It is not a holiday period. There is a view in the community that members have it easy when Parliament is not sitting. The fact is that we have a break between now and the middle of February. When we set the setting pattern I was determined—I am still determined about this—that we would do something sensible. For 16 years I have not understood why Parliament has been scheduled to sit while school presentations are taking place. Every school community loves to see their member of Parliament and to showcase to them on presentation days the wonderful things that are happening in our schools, both public and private.

As all of us leave this place today the first order of business is to start to attend those wonderful school presentation days. I say to the new members: Take a hint from me. Do not count how many you have in the season, just enjoy all of them because if you count them prospectively or count them down you will start to get tired. I think of my friends who come from rural and regional areas. I might complain about having 18 primary schools and 11 high schools in my electorate but members from country areas have 30 or 40 schools. I wish them well.

At times members of Parliament are the point of first contact for people who get into difficulty, whether with housing or the services for which the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister

for Women has responsibility. Ultimately, we know, regrettably, that there will be storm, fire or flood emergencies across the State and they involve members of Parliament and their staff. I make the point that being a local member is a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week occupation. We may mask that from the public but it is ultimately a caring and sharing profession designed to assist our local communities. We are not re-elected if we do not fulfil that task first and foremost. Members and the staff assisting them undertake that role diligently.

I wish everyone well for the Christmas-New Year period. I hope that everyone gets to spend some time with their families. This is not a complaint, because we come here voluntarily, but this 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week lifestyle has an impact on our families. We should go home this evening and over the Christmas season we should give our families a tighter hug and spend more time with them so that we earn the interest in the bank that enables us, come 14 February and beforehand, to get out there and work the hours we do. Thank you.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.30 p.m.]: In response to the motion about Christmas felicitations I commence by thanking you, Madam Speaker, for your general tolerance. I know we push the boundaries in this place from time to time but I do appreciate the role that you play in this place. I also place on record my thanks to the Clerks at the table and elsewhere. I congratulate Ronda Miller on her appointment and acknowledge that this year is the first time in many years we have had a new Clerk assume that role. I also acknowledge the contribution Russell Grove has made in his years here, particularly this year. Russell was of great assistance to me and our other new members. I place on record my appreciation for his support and assistance as we have gone through this year. I also acknowledge the attendants. They are the people who make this place tick effectively and efficiently. They are probably not well noticed but it is acknowledged and recognised by members on both sides of the House that they make a fantastic contribution to making sure this Chamber operates appropriately.

As the Premier has said, the Hansard staff do an amazing job. They make our speeches which do not sound well when given in debates read as though they were most effectively, efficiently and articulately delivered. That is particularly so when passions rise and people do not necessarily deliver the words they would like to deliver. The Hansard staff do a fantastic job. I thank them very much for the efforts that they put in each and every day, sometimes late at night and sometimes at late lunches, as happened today. I appreciate and acknowledge the great contribution they make. I also acknowledge the Whips on both sides of the House. First I acknowledge Richard Amery as someone on our side of the Chamber who has been of great support and assistance to me. I also acknowledge those on the other side, the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Murray-Darling. We do appreciate their efforts, even though there is a bit of banter. They do a tough job, and have had a lot to count this year. That seems to be taking some time to get across.

Mr Daryl Maguire: We are happy about that.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: We will make sure we do all we can to reduce those numbers over time. I thank all the Whips and acknowledge the great work they do. I also place on record my thanks and the thanks of those on the other side of the House to the other parliamentary staff, the catering staff and the cleaning staff, who do a fantastic job. The catering staff stay here for extraordinary hours if both Houses sit late. They are here to make sure we are fed and watered and sustained throughout some of those tiresome and dull debates when we are required to be here. They make it a little more comfortable to be here than it otherwise would be. The cleaning staff, as the Premier has said, do a fantastic job. Like the Premier, I am here very early. Sometimes only the Premier, the cleaning staff and I are in the building. They do a fantastic job. The woman who cleans my office was very upset and very concerned when the Premier moved downstairs. She was not sure what I would be like but we are all getting along famously.

I place on record my appreciation to my staff and the staff in the Opposition leader's office for their great work and the hard work they do. Those on the other side now will remember that their staff in opposition worked tirelessly and thanklessly. It is a very tough job. I place on record my appreciation to them. I also thank not only my electorate staff but all the electorate staff who work in members' offices out there serving the community so very effectively. When we are here or elsewhere performing other functions they are our face. They do a fantastic job ensuring that when we are away our constituents are well looked after and their interests are addressed efficiently and effectively—and resolved as far as possible.

I thank the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Linda Burney, for her contribution and her support to me in my role. She has made a very effective contribution and has been of great support to me. It is a contribution

I recognise and acknowledge, as I am sure all my colleagues do. I thank her for the hard work she has put in each and every day. I also thank the rest of my team for the support they have provided me and the work they have put in this year.

The Premier talked about the spring ball. I commend Melinda Pavey and Mark Tobin, and also Helen Westwood, who was the third part of the bipartisan support for the spring ball. It is amazing that the oldest Parliament in the country had its first spring ball only this year. Nonetheless, I am sure all would agree with me that it was a fantastic event that raised a significant amount of money. The event was well attended and highly regarded and I am sure will continue to be a great success. Like the Premier, I thank Mark Tobin and the staff on level 6. They perform a very important function in the Parliament. As the Premier said, if they were not here reporting what was going on a lot of it would go unnoticed. As frustrating as it can be on both sides, whether in opposition or in government, they perform a vital function, a function that we all in the end rely on so that the broader community knows what we do.

I add my thanks to the Leader of the House. He has been tough but fair. We have probably tested him a bit, as we have tested the Speaker sometimes. I appreciate the fact that we have been treated reasonably well—I am not saying perfectly—over the year. I thank him for that. I am sure that is difficult: he is balancing a whole range of different things. I also acknowledge the work of Michael Daley, the shadow Leader of the House, in liaising with the Leader of the House. Sometimes he gets a bit frustrated dealing with the Leader of the House; nonetheless, he is doing a great job and I thank him for that.

I conclude by wishing everybody on both sides of the Chamber a happy and safe festive season. Whilst it does get heated in here at times, the really important thing is that it does not get personal. Speaking for myself, I get quite passionate in here at times. We all believe in many things. Sometimes those things produce rather heated and vigorous debates. I do genuinely wish everybody here in the Chamber and all those who are not here a happy and safe festive season. I am looking forward to coming back next year. I have had a fun year. I have thoroughly enjoyed my year and I am looking forward to coming back and doing it all again in the year 2012.

The SPEAKER: With the indulgence of the House and the Leader of the House I wish to contribute to the debate and add my Christmas felicitations. At the outset I congratulate everybody in this Parliament on the way they contribute to the smooth running of the Parliament day in and day out, when we are here and when we are not here. This has been an extraordinary year for the staff of this Parliament—with 50 new members and IT and office fit outs, both in electorates and in this building. The staff have put in an extraordinary effort and it has been done seamlessly for the benefit of all of us.

As a member of Parliament from a regional area I used to come to this place and wish I was home and go home as quickly as I could. I did not really understand what the staff of this place continue to do on a daily basis. They are the ones that keep this place operating. They are professional, as other members have said. From the cleaners to the caterers, every single member of staff in this place works tirelessly for the benefit of all of us. I hope we all remember that at this time of the year with about a month to go until Christmas. I congratulate them all. I thank my staff. For some time I had only one staff member operating in my office. That was Luke Sikora. He has dealt, I think extremely professionally, with everybody in what is a new position to him.

I also thank Gladys Kleiner. Many of you would know Gladys, who has just joined my office. She has fitted in very quickly. She knows everything about this place and works marvellously in the office of the Speaker at the moment. Also I thank my electorate office staff, Lynne Arnold, Adam Carney and Lyn Taylor, who obviously work now without me more than ever, because sometimes the Speaker's role requires me to be here when Parliament is not sitting.

I thank also all drivers for Ministers particularly and the Leader of the Opposition. They do a wonderful and professional job. I thank my driver, Garry Brooks, who I believe was the driver for the member for Canterbury for some time. He is a wonderful person and I thank him for his professional assistance to me since I became the Speaker. The Chamber staff do a wonderful job. I thank specifically Joe Andrade and in my office Ian Delahunty and all Chamber support staff who are just unbelievable. Sometimes we do not notice their presence. Today the Chamber staff were on the ball in managing a difficult gallery while observing what was happening. They did a fantastic job. I congratulate them all, particularly Greg Kelly, who sits at the back of the Chamber and is ready to help me eject members when needed. I do not think too many were this year and, obviously, I do not want to eject too many. Greg always is available and behaves extremely professionally. He is very knowledgeable on every aspect of this Chamber.

I thank the Deputy-Speaker, Thomas George, the Assistant-Speaker, Andrew Fraser, and my panel of Assistant-Speakers—Lee Evans, Melanie Gibbons, Sonia Hornery, Gareth Ward and John Barilaro. They have slipped into those positions easily. They received assistance and training, as have I, and although it may look easy sitting in this chair, it is not. I thank them all for their professional assistance. They have acted extremely well in their roles. I thank them for their continued assistance and hope that they continue in those positions, especially the member for Kiama.

Obviously, I thank the Clerks at the table—Ronda Miller, Les Gönye, Helen Minnican, Catherine Watson, Elaine Schofield and Vicki Buchbach. Without them this place just would not operate. All the Clerks have an intense knowledge of the procedures of this Parliament; all the members do not. The Clerks provide sound advice to me and to all members. I repeat that without them this place would not operate at all. I thank them all. Obviously, I congratulate Ronda Miller also on her appointment as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. She is doing a marvellous job. Mr Rob Stefanic, Manager of the Department of Parliamentary Services, also is relatively new to his position. In my dealings with him and his department I continue to be impressed by his intelligence, wisdom and professionalism in that role. I thank Mark Faulkner and the Hansard crew. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the fact that Hansard staff make us all sound good from time to time. I thank all of them for fulfilling a difficult job. I thank also Jeannie Douglass and the Education Community Relations Section.

To the party leaders, Barry O'Farrell, Andrew Stoner and John Robertson I say well done. The party Whips Darryl Maguire, John Williams and Richard Amery, and their assistants Stuart Ayres and Ryan Park—I will thank Ryan Park—have also done a remarkable job. They have a difficult job to make sure that speakers' lists are ready at the beginning of the day and that their members are ready to speak on legislation at any time. Congratulations to all the party Whips. The Leader of the House, with whom I have to work very closely, always is prepared at any time for this House to proceed with legislation. He has an enormous job in the morning to fulfil his obligation to this House as the Leader. He does so remarkably well. I do not think I have witnessed a better Leader of the House. He really has been wonderful to work with and I thank him for the close cooperation he has shown me as well as the Opposition, which I have noted daily.

I thank also the shadow Leader of the House for his cooperation over the year. We have had words—obviously, we all have had words—but at this time of the year I thank every member of the Legislative Assembly for their real passion and commitment since the election. I have heard some wonderful speeches and witnessed some wonderful contributions in this Chamber. I continue to be convinced that those who are elected to this place respect and love it and want to do the best for their communities. They are doing so to a man and woman. Congratulations and Merry Christmas to everyone. I hope you all have a wonderful break and that we all return renewed next year.

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services) [3.44 p.m.]: As Leader of The Nationals and Deputy Premier I am delighted to add my Christmas felicitations to all who make this Parliament what it is: one of the shining examples of democracy in our nation and, indeed, the world. I thank everyone associated with our democracy, including those in our electorate offices. Indeed, we have had an exciting and interesting year in New South Wales politics. Of course, every newly elected government brings a fresh perspective. It has been a great pleasure for me on behalf of The Nationals to welcome so many new faces to the House this year. I look forward to continuing to work with them as colleagues for many years to come.

I thank all members from both sides of this House as well as the crossbench, Independent and Greens members, and also those in the Legislative Council who are part of this Fifty-fifth Parliament for their earnest endeavours. All members in this place have genuine motivations to make a difference and serve the communities they represent. Whilst we may disagree on various issues, I am certain that we act consistently with what we believe are in the best interests of the community. The robust debate we often see in this place contributes to the very good outcomes that make our society in New South Wales well governed and well run. The Premier compared us with other jurisdictions around the world. Often we find things to criticise, but looking around, New South Wales is a pretty good place that is well governed and well run principally through this Parliament.

As I mentioned, this year was busy and eventful beginning, of course, with the election campaign and then the momentous day of the general election on 26 March. This was followed by a very busy parliamentary program, including full four-day sitting weeks with a question time on each day in a back-to-back sitting schedule running from Tuesday to Friday and then Monday to Thursday. It has been a difficult year with that

schedule particularly for regionally based members. The member for Murray-Darling has a 3½ hour flight that is scheduled once per day. Sitting through to Friday afternoon and resuming on Monday morning means that not much time is spent at home or with constituents.

Of course, this busy parliamentary program involved lots of legislation, many reforms, much debate and some difficult issues, including one that sparked some strong emotions today. Of course, a by-election also was thrown into all of that. In that context, I thank the Speaker, the Deputy-Speaker, the Assistant-Speakers and the Temporary Speakers. I thank also my colleague the Leader of the House, who just received a big rap from the Speaker as being the best she has seen. This year has been difficult. I pay particular credit to the leaders of the House from the Government and the Opposition. Despite a busy and at times uncertain legislative program, this place has been run particularly well.

I thank the Government and Opposition Whips for what they do to keep parliamentary business ticking over. Again I mention the member for Murray-Darling, as did the Premier, who, with his dry and laconic far-western New South Wales style of humour, even keeps us amused during divisions while we wait for the votes to be counted. I thank the Clerks and the attendants. Of course, we have had a significant handover this year with the retirement of our very long-serving Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Russell Grove. However, he passed on the baton to a very capable person in Ronda Miller.

I congratulate Ronda and thank her and the other Clerks at the table for what they do to keep this place running. As Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Ronda is always there with advice. She is on top of the technical requirements, the rules, standing orders and procedures and keeps us pointed in the right direction. I thank the diligent Hansard staff for their patience and focus in deciphering what is said by members in the Chamber. Some members are more articulate than others but Hansard ensures that all the members in this House sound like accomplished orators, and for that we are eternally grateful.

I thank the ancillary and back-office staff members who help us do our jobs in a variety of ways, ranging from accounts, building services, catering, security, the special constables, library staff, information technology, procedure office, and the cleaners. All these people play a vital role in supporting members in myriad ways. Cafe Quorum, staffed by Alex and his crew, has kept us fed and supplied with coffee. However, I ask Alex to stop giving the member for Keira triple shots in his coffee. I thank the media gallery on level 6 who keep the public informed about what we do. Increasingly these days members of the media tweet madly from the press gallery during question time. No sooner have we said something than it is out in the Twittersphere and online in the media. Thank you to Mark Tobin and all the journalists and reporters downstairs.

I thank my own electorate office staff in Kempsey. The Oxley electorate is the lowest income electorate in the State so they have a significant constituent workload and a frequently absent member. Nonetheless, my electorate office staff look after the people that I have been elected to represent. They are constantly in touch with me as we make representations to improve the lives of the people in my electorate. In Kempsey, Patricia Baker and Jodie Griffiths are working away as we speak and dealing yet again with floods in my electorate. Electorate office staff face all sorts of challenges and in the past few years various natural disasters, including some minor to moderate flooding. All electorate office staff do a similar job; they are at the front line, at the coalface, dealing with constituents that we represent and at the end of the day they pay the salaries of all those associated with this Parliament. Thank you and a happy Christmas to all those hardworking and dedicated electorate office staff.

We all need to understand that it can be a difficult business and that electorate staff come under a lot of pressure not only from the workload but also from some difficult customers who are at the end of their tether. Our staff often bear the brunt of dealing with angry and disturbed people—there is a lot more in here—and we are all grateful for what they do. I thank the Premier, leader of the parliamentary Liberal Party, member for Ku-ring-gai, and my Coalition partner in this Government. He has taken to the highest political office in the State with aplomb. Over the past eight months he has met the challenge of leading and building a clean, stable and competent Government for this State. I thank him for his great work over recent years, including during the election campaign. He has been a strong Coalitionist and it is why we have a stable government and large numbers of Liberal and Nationals members in this Chamber.

I thank my ministerial staff, commencing with my chief of staff, Rod Bruce, Alexander Drake, Alex Bruce—also known as Sandy—Lis Davies and Ben Shine. Professor Rick Shine, Ben's father, the world's cane toad expert, received a Scientist of the Year Award at Government House just the other night. I used to have my

own methods of dealing with cane toads that involved a seven iron but Professor Shine's methods are much more sophisticated. I thank Sean O'Connell, Tara Black, Edward Yabsley, my personal assistant and office manager Bree Price and Laura Clarke, our receptionist. The responsibilities of a Minister are wide-ranging and complex and I appreciate the effort my office staff make in assisting me—I think they have written this part—with my ministerial duties. I acknowledge all government staff, in particular, the Premier's chief of staff Peter McConnell and director of communications Peter Grimshaw. They both do a great job in helping the Premier set a strategic direction for wider governance.

I thank my wife, Cathy, and all my children, Steven, Beau, Gemma, Abbie, Annalise and Nathaniel—sometimes it is difficult remembering them all—for their forbearance and patience with what is a very difficult role for a family. This year more than any I have spent a lot more time away from home. In the past four weeks I have been at home for one night and yet they survive and my wife fills the void of an absent father and husband. I look forward to the Christmas period when I can invest something back into my family. At the end of the day all we have are our families. I ask all members in this place, the staff and the public, to take care on the roads and at the beach this season. We do not want the Christmas period marked by a tragedy. I encourage people to remember the real reason for the festive season. It is not about commercialism or overindulgence; it is about the significance of the birth of baby Jesus to all mankind and the good news of the Gospel. I wish everybody a happy, holy and safe Christmas and all the best for the new year.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [3.49 p.m.]: I participate in Christmas felicitations and join the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and other speakers in wishing everyone well. I will not go through the long list of staff and people in the Chamber who have already been thanked by other speakers. However, I concur with what everyone has said. Clearly, Madam Speaker, you would recognise and know better than any of us the staff who work in this place. Where would we be without them? Of course we would not have an operating Parliament.

Sometimes it is interesting and exciting when new members are elected—I was in that category a decade ago—but the staff members have experienced that many times over. I often wonder what they are thinking. It could be, "Here we go again." However, they all help members to do their jobs properly. I thank all those people to whom other speakers referred. No matter which way we cut it, it has been a big year for elected members in this place. Our profession is challenging and rewarding. There are days when I wonder how I can assist some of the people who come into my electorate office and there are days when I do not spend much time at home.

If one judged this profession by what happens in this place—and question time is very adversarial—one would miss the point of what being a member of Parliament means. Yesterday I was in the lift with a newer member of the Government who said "I am glad we are nearly finished our first year, it has gone so quickly." I thought: I have been here for 10 years and it has gone in an instant. I reflect on the many people I have met, on the very difficult challenges I have had, on the good things I have been involved in and I realise why the people who work here show such commitment and dedication, as well as members of Parliament. Comments have been made to me from across the floor, such as, "You used to be nice, Linda". I think the member opposite said that to me a couple of times.

Mr Brad Hazzard: I don't say it with any great malice.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I know that. Grace, good manners and deep thought is behind what we do. In the main, the very important issues that people face, like disabilities, Aboriginal affairs and children, are dealt with in a bipartisan fashion. Members forge good relationships and friendships that are quite surprising. When I arrived here I sat next to Peter Black, which was not going to be an easy ride. Peter and I ended up the best of friends, something that surprised a lot of people. Members need to connect with each other otherwise this becomes a very lonely place. That relationship has to be across parties and beliefs and regardless of other differences.

I thank all the people who have previously been thanked. I recognise our electorate staff. I recognise the Leader of the Opposition's staff, who are absolutely wonderful people. I thank the Premier for his leadership, and particularly thank the Leader of the Opposition for the leadership he has shown on this side of the House and for the inspiration and energy that he provides. I wish everyone a really wonderful Christmas. Christmas is a challenging time for many families. It is a challenging time for me because we think at the time of the people we have lost. Of course, I am thinking of my late husband. It is a time for us to come together and recognise family and remember those that we have lost. Merry Christmas.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.54 p.m.]: I acknowledge the words of the member for Canterbury and note that she is the shadow Minister. I remember the sad time when her husband, Rick, passed away. I express my sympathy to her and to all those who will be finding it a little difficult at this time because of the people who have passed away. I first thank the New South Wales community for supporting those on both sides of the House. We need the community to understand that Parliament serves a purpose. We can have our debates and our differences but, because of the great democratic process, that is the end of it. We fire words at each other from time to time but that is it. I thank the community for supporting the democratic process in New South Wales.

I thank members on both sides of the Chamber. I have been a member of Parliament for 20 years and I have many friends on both sides. Some of them have also passed away. This place has a proud history and, hopefully, each of us is contributing to that proud history. I also thank the crossbench members, some of whom have only been elected recently, for their contributions to the democratic process. I add my thanks, as did the member for Canterbury, for the leadership of the Premier. After 16 years of the Liberal-Nationals being in the wilderness he literally led us out of the wilderness. I thank Barry O'Farrell and Andrew Stoner. They are both very good people who are leading a group of people genuinely interested in making sure the State moves forward in the interests of the community.

I thank you, Madam Speaker, the first female Speaker in the history of this place. It is always a tough gig to be the first and carve out your own space. I think you have done it extraordinarily well. I thank you on behalf of both sides. Well done. I thank your staff, Joe Andrade, who has been around forever, and Gladys Kleiner. I also thank the Deputy-Speaker, Thomas George, and the Assistant-Speaker, Andrew Fraser, who has been amazingly contained in his new role. We remember some of his past activities and it is very good to see that he now—

Mr John Robertson: It is probably still on YouTube.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: You are right, it is probably still on YouTube. We are very grateful that he has shown some judiciousness during this first period of the Government. I thank my electorate staff and all electorate staff across the State. When we are in Parliament we tend to think it is the centre of the universe. It is not. It is an important part of the universe but it is not the centre of the universe. Most people walking along Macquarie Street do not even know what is happening in here most of the time. That is probably testament to how well this place is run and the strength of democracy in New South Wales.

Our electorate staff, whether they represent Labor, Coalition or Independent members, are on the front line day after day. We should all reflect on the fact that we only do our work in here because of our electorate office staff. They are the ones talking to people and making sure that we are able to do our job in here. I particularly thank Noeline Barrell, who has been with me for 20 years. I sometimes wonder how she has put up with me but she has, although at present she is enjoying six months long service leave in France. I thank Lisa Nagle, who has been with me for three years, and Meredith van Wensveen, who has only been with me for a few months. I thank them as representatives of all other electorate staff.

I thank the party Whips, Daryl Maguire, John Williams and Stuart Ayres and, on the Opposition side, Richard Amery, whom I have known for years. I love his dry laconic humour. One never knows what lines he will come out with. I think he probably wrote them down in his old police notebook and produces them on occasions to keep us all amused. I thank all of the Whips, who quietly make sure that members are present for debates and generally ensure the place runs appropriately. Most people think that it is always war in the Parliament; it is not. More often than not we argue about the things that need to be argued about and have no arguments on the things that we do not need to argue about. That has certainly been my ambition in this first 12 months as Leader of the House. The Whips have done an excellent job in their role.

I also thank my Opposition number, the member for Maroubra, whom I love to stir along the way if I can. He has had my mobile number running off the hook this year, and I have had his running off the hook as well. Between the two of us we have managed to achieve that aim of having the battles we need to have and avoiding those that we do not. Basically he is a good bloke; he is just in the wrong party. I thank Michael Daley's adviser, Mitchell Wilson, who has taken some leave. I also thank John Robertson. There has to be a contest of ideas in this place but other than for a few brief moments I have found John Robertson to have worked well with all of us to make sure that we focus on the big issues.

We all need the Clerks at the table. Without the Clerks we are all in deep trouble. First, I thank Russell Grove. He is no longer the Clerk but he served in this place for over 40 years in one capacity or another. He is an amazing gentleman. I could not believe it on his last day when he started undressing by taking off his braces and auctioning them. I do not know whom he has been hanging around with. At any rate, he made some money for a good charity. I thank Ronda Miller for all her efforts, both in her former capacity as an Assistant Clerk but now in her new capacity as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. I congratulate her on her appointment.

Mark Swinson has worked in the Legislative Assembly for many years, but he is not here at the moment. I thank him and want him to know that we appreciate his contribution over the years. Les Gönye, one of the Acting Deputy Clerks, always has a word of wisdom. When I obtain advice from him I often wonder what he is really thinking. Thank you, Les, for your advice. I also thank Helen Minnican, Catherine Watson, Vicki Buchbach and Elaine Schofield. I want to tell Deputy-Sergeant Greg Kelly that I am happy I am a Government member because he does not tend to throw me out of the House, which he has done over the years. I thank all the table office staff generally and all those who support the table office.

I thank Parliamentary Counsel, Don Colagiuri, and his staff. They have a tough job. I also thank Paul Miller from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, who is constantly involved in making sure the legislation comes through on time. I thank generally all of the Premier's office staff. When running a government we need good staff in our offices. The Premier's office staff does a first-class job. I thank Pete McConnell, Chief of Staff, Natasha Luschwitz, who is constantly in the Chamber and all the others who contribute in so many ways. I thank the Hansard staff. I would hate to have a job with Hansard and put up with everything that happens in this place. They turn the nonsensical into sensible speeches. Sometimes when I read my speeches the next day I cannot believe how good they are, because they were not that good the day before.

Mr Gareth Ward: I doubt that.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Thank you for your strong support. I appreciate it. I thank all the Chamber attendants: Ian Delahunty, Danny Heldal, Peter Tuziak, Steve Smith, Lynne Vitali and Chris Herbert. They quietly go about their business and make sure that things appear almost mystically and magically when we need them. I thank the catering staff who, whether in the dining room or cafe, create an easygoing and supportive atmosphere.

Mr Richard Amery: Don't worry, they will fix it tomorrow.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: They are wonderful people and we appreciate their efforts. Members can tell from my waistline that I particularly have appreciated them. I thank the Parliamentary Library staff, who quietly work downstairs but when we need something urgently they are always available. Over the years they have shown themselves to be, in my view, the pre-eminent library staff in New South Wales. I also thank the Parliament's technical staff who appear and fix the television or some other aspect of the building. We often do not think about them until we have a problem. I thank the Information Technology staff, who are often called in at short notice to fix our computer problems. I thank the administration staff. In the bowels of this building there are people everywhere doing the most amazing jobs. We sometimes only see them when we take our newsletters to be vetted. I thank all of them. We appreciate their efforts. I thank the media people downstairs. We can all be on the receiving end of media that we are not happy about.

Mr John Robertson: You more than us these days.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: That is certainly true. Without the media we do not have democratic process. Mark Tobin is a great bloke and I have regard for the media personnel, except when they criticise me in the press. Then I lose interest in them briefly. I thank all of them. I thank my staff. It has been a tough gig being the planning Minister and Leader of the House. It was not my preferred position to take on all the extra work but we have got through it pretty well. I particularly thank Kath McFarlane, who was quietly doing her PhD at Sturt University when she got the call. I do not think she has ever been a member of the Liberal Party and she is very unlikely to become one. She took over the role of chief of staff. Lee Dixon, deputy chief of staff, has put up with me for about six years. She has been superb over that time. Tim Robertson is my one and only adviser, which is challenging for him and me because we have so much happening. Ingrid Jansons, as most members would know, is the girl who sits on the chair near the brass rod every sitting day. Ingrid has taken on the role of supporting the Leader of the House and liaises with Michael Daley's staff. I know she has created a good relationship.

Mr Daryl Maguire: She is doing a very good job.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: As the Whip says, she is doing a very good job. She has been doing a first-class job. I thank Tania Tucci, who has recently joined my staff but whom I have known for years, Kasey Cogle, Sue Kiprovic, Clementine Johnson and Francis Rigg. Thanks to those who regrettably no longer work with me but whom I found to be of invaluable help when they were on my staff: Judy Ludvik and Barbara Williams. I also thank the staff who rotate in and out of the office from the department: Simon Manoski, Lyn Wrona, Phil Pick, Chris Ray and Fiona Beattie. I was a bit hurt when Phil Pick told me that the best time he ever had was working for Frank Sartor. That was hard to cope with initially.

Mr John Robertson: He hasn't got used to you yet.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: That is it. I am hoping to meet the high criteria that he applies. I also add that initially Fiona Beattie was one of the departmental liaison officers. Fiona has now had her first child. When she was pregnant I would say to her every afternoon at about five o'clock say, "Go home, Fiona." At seven o'clock she would still be there working. Thank you, Fiona, I hope you are enjoying being a mum. Finally, I thank my family. As the Deputy Premier said, this is a tough life on family. My wife, Beth, who is a medical practitioner, has been very supportive. I thank Beth. I also thank my two boys, Andrew Hazzard and David Hazzard. As some members know, Andrew is an actor and Dave is a basketball sportsman.

Mr Gareth Ward: His father is an actor.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: His father is not a good actor. I thank my sons for their support over many years and for being part of the loving unit that supports me when I go home at night. I thank all the members. I appreciate their support during the year and look forward to us all being back here on Valentine's Day next year. We have chosen a great day to return. This place will be full of love on the first day back. It may be the only day next year that it is full of love. I will see you next year on Valentine's Day at one o'clock.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [3.59 p.m.]: I am coming up to my twenty-ninth Christmas in this place and this is the first time that I have contributed to Christmas felicitations. As I am the Opposition Whip it is appropriate for me to say a few words. I will not go through a list of names because that will take up too much of my time, but I will name a few people. It has been a challenging year for the New South Wales Labor Party since the last time felicitations were given in this place. In recognising the challenge for the party, I thank John Robertson and Linda Burney, who have already spoken to this motion. They have made a sterling effort in picking up the pieces after the election and making us an effective parliamentary group this year. I say that genuinely. It has not been an easy period for the party, which has been in this Parliament since 1891.

The election result was a substantial majority to the Coalition. I congratulate the Premier, the Deputy Premier, the Ministers and all Government members. Whilst I wish them a successful career, I put on record that it is my duty and that of Labor Party members to try to make their career as short as possible. This is the first time that I have worked as a Whip in Parliament. I recognise Daryl Maguire, my opposite in the House, and the Deputy Whip, John Williams from The Nationals. I also recognise Ryan Park, who is my Deputy Whip, Michael Daley, the manager of Opposition business in this House, and Brad Hazzard, the Leader of the House, under whose leadership the Parliament has been well run.

I add to that list Cheryl Samuels, not just because she works so hard within the parliamentary precincts but because she is manager of the Parliamentary Bowling Club and it would be remiss of me not to recognise the great work she does for the club. I am just one of many Whips. When I first came to this place the Whip was Pat Flaherty, the member for Granville, followed by Ned Wade. Then came Bill Beckroge, George Thompson and Gerard Martin. The last few of those Whips, including me, have been very well supported by Jan Clifford. It would be remiss of me not to mention Jan's fantastic effort not only working in our office and with the Opposition party but also working with Government staff. In my electorate office, Leisa, Sarah and Lorraine have done a fantastic job supporting the work that we do here in Parliament and also working in the electorate office while we are away.

It has been an interesting time. One member mentioned the fact that the four-day sitting weeks were very difficult, particularly for members who must travel a long way. The experiment was tried and I think it probably did not work. I think the change in the program should be supported and commended because it recognises the dual role of parliamentarians. When we are here we are parliamentarians, dealing with legislation and question time and so on, but a very important part of the work of a member of Parliament is their electorate

work. Having free the Monday and Friday of parliamentary sitting weeks is extremely important. I commend the Leader of the House and the Whips for making those changes, which I think acknowledges the fact that we are required to be in Parliament to debate legislation and hold governments to account but also recognises our other role in working in our electorate for our communities.

I thank the residents of Mount Druitt for electing me for the ninth time in what was probably the most challenging election. I said to somebody after the election that I got the worst vote I have had since 1983 but it was my best result under the circumstances. That result came in a difficult election and it would be remiss of me not to recognise that being a candidate for the Labor Party at the 2011 election was made all the more inspiring and successful because of the great leadership of Kristina Keneally. The polls before the election predicted that we would win 10 seats and that we were going to be eliminated completely. As Premier and as leader of the Labor Party taking us to that election, Kristina made it worthwhile getting out of bed in the morning to fight a very difficult campaign. I wish a Merry Christmas to all. I hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday period and that we are all back here healthy next year, trying to tear each other apart. We will do our bit to bring the Government down.

[Business interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [4.14 p.m.]: After the conclusion of seasonal felicitations notices of motions and then private members' statements will be given. Also, I forgot to thank the drivers. These days, if we are lucky enough, we have drivers. I did not have one for 16 years. I thank my driver, Bill Young, and his wife, Michelle, who puts up with the crazy hours he works, and all the other drivers. I thank Bill for his patience.

Mr Michael Daley: For putting up with you.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Yes, I thank everyone for their patience in putting up with me. I agree with that.

Mr Michael Daley: I wouldn't like to be locked in a car with you all day.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Thank you, Michael. You are not going to get the opportunity to be locked in a car with me all day, but thank you. Now you put it that way, Bill certainly has even more patience than I thought—and tolerance.

PRINTING OF PAPERS

Motion, by leave, by Mr Brad Hazzard, agreed to:

That the following papers be printed:

Report of the Animal Research Review Panel for the year ended 30 June 2010

Reports for 2010:

State Parole Authority
Technical Education Trust Funds
Wild Dog Destruction Board
NSW Youth Advisory Council

Report of Riverina Citrus for the year ended 30 April 2011

Reports for the year ended 30 June 2011:

Professional Standards Council
New South Wales Bar Association
Barangaroo Delivery Authority
Election Funding Authority of New South Wales
New South Wales Electoral Commission
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal

Internal Audit Bureau of New South Wales (trading as IAB)
 Natural Resources Commission
 Department of Premier and Cabinet
 Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and the National Boards, reporting on the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme
 Health Care Complaints Commission
 Board of Studies and the Office of the Board of Studies
 New South Wales Board of Vocational Education and Training
 NSW Institute of Teachers
 Mine Subsidence Board
 Department of Transport and the Public Transport Ticketing Corporation (in one volume)
 Independent Transport Safety Regulator
 State Transit Authority of New South Wales
 Office of Transport Safety Investigations
 Country Rail Infrastructure Authority
 Rail Corporation New South Wales
 Maritime Authority of New South Wales (trading as NSW Maritime)
 Roads and Traffic Authority
 Transport Construction Authority
 Sydney Ferries
 Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Australian Museum Trust
 Casino, Liquor and Gaming Control Authority
 Greyhound Racing New South Wales
 Harness Racing New South Wales
 Library Council of New South Wales
 New South Wales Film and Television Office (trading as Screen NSW)
 Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences
 Racing NSW
 Responsible Gambling Fund
 Sydney Opera House Trust
 Landcom
 New South Wales Treasury—Crown Entity
 Superannuation Administration Corporation (trading as Pillar Administration)
 Sydney Water Corporation (trading as Sydney Water)
 Newcastle Port Corporation
 Port Kembla Port Corporation (Volumes One and Two)
 Sydney Ports Corporation
 New South Wales Treasury—Office of Financial Management
 NSW Self Insurance Corporation
 State Water Corporation
 Hunter Water Corporation
 Ausgrid
 Endeavour Energy
 Delta Electricity
 Eraring Energy
 Macquarie Generation
 TransGrid
 Essential Energy
 New South Wales Treasury Corporation
 Department of Finance and Services
 SAS Trustee Corporation (State Super) (containing the separate reports of all controlled entities of the Pooled Fund for the year ended 30 June 2011: Valley Commerce Pty Limited, Buroba Pty Ltd, State Infrastructure Trust, State Infrastructure Holdings (SEA Gas) Pty Ltd and State Super Financial Services Australia Limited)
 NSW Architects Registration Board
 Board of Surveying and Spatial Information
 Long Service Corporation
 Trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund
 Workers' Compensation Dust Diseases Board
 Lifetime Care and Support Authority
 Motor Accidents Authority
 State Property Authority
 State Records Authority of New South Wales
 Sporting Injuries Committee
 WorkCover Authority of New South Wales
 Teacher Housing Authority of New South Wales
 Veterinary Practitioners Board of New South Wales
 Rice Marketing Board
 New South Wales Food Authority
 Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority
 Central West Catchment Management Authority
 Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority
 Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority
 Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority
 Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority

Lachlan Catchment Management Authority
 Murray Catchment Management Authority
 Namoi Catchment Management Authority
 Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
 Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
 Western Catchment Management Authority
 Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority
 Wentworth Sporting Complex Trust
 Lake Illawarra Authority
 Dumaresq-Barwon Border Rivers Commission
 Dams Safety Committee
 New South Wales Rural Assistance Authority
 Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales
 Department of Attorney General and Justice
 Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
 Judicial Commission of New South Wales
 Law and Justice Foundation of New South Wales
 Legal Aid New South Wales
 Legal Profession Admission Board
 NSW Trustee and Guardian (incorporating the report of the Public Guardian)
 Chairperson's Report of the Victims Compensation Tribunal of New South Wales
 Guardianship Tribunal
 NSW Rural Fire Service
 New South Wales Crime Commission
 New South Wales Police Force
 New South Wales State Emergency Service
 Fire and Rescue New South Wales
 NSW Business Link Pty Ltd
 Department of Family and Community Services (Volumes 1 to 3)
 Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing
 Building Insurers' Guarantee Corporation, Fair Trading Administration Corporation and the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry
 Authority (in one volume)
 Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal
 Rental Bond Board
 Mental Health Review Tribunal
 Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust
 New South Wales Environmental Trust
 Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales
 Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust
 Lord Howe Island Board
 Nature Conservation Trust of New South Wales
 Parramatta Park Trust
 Radiation Advisory Council
 Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust
 Taronga Conservation Society Australia
 Western Sydney Parklands Trust
 New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council
 Community Relations Commission
 NSW Institute of Sport
 Sydney Olympic Park Authority
 Illawarra Venues Authority

SEASONAL FELICITATIONS

[*Business resumed.*]

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [4.24 p.m.]: I begin by wishing all members, staff and their families the very best for the festive season. This year certainly has presented many challenges for a new government, and particularly for the Leader of the House and the Whips. I thank the Clerks and the staff of the Parliament for helping us during a transition that was major by any description. I also acknowledge the election of the first woman Speaker of this Parliament. It is a very difficult job and she is doing it exceedingly well. I acknowledge also the work of the Leader of the House: he has done the job with good humour. There have been many changes and I appreciate the way in which he has gone about his job. In particular, I mention his staffer Ingrid Jansons, who has been working with my office and with members on the other side of the House to ensure that this place runs efficiently.

Importantly, I thank my staff. Margaret, Paula and Brenda between them have served 75 years in the Wagga Wagga electorate. Just last week Margaret and Brenda were here with many other dedicated staff members when Margaret celebrated 30 years of service and Brenda 20 years. I thank them for the enormous contribution they have made for the constituents of the Wagga Wagga electorate. This year we have had some

very good news. Susan Schiller, one of my other staff members, had a baby she named Mae Frances Schiller. She is now six months old and a delightful addition to the Schiller family and to the parliamentary family who look after my office. I also mention Cheree, who is a new addition to my electorate office. All these ladies work part-time—they job share and it works for us.

In Sydney I thank Maryann Winterflood, who began this year with us. Maryann left because her mother became very unwell and she has been tending to her mother's needs. I wish Maryann well. We do miss her. Rebecca Cartwright, our new addition—and who everyone would know—and Nicole Hatton are both working for the Whip's office and doing a fantastic job. I also thank for their efforts during the transition Gladys Kleiner and Carolyn Blenkie, who helped my staffers go about their work by installing new members in what was very new real estate and territory for us. I particularly thank Deputy Whip Stuart Ayres, who is settling into the role wonderfully well, and John Williams, who is riding shotgun for me. I also appreciate Richard Amery, backed up by Jan Clifford, whom we all know and love. They work very well with us to ensure that this place runs smoothly. Again, I thank the staff of the House and congratulate Ronda Miller on her appointment as Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. I also acknowledge the great contribution of Russell Grove.

I was pleased to be elected the chairman of the Asia-Pacific Friendship Group and I particularly thank executive members and the committee. I thank also Patricia Brodrick for the enormous amount of work that she does voluntarily, as well as those honorary members who continue to participate and raise funds for charities, orphanages and education facilities that we support, as well as fostering good relationships with our nearest Asian neighbours. I encourage members to visit next year places such as the Solomon Islands and Timor that are facing challenges and need this Parliament's help. I encourage members to visit those places so they see firsthand and understand the challenges they face and how New South Wales can help our near friends benefit from the great economic booms that are occurring in certain parts of the world.

Last year at this time the electorate of Wagga Wagga was experiencing floods. This year—just last week—a terrible hailstorm at Batlow caused some \$26 million worth of damage. That will create some difficulties, and I thank the Minister for Agriculture for visiting the area with me last Wednesday and talking with the farmers. I also thank the Federal member for the work that the Federal Government is doing to try to assist those families. I also wish the member for Swansea well. He has undergone a major operation this week and he told me yesterday that the doctors have given him the all clear. I wish him well. We will see him back in this place next year. You need the support and understanding of family and friends to do this job. I thank all families and friends of members, including mine, for their continued understanding and patience in allowing us to get on with the job. I thank Barry O'Farrell for the magnificent leadership he has shown this year as Premier, and of course over the years in opposition.

In closing, I say to the electors of Wagga Wagga, who saw fit to re-elect me this year: You will have your new hospital next year. Construction will begin in March. I have for all members a copy of the magnificent brochure, which shows, step by step, the long-awaited \$400 million redevelopment. This is the Christmas present that the electorate of Wagga Wagga has been waiting for, and I look forward to being there when work starts in March. Merry Christmas, everyone.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [4.29 p.m.]: This afternoon I represent John Williams, The Nationals Whip, in passing on his thanks and those of The Nationals. The member for Oxley and Deputy Premier has acknowledged everyone on behalf of The Nationals, but, as a former Whip, I know it is very important at this time of year to thank a lot of people. First, I congratulate and thank all members of the Fifty-fifth Parliament on their support. I know that John Williams has received great support, especially from the new members of The Nationals team, for which he is very appreciative. On behalf of John Williams, I thank the Leader of the House and Ingrid from his office, who is very cooperative. Everyone has said how good Brad Hazzard is. He has really excelled as Leader of the House and the Parliament has run very smoothly this year. I also thank the Government Whips, Daryl Maguire and Stuart Ayres, for the job they have done in the House and the support they have given John Williams. We also pass on our appreciation to Rebecca and Nicole in the office. To Richard Amery, the Opposition Whip, who is ably supported by the member for Keira, there is much appreciation from John Williams.

Congratulations to the Speaker, the member for South Coast, on the magnificent job she has done. I especially appreciate it, and it is lovely to see her walk into the Chamber as I speak. As her deputy, I more than appreciate what she has to go through. She has handled everything in a most professional manner. She is very ably supported by Joe, who I thank for assisting not only the Speaker but also John Williams and me. To Ronda, Les, Helen and all the other Clerks, The Nationals—especially John Williams—sincerely thank you for your

cooperation. I can only endorse all the comments made about Hansard. They certainly make us look good. They correct us and present us in a very professional manner. I thank each and every one of them for the support they have given us.

We thank the caterers, the cleaners, library staff, security staff and the attendants—Ian and his team in the House—for the job they do. I do not know how Building Services survived the first three months following the election. The team did a tremendous job relocating virtually everyone in this Parliament. They did a wonderful job and we thank them. Hannah Parsons came to us earlier this year and she has done a magnificent job keeping John and me organised. Hannah had no experience in Parliament House when she accepted the position and she has taken to it in a very professional manner. I thank her on behalf of the whole team. She is only in her early 20s but she has mothered us—all good country members need mothering—and organised us as well. She has done a fantastic job.

John Williams asked me especially—and I know the Whip's perspective—to thank the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, his chief of staff, Peter, and the entire team in the Premier's office for the support they have given us. Whenever you call them, nothing is a problem. When you are the Whip it is important to have all the information and find out what is going on. They have always been very cooperative. The Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals, Andrew Stoner, and his office staff—Rod, Bruce, Bree and the team—have been very professional in their handling of any queries from the Whip's office, provided answers immediately and supported us in every other way. We thank them. To the team in John Williams' offices at Broken Hill and Deniliquin—Maree, Sue, Merrilyn, Jane and Mary—we say thank you. As someone explained, it is difficult to have someone like John Williams as Whip because he is away a lot, but he has a very professional team behind him.

I know that today will go down in history and John Williams will be very proud to have Princess Mary and the Governor in Broken Hill to pay tribute to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. That is tremendous. I thank the team in my office—Bronwyn, Annie, Tracie, who has just resigned, and now Natalie—for their support not only in representing me when I am not there but also making me look good through all the work they do. They work for the good of our constituents, and all I can say is that I appreciate it. I thank my wife, Deb. The past couple of years have been long ones but she has been there all the way. I thank her for her support. None of us could do this without the love and support of our family and friends, and this is one time of the year when we can sit back and appreciate what they do. I wish everyone a safe, happy and holy Christmas. All I ask is that everyone is blessed with good health in 2012.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [4.34 p.m.]: At this time of the year I encourage everyone to spend time with their family and enjoy a safe and happy Christmas and New Year period. It has been a fairly momentous year, with the change of government. I thank the members of the Liberal Party room who elected me as Deputy Whip earlier this year. It has definitely been a significant learning experience. I was a little surprised by how quickly you can pick up how this place works when you have a role such as Deputy Whip. I have definitely learned from some good people. I thank the Leader of the House, Mr Brad Hazzard, for his support throughout the year, and also the Government Whip, Daryl Maguire, who has been very supportive throughout the year and who has done an outstanding job.

I also recognise the contributions of the staff in the Whip's office. Nicole Hatton has done a fantastic job, as has Maryann Winterflood, who was there earlier in the year. Thanks go especially to Rebecca Cartwright for her outstanding contribution in the Whip's office. She is highly respected by all members of the Government and manages to keep us moving forward. Even when things are not operating as smoothly as we would like, she approaches things in a very calm manner and gets us all on track again. I thank many of the parliamentary staff for their support throughout the year. I thank the Clerks for their support in the Chamber and in the Table Office, and I congratulate Ronda Miller, who has taken over the role of Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. I thank the catering staff, who look after each member—

Mr Gareth Ward: The mint slice.

Mr STUART AYRES: The mint slice—definitely the mint slice. Thanks, Maria, for looking after us in the Members' Dining Room, and thanks to the finance guys, who put pay in our bank accounts every now and again to ensure we survive. To the Hansard team: I am not sure how you turn the sometimes absolute ramblings in this Chamber into well-crafted speeches. To the Whip on the other side of the Chamber, Richard Amery—the grandfather or father of the House—

Mr Richard Amery: Father will do.

Mr STUART AYRES: He and his able deputy, Ryan Park, have done an outstanding job.

Mr Richard Amery: If I were your father I would send to you to your room.

Mr STUART AYRES: That is exactly right. I will see the member on the lawn bowling green at St Marys. I thank the chairs of the committees of which I am a member. The member for Baulkham Hills is the Chair of the Committee on Economic Development and the member for Albury is the Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety. They have both been extremely understanding about some of the challenges that a Whip faces in trying to attend all of those committees. They have both done an extremely good job in their roles. I thank the Speaker, the Deputy-Speaker, the Assistant-Speaker and the Acting-Speakers. It is good to see my close friend the member for Heathcote in the Speaker's chair at the moment. I am sure he is also learning more about the Parliament in his role as Acting-Speaker.

I could not offer a seasonal felicitation without recognising some of my western Sydney colleagues in this Chamber. To my close friend the member for Londonderry, thank you for your support throughout the course of the year, in particular during that hectic period of the general election. I congratulate the other members of Parliament from western Sydney electorates. The member for Mulgoa has done an outstanding job in her electorate as its first Liberal member. The member for Blue Mountains is doing an outstanding job right across the mountains. My close friend the member Smithfield is the first Liberal member to win in that electorate. That western Sydney team will continue in leaps and bounds over the course of this Parliament. Residents across western Sydney know they have a strong group of representatives looking after their interests in this Parliament.

To the leadership of the Government, the Premier and the Leader of The Nationals, I thank you for your strong and dedicated leadership throughout the course of the year. To the Ministers who have helped settle everyone in, your guidance across portfolios has been extremely helpful. I will make special note of all of the staff of the Ministers' offices. The ministerial staff do an exceptional job. They have to deal with a large group of demanding backbenchers and members who always want things more quickly than they can be made available. People in parliamentary liaison roles, such as the media adviser roles, are required to be on the end of the phone or at the end of an email. The backbenchers definitely appreciate their dedicated work over many days of what I am sure were very long hours. We thank them for their work. I wish everyone a merry Christmas.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

[During the giving of notices of motions]

Ms Linda Burney: The member for Smithfield is out of order.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I advise the member for Smithfield that motions of which members are giving notice should not reflect on individuals or be political.

Mr Chris Hartcher: To the point of order: Standing Order 73 states that one cannot make a reflection except by way of substantive motion. This is a substantive motion. I invite the Clerk to show you Standing Order 73, Mr Acting-Speaker.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I ask the member for Smithfield to finish giving his notice of motion and then to hand it up to the Clerk.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

QUAKERS HILL NURSING HOME FIRE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [4.54 p.m.]: I will speak about a tragic event that has had a significant impact on my electorate. I refer to the Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire

that occurred last Friday. I do so with great sadness not only for the families who lost loved ones but also for the residents who find themselves compelled to relocate to nursing home facilities elsewhere throughout Sydney. What happened last Friday is beyond comprehension for most of us. It was certainly a huge tragedy, and it occurred because of the alleged actions of one individual. I do not wish to dwell on that, but it is unbelievable that such an event could happen so close to home for so many people.

Many of the residents of the home suffer from dementia. They found themselves in the most extraordinary circumstances last Friday. I express my condolences to the families who have lost loved ones as a result of this tragic event. I attended with the Premier the memorial service on Wednesday this week and was touched by many moments during that service. We heard many stories during the service and witnessed much sadness. I found myself, for the first time ever, listening for the whole of the service to what sadness sounds like. The staff have been scarred for, what I suggest will be, a significant period as a result of what they went through. The sadness was beyond belief and almost beyond explanation. At the conclusion of the service the Premier and I moved around and spoke to staff members and emergency service workers and listened to the stories they told. They were prepared to share brief accounts of the terrible events that occurred on Friday morning.

I met the firefighters from Schofields fire station who were the first on the scene, followed very closely by the firefighters from Blacktown station, which is located probably a kilometre from my place. I spoke to them and Greg Mullins, the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW, about how they were feeling and coping. Whilst they said they were feeling well and being well looked after by the emergency services you could sense when you spoke to them how much of an impact the fire had had on them. Then I met the police officers from the Quakers Hill Local Area Command and from Blacktown station. I met the young probationary constable who was the first on the scene and spent some time talking to her about how she was coping. The thing that struck me about meeting all these emergency service personnel was the indelible mark that this tragedy has left not just on the community of Blacktown and the electorate of Riverstone but also on those who were confronted with the realities of that horror. No doubt it will have an effect on them for the rest of their lives.

During the memorial service we also heard from the chief executive of the organisation that owns the nursing home, who was clearly and visibly moved by what had happened. You could see that he felt an element of responsibility, unnecessarily so, but that he could also see something good in such a horror event. That was the fact that staff were working hard, unconcerned about their own safety but concerned for the residents of the village. They were concerned to make sure that everybody was safe and okay and that they were transported to hospital appropriately. I spoke to a member of staff on that day who, despite suffering from back, leg and shoulder pain from having carried six residents out of the nursing home, was determined to attend the memorial service.

I spoke also to another staff member who told me how guilty she felt because she had been unwell that night and was unable to be there. She felt she should have been there at the time of the tragedy. I raise this matter because it is significant. It was a huge tragedy and it has left a mark on the people of Blacktown, the residents and staff and the emergency service officers. I place on record today the community's great appreciation for the emergency services personnel and those staff who found themselves in the most horrific circumstances last Friday. I place on record also my appreciation and that of the electorate of Blacktown, and I am sure all members, for their fantastic efforts. We all should make sure that they continue to get the support they need now and into the future.

TRIBUTE TO MERVYN EARL CARTWRIGHT

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [4.59 p.m.]: I offer my condolences to the family of Mervyn Cartwright who passed away last week and whose funeral was held in Penrith on Wednesday. The name Cartwright is rugby league royalty to the people of Penrith and St Marys. On 2 June 1967, Mervyn Earl Cartwright was one of the 11 signatories who created rugby league history through their signing of the memorandum of association that brought the Penrith Rugby League Club into existence. Those 11 names are firmly entrenched in the club's history as part of the club's constitution. To many in the district it would seem like only yesterday that Merv was mowing the playing field or stacking the canteen as in the early days of its first grade existence that was the norm for anyone involved in sport.

Merv Cartwright lived in Carpenter Street, St Marys, and his official occupation listed on a document was Head Storeman. Merv and his wife, Margaret, created a legacy for the district, supplying no fewer than four boys, Cliff, David, John and Michael, to the sport of rugby league. Not wanting to be left out, their daughter,

Mary, married long-time Penrith rugby league administrator Jimmy Jones. In terms of careers, there was not much that Merv could not do or turn his hand to. Fruit shops, nurseries, a florist shop, a paving business—you name it, Merv had a go at it. But his passion was rugby league, and from 1967 to 1971 he held the position of Secretary of Penrith Rugby League Club.

Merv grew up playing front row for the Penrith district team, and as secretary of the club he was instrumental in getting the club admitted to the top division of the Sydney competition in 1967, fighting off a determined Wentworthville club for the spot in the then New South Wales Rugby League Association. In 1966 word was out that the New South Wales Rugby League would introduce two new teams to the Sydney premiership in 1967. Three teams were vying for the top spots: Penrith, Cronulla-Sutherland and the Wentworthville Magpies. Cronulla-Sutherland had been assured of one place, leaving Penrith and Wentworthville to fight it out for the other place. New South Wales Rugby League eventually settled on Penrith due to its location and a win in the 1966 second division.

On 23 April 1967 Penrith Park was officially opened with a match between the Panthers and the reigning premiers, St George. Penrith won 24-12 in front of 12,201 spectators. Penrith finished eleventh that season, with 12 points from five wins, two draws and 11 losses. Penrith surprised everyone and it is Merv's work that helped the club to that successful year. There were 20 years of struggle after that before Penrith found its next final series in 1985. It is no coincidence that the Cartwright name featured prominently in the Penrith Panthers climb up the ladder. After graduating from the St Mary's club, Merv's son, John, went on to play 200 first grade games for the Panthers. He also made many appearances for New South Wales and played 18 tests for the Kangaroos.

Again, not surprisingly, the founding member of the John Cartwright fan club was his father Merv, who unfortunately spent the last few years mostly bedridden in Penrith's Mountain View Nursing Home, across the road from the home ground of his beloved Panthers. The eldest of Merv's sons, Cliff, said his brother's success is due to the fact that, "He's just a fair dinkum bloke, there is no crap in him. He gets trust out of people. He was always a leader." Much of the same can be said of all the Cartwrights, no doubt attributed to the personal life and skills of their parents. Merv Cartwright's name will live on in the district as one of the founding fathers of the club courtesy of the First Grade Player of the Year award being named in his honour. Merv leaves behind a library of memories, 12 grandchildren and a great-granddaughter. Whenever the mighty Penrith Panthers run onto the paddock the people of Penrith will always have champions like Merv Cartwright to thank and remember.

FLYING FOX CONTROL

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [5.04 p.m.]: Mr Acting-Speaker [Mr John Barilaro], I congratulate you on your ascendancy to the chair. Today I shall discuss a great concern of mine: the camp of flying foxes located directly adjacent to the Sylvanvale Foundation's new Mikarie Place Child Care Centre. The centre is not located in my electorate, but I have grave concerns about what is happening there. Earlier this year I had the honour of attending the official opening of the centre with the Governor of New South Wales, Marie Bashir, and it is a truly remarkable community asset. The state-of-the-art centre provides 59 child care places where children with disabilities can receive specialist long day care and early education alongside children without disabilities.

The Sylvanvale Foundation meticulously planned every aspect of the centre over many years to provide a safe, positive setting for children, carers and teachers. Unfortunately, even the best laid plans can be compromised by the unpredictability of nature. Currently an estimated 14,000 fruit bats or flying foxes have set up camp overlooking the centre's playground. I believe that this presents a significant health and safety concern. The danger posed by the proximity of the camp is higher than usual due to the presence of children at the centre. The Office of Environment and Heritage provides a list of safety measures to follow around these animals, including instructions to avoid contact with flying foxes and call the Wildlife Information and Rescue Service when injured or trapped flying foxes are found; use thick gloves to handle dead flying foxes; immediately apply antiseptic to bites or scratches; seek medical attention immediately; and obtain a post-exposure vaccine after contact.

My concern is that the children at the Mikarie Place centre, those with disabilities and those without disabilities, may not fully comprehend the dangers associated with encountering a fallen, dead or trapped flying fox or its droppings. The centre provides constant supervision of its children, but even with the most careful monitoring the introduction of an infectious hazard could go unnoticed momentarily. Thankfully, the Office of Environment and Heritage has a number of techniques that can be applied to alleviate this danger. The least

harmful method appears to be a range of acoustic olfactory and visual deterrents. These encourage the flying foxes to move their camp elsewhere without causing unnecessary harm. These deterrents include recorded sounds such as predator calls, animal calls or other loud and sudden noises broadcast near the current camp.

Another method is to set up movement-activated bright light grids or strobe lights, or to introduce an unpleasant smell such as carbide. The final option is to install scaring devices such as models of birds or reflective streamers. Each of these methods is designed to relocate the camps while keeping the risk of harming the animals to an absolute minimum. The Office of Environment and Heritage is reluctant to disturb flying fox camps as this separates the animals from a reliable food source, inevitably causes stress and some risk of injury, and because attempts to relocate camps are often unsuccessful. However, for the reasons I have outlined today I believe that this specific site presents extraordinary circumstances, and I strongly suggest that a relocation attempt is warranted.

Sutherland Shire Council is responsible for the land where the camp is located. I strongly urge the council to request a relocation from the Office of Environment and Heritage as soon as possible. A common argument against such measures is that moving a colony will simply shift the problem to a new location. Again I argue that this site entails greater risks to health and safety than most sites to which the camp would move. I believe that this action is appropriate whenever there is an elevated danger to children. Eventually, the camp will settle in an area that has significantly less impact on its human neighbours.

It is understood that land clearing along the coast of New South Wales has resulted in habitat loss for some species, and no-one wants to threaten the survival of these native species. They are an important part of our ecosystem, dispersing seeds for the spread of tress and bush plants and keeping insect and mosquito numbers under control. Efforts are underway to support the survival of vulnerable species but these must be balanced to maintain health and safety standards and minimise impacts from flying foxes. Careful management can allow flying-fox camps to exist alongside urban communities in harmony but determining the best locations for these camps is essential. I wish everybody in the House a merry Christmas.

MOVEMBER

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.09 p.m.]: In Australia in 2004 a serious campaign started that now has great significance around the world. This campaign gives men throughout Australia a good reason to put away the shaving cream and razor—or at least to leave the upper lip untouched. It is a campaign that is not for the follically challenged. Of course, I refer to Movember. Unfortunately, for some men the look of a moustache is ridiculous, while for others it looks great. I take the example of my father, who has had a moustache for most of his life; it has truly given him a distinctive look. It is a distinctive attribute of my father that I cannot emphatically state I was fortunate enough to inherit. On that point, according to my wife, the jury is still out.

However, beneath the upper lip is the real concern that Movember seeks to tackle. It is an issue that affects men worldwide. The issue is men's health in the form of prostate cancer and depression. Going back to the lighter side of the campaign, I pay tribute to all mo-bros for taking a beating in the name of a good cause, with which the member for Camden would concur. Some members of this Parliament have joined thousands of men around Australia who have put their reputation on the line. They have allowed themselves to be the subject of interest, laughter, jokes and even ridicule. Yet it seems these jokes and laughs signify the potency of Movember, because jokes and laughter get people talking. Jokes and laughter bring out in the open the importance of men's health. Men become aware of prostate health. Men know that there are people out there to talk to when they are feeling down. When all the jokes and laughs have been had, what remains is the message—and the message is of significant importance to Australian men.

Prostate cancer is a silent killer of Australian men. One in nine men in Australia will develop prostate cancer in their lifetime. Prostate cancer is responsible for roughly the same number of deaths in Australian men each year as breast cancer deaths in women. Yet only 10 per cent of men between the ages of 50 to 70 can admit to being tested for the disease. Underlying this low percentage is the mentality amongst men that we are invincible, that we are a specimen of perfect health—going to the doctor and being tested for prostate cancer is not the macho thing to do. It is this image that the laughter and jokes is slowly beginning to undo.

Depression has an equally devastating effect on Australian men and their families. According to beyondblue, around one in six Australian men suffer from depression at any given time. Just like prostate cancer, instead of speaking to someone about their issues, men have a tendency to bottle it up. Instead of reaching out to friends and families, the issue is often left burning inside them. In 2000 the Australian Bureau of

Statistics stated that four times more young men than women commit suicide. Depression is a big factor in the statistics. For older Australian men, aged 65 years and older, the suicide rate remains very high. Movember and the bit of fun it creates goes a long way to bring the issue of depression out in the open. It lets people know that help is available, and there is someone to talk to when they feel that there is no hope in the world.

I have had many conversations with Fairfield residents since growing a mo. What surprised me is how people have reacted after the jokes have been cast aside. I am sure the mo-bros in the Chamber would have experienced something similar with family, friends, colleagues and the people they represent. This campaign has become so well-known that last Saturday at the forty-fifth anniversary of the Fogolar Furlan Association at Club Italia at Lansvale the proceeds of the evening's raffle of \$9,600 went towards fighting prostate cancer. Dr Cozzi, a Sydney urologist, and a proud descendant from the northern Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, spoke about his work and the fight to battle prostate cancer. Like the Movember campaign, Dr Cozzi also distributed information in the form of a cardboard cut-out of a gingerbread man with a very important message on it that read:

Hi! I am Surf Man.

I want to talk to you about my blue bit.

Prostate Cancer is the most common cause of male deaths from cancer.

In Australia, there is around 20,000 new cases and 3,000 deaths every year. Prostate Cancer is curable if detected early.

Be a Smartie!

www.urologysydney.org

That is the whole point of Movember. It gets the message across to Australian men, by using the one medium we can all relate to—laughter. The more ridiculous the moustache, the more heads are turned and the more conversation is created. As such, the worse the style of moustache, the better the look. I commend all the mo-bros and mo-sistas who took part in Movember. It is through a united commitment that we may one day reduce the number of men who are lost through prostate cancer and depression.

SAMOA TSUNAMI AND GROUNDSWELL

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [5.14 p.m.]: The tsunami that hit Samoa in 2009 was incredibly devastating. When an 8.1 magnitude earthquake struck 200 kilometres south-west of the Samoan coast early in the morning of September 29 it created a tsunami reported to be up to seven metres high in some areas. The aftermath of the tsunami was horrendous. Nearly 200 people died, entire villages were wiped out, and vital utilities such as electricity and water were lost. Samoa's development was set back many years in just one day of destruction. Since then, the rebuilding process has slowly started, and Samoa is gradually returning to a normal life.

The rebuilding process has been aided by Groundswell, a not-for-profit organisation set up in the wake of the disaster by Reg Barton, assistant director of Randwick TAFE, and Mark Hawkins, head teacher of carpentry at Randwick TAFE. Groundswell started from a brainstorming session between Reg and Mark, both keen surfers, who felt a duty to do what they could to help the Samoan community in the aftermath of the tsunami. Thus far Groundswell has made two trips to Samoa to assist with the rebuilding process. These trips have been organised and attended by Reg and Mark, as well as groups of carpentry apprentices from the Randwick TAFE institute.

The first trip took place a few months after the tsunami, with the Groundswell team paying out of their own pockets to visit Poutasi, a village on the south-east coast of Upolu Island in Samoa. Poutasi lost nine lives on that morning of the disaster, as well as the village and the way of life. Through its first and subsequent visits, Groundswell has forged a friendship and a working alliance with Samoan chief Matai and the chief of the Poutasi village, Joe Annandale. It has also helped with rebuilding the lives of the villagers. Its vision is for a model village, allowing Poutasi to live sustainably and families to return to some form of normality. The village will adopt a whole-of-life approach, including a preschool facility, focusing on numeracy and literacy development, and cultural education, which is intended to re-engage young people with their culture. It will also provide examples of sustainable living. Groundswell aims to foster a business environment to stimulate the village's economy and to ensure it does not need to rely on external funding.

The second trip undertaken by Groundswell occurred this year. The team built a brand-new arts centre for the community in a matter of weeks—a truly amazing effort. I understand that plans are underway for

another trip early in 2012. It is not possible for everyone who wants to help Groundswell to make the trip to Samoa. It is for this reason that Groundswell organises an annual paddle across Sydney Harbour on the anniversary of the tsunami every year, September 29. This year a small team of surfers on boards joined outrigger crews to paddle across Sydney Heads, from the Quarantine Station to Rose Bay. In the outriggers were Polynesian NRL players such as Nigel Vagana, Frank Pritchard and Roy Asostasi, all supporters of Groundswell. For those who did not dare to paddle across Sydney Heads, a supporters' boat was there every step of the way. The annual paddle, both this year and last year, has raised tens of thousands of dollars for the relief effort. Groundswell is a brilliant initiative, and I commend all those involved for their efforts.

In times of need it is incumbent upon those of us with the ability to do what we can to help. Groundswell has not just simply helped the people of Samoa—it has gone above and beyond the call of duty. In the past two years Mark Hawkins, Reg Barton and all of those involved with the Groundswell project have donated much of their lives to this worthy cause. I am proud to note that this initiative originated at and is supported by the Randwick institute of TAFE, in my electorate of Coogee. I have been to Randwick TAFE, East Sydney TAFE and Sydney TAFE. I commend the work they do. In particular, I commend the work of Reg and Mark—I know them both. They are a great asset to Randwick TAFE. I wish both of them and the Poutasi village nothing but the best for the future. I commend the work of Groundswell to the House.

WHITE RIBBON DAY

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.19 p.m.]: Today I speak on White Ribbon Day, which aims to promote the positive role that men can play in bringing an end to violence against women by raising awareness within the community. Violence towards women would have to be one of the most despicable acts possible. Violence can be physical, mental and sexual. The risk factors for perpetrators include low education, past exposure to child maltreatment or witnessing violence between parents, harmful use of alcohol, attitudes accepting of violence and gender inequality. Violence against women remains a hidden crime often shrouded in secrecy and shame, collusion and cover-up.

Low levels of reporting and the reticence of women to agree to police charging offenders makes it difficult to assist women in a violent relationship, either with a family member or a partner. Sadly, 48 per cent of Australian women report experiencing at least one incident of physical violence over their lifetime. Days such as White Ribbon Day can begin to reduce these statistics. Most victims of domestic violence are aged between 20 and 30 years old, so younger women are at greater risk. Indigenous women suffer higher rates of more serious violence than other women. Women from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are victims of violence from their partner during their relationship. Due to language and cultural restraints, they often find it difficult to report that violence to authorities. Women with disabilities can experience violence at higher rates and more frequently.

Domestic violence is the leading contributor to death, disabilities and illness among women aged 15 to 44. The ongoing impacts of domestic violence can result in depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, mental illness and homelessness. When women who are victims of violence become homeless it results in further disruption of their lives. They need to find a safe refuge from their perpetrator and often have to leave their local communities. This then results in the children needing to leave their schools and friends. Again, women have to pick up the pieces and try to begin a new life away from supportive family and friends. White Ribbon Day aims to promote the prevention of violence against women. We believe that every single one of us, especially men, can make changes to the way we live to make this happen.

As community leaders and decision-makers, men can play a key role in helping to stop violence against women. Men can speak out and step in when male friends and relatives insult or attack women. This is a men's issue because a minority of men treat women and girls with contempt and violence. It is up to the majority of men to create the culture that this is unacceptable. I was talking to the extremely hardworking staff from Minister Skinner's office, Zaritha, J. Mack and Cassandra Smith, who all were extremely supportive of White Ribbon Day, as are, I am sure, all staff and members of Parliament. White Ribbon Day encourages men to take a stand against violence in their families, communities and networks. The White Ribbon Foundation is to be commended for its positive promotion to one day wipe out violence against women forever.

LEBANESE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.22 p.m.]: I advise the House of an event I attended earlier this year that involved a number of my constituents and was of interest to many of my other constituents. It was the

launch of the book *On Being Lebanese in Australia* on 23 September at the premises of the Arab Council Australia. The book was co-authored by Dr Paul Tabar, Greg Noble and Scott Poynting. I have read a number of other books by these authors on important topics that have contributed to useful public debate and, importantly, have assisted me in my role as the member for Liverpool. These other works include *Kebabs, Kids, Cops and Crime: Youth Ethnicity and Crime* published in 2000, and *Bin Laden in the Suburbs: Criminalising the Arab Other* published in 2004.

At the book launch the Master of Ceremonies was Randa Katan, Executive Director of the Arab Council Australia, a well-known and hardworking member of the Arabic community. Speakers at the launch included Dr Rosemary Suliman, chairperson of the Arab Council Australia and senior lecturer at the University of Western Sydney, and Mr Joseph Wakim, OAM, former Victorian Multicultural Affairs Commissioner. Also present was my parliamentary colleague and member for Bankstown, Ms Tania Mihailuk. The other speaker of particular interest was Dr Paul Tabar, one of the authors. Dr Tabar is the Director of the Institute for Migration Studies, Associate Professor of Sociology/Anthropology at the Lebanese American University, Beirut campus, and Associate Researcher at the Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney.

In the second paragraph of the introduction to the book the authors note that a conventional book on the Lebanese community would commence with a mapping exercise. That would point out that almost 75,000 Australians were born in Lebanon, over 180,000 Australians claim a Lebanese ancestry and about 75 per cent live in Sydney, with over half identifying as Christian and 40 per cent identifying as Muslim, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures published in 2008. However, through this book the authors sought to do something different and more difficult but at least as important and quite useful for public debate generally and for parliamentarians. They rely in their work on the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu and Ghassan Hage but have a strong empirical engagement with the reality of Lebanese communities in Australia.

The authors focus particularly on the complex and differentiated experience of Lebanese in Australia—that is, that there is no simple set of characteristics of the Lebanese community and there is not one single culture or tradition that remains the same: inevitably, it evolves in a multicultural Australia. In a sense, that is one of the key points of the book. The authors look at a number of practices and issues within the Lebanese community. The first one they deal with in any detail is the rite of Ashura—the rite of Shia Muslims that commemorates the martyrdom of Husayn ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet killed at the Battle of Karbala by the forces of Yazid I and the Umayyad army. That is a matter of considerable importance to the Shia community.

Interestingly, the book deals with that by pointing out that Shia Muslims who would not attend the mosque or Ashura ceremonies in Lebanon do attend them in Australia. It becomes part of their commitment to their culture but, clearly, not the same as in Lebanon because in Lebanon they would not have been part of it. The things they think about when they attend the Australian ceremonies are different from what they might have thought about when they were in Lebanon. In an Australian Ashura they think about the challenges they face with racism and other issues. It is an interesting and much more sophisticated view of multiculturalism than that quite often talked about in places like this and in simple speeches.

Interestingly, the authors also talk in some detail in the book about dancing the Dubke. Anyone who has attended an Arabic function would know all about that. However, it is danced somewhat differently in Australia, and different types of people do different things. Instead of people from one area of Lebanon dancing one type of dance, in Australia lots of people are involved in different dances. It is about the complex differentiation of multicultural Australia; it is not as simple and as easy as people talk about. The book deals with a series of issues that I found quite interesting. One was the Lebanese community involvement with rugby league—a demand of the community that they become involved in the Australian way. They became involved with rugby league through the Bulldogs and then were criticised for their involvement. Basically, they cannot win because they are attacked for not being involved and then when they do they are criticised for the way in which they are involved. It is a particularly interesting book and I suggest to anyone in this place interested in multicultural Australia that it is a seriously good place to start as it raises some interesting issues.

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.27 p.m.]: I acknowledge and congratulate the hardworking students in the Rockdale electorate who recently completed their Higher School Certificate exams. Students from the Rockdale electorate joined this year with 72,000 other students who sat those exams—the largest number of students enrolled. While the Higher School Certificate written exams commenced on Monday

17 October, the preparations for students began many months ago. There is little doubt that this period of an adolescent's life is challenging and can result in a great deal of stress for the student, their family and their friends. I take this opportunity to praise the efforts of the students of Rockdale for what has been a testing year—excuse the pun. From cramming equations to memorising historical dates, Higher School Certificate students at James Cook Boys Technology High School and Moorefield Girls High School have had a tumultuous 2011.

It is important to remember that the senior year at high school is more than just assessment tasks and exams; it is the year when senior students become leaders in their school community, when students develop into mature young adults, and when they realise that their teachers are their most valuable educational resource, not Google. The high schools in the electorate of Rockdale have excelled in multiple areas of school life, not just the high academic results. These include renowned sporting reputations and excelling in technology applied subjects. It is noteworthy that the high schools in the electorate of Rockdale also have a proud reputation in the local community.

I commend the school captains of the two high schools in the Rockdale electorate for the leadership they have shown in this important year for them: at James Cook Boys Technology High School Ali El Hussein and Anthony Nedanoski, and at Moorefield Girls High School Katerina Jovanovska and Samia Kandil. As a teacher I always found that the junior school genuinely appreciates the role that the school captain plays in setting a high standard for the younger students to follow. With written exams having concluded for the Higher School Certificate on 11 November, the time has now come for the class of 2011 to relax and enjoy themselves. While they may have the nervous wait until 14 December for their results to come out, I encourage schoolies to behave in a responsible manner and be respectful and law-abiding in their celebrations. Mistakes made at this time of life can all too often follow you through the rest of your life.

Once again it is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the students of Rockdale electorate in this place today. As a former teacher of senior year students and a former Higher School Certificate marker I know how hard they work and the number of hours they commit to achieving their goals. As their local member I am proud to congratulate Rockdale students on completing their Higher School Certificate exams and I wish them every success in their future endeavours.

BARANGAROO DEVELOPMENT

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [5.32 p.m.]: I will speak today on an important issue to my electorate, which goes to the heart of the planning process and the financial management of our State. Today I will make a statement on the evidence which points to a \$1 billion gift to Lend Lease by the former Government and the obligation on the current Government to act. Australians for Sustainable Development, of which I am a member, commissioned a review of major developments in the northern end of the Sydney central business district over the last 10 years.

One of the major issues raised by the review in relation to the Barangaroo development is: Has Lend Lease paid a fair price for publicly owned land at Barangaroo? As a former mayor and councillor for over 12 years I am very familiar with valuation and development issues. I am advised that true land value is largely determined by what can be built on the site, and the measure that should remain comparable from site to site is the cost of land per square metre of gross floor area. Analysis of land sales in the northern end of the city over recent years stretching from the Lend Lease Darling Quarter site at the southern end of Darling Harbour, the Goodsell building at Chifley Square, and down to Circular Quay have an average land price of \$3,183 per square metre of gross floor space.

The Auditor-General's report released on 15 June this year made it clear for the first time that Lend Lease will pay only \$1.03 billion, spread over 10 years, for Barangaroo. That report suggested that if the final value share payment does not materialise the actual payment might be significantly less. Lend Lease acknowledges that the net present value of the payments is \$500 million. Adding the \$200 million Lend Lease asserts it is committed to pay for public works in Barangaroo South produces a cash price of \$700 million paid on contract signing. The Lend Lease plan for Barangaroo has 560,000 square metres of building area, which equates to Lend Lease paying about \$1,250 per square metre of gross floor space based on a consideration of \$700 million. Lend Lease is obtaining this prime harbour foreshore land for about 38 per cent of the fair value of the land. This has cost the New South Wales Government and taxpayers somewhere between \$700 million and \$1.4 billion.

If the plan changes over time to more residential and less commercial the end result will be an even bigger lost revenue opportunity for the Government. On top of this fair value question, the true cost to the New South Wales taxpayer may be several billion dollars more, taking into account the massive transport challenges of the site as outlined in the Auditor-General's report. It is important to consider the process for arriving at this outcome, as conducted on behalf of the previous Labor Government. In 2006 Hill Thalys won an international contest for the design of Barangaroo. In due course the remaining judges were dismissed and Paul Keating was appointed as Chairman of the Design Excellence Review Panel of the Barangaroo Delivery Authority. The authority then chose to ignore the original contest by inviting Lend Lease, Mirvac and Multiplex to submit design and build solutions for the entire site in a highly restricted form of tender process. Lend Lease was awarded the contract to develop Barangaroo South with a design remarkably similar to its losing entry in the original contest.

From the time of the award until the last election the Keneally Government refused to disclose the amount Lend Lease paid for the land or to offer any comfort that the narrow tender process achieved a fair and reasonable price for the land. Repeated freedom of information requests for the authority's board minutes to determine if the board knew of this under-market result were denied by the previous Government, and have not yet been provided by the current Government. Today I am calling on the Premier, as a matter of urgency, to: examine the Lend Lease contract for Barangaroo to establish whether it allows for a fair value review of the approved contract; outline other actions the Government will take to ensure that the true value of the land is obtained for the people of New South Wales; and review the competency of the board of the Barangaroo Delivery Authority and others involved in the tender process in approving a fair value of the public land.

Finally, I have written to the Auditor-General and call on him to thoroughly review this transaction. The evidence points to the fact that the people of New South Wales have been short-changed by an amount in the order of \$1 billion, due to a flawed tender process with this once-in-a-generation opportunity of 22 hectares of public waterfront land. It is my fear that this flawed tender process has seen a billion dollar gift from the people of New South Wales to Lend Lease. I call on the Government to act. The Government must now act to ensure that the people of New South Wales have achieved fair value for this precious piece of waterfront land.

QUAKERS HILL NURSING HOME FIRE

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [5.37 p.m.]: Friday 18 November 2011 was a day of unimaginable horror and tragedy for our local community. It was the day of the Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire. Much has been said of what happened in the fire last week and of the events which led to the tragic loss of life. As the local member for the area it was difficult for me to imagine that such a tragedy could occur so close to home. When I heard the news that morning I went immediately to the nursing home and I stood at the police tape line with family members, neighbours and members of the community. Relatives gathered there seeking news of loved ones. It was a horrific situation and I could do nothing as a local member other than to be a friend who would wait for news with them.

I was impressed with the manner that the emergency service personnel—so many of them—conducted themselves. I especially acknowledge and pay tribute to the police, the ambulance, the fire brigade and a host of others who did a terrific job and responded quickly to the unfolding disaster in the early hours of that morning. Special mention must be made of the Schofields and Blacktown fire brigades and the police of Quakers Hill local area command who were first on the scene—less than 10 minutes after the alarm was raised at 4.53 a.m. The night staff on duty began to evacuate residents at great risk to their own personal safety. Probationary constables Kirsten Grech and Ron Johinke were among the police officers who first arrived on site and they promptly began evacuating the elderly residents despite having no protective equipment or breathing apparatus.

Staff, police and fireys were assisted by local residents and passersby who heard or saw the disaster unfolding. Superintendent Gary Merryweather, the local area commander, said that what his officers did was very brave and he was proud of how the entire command had responded to the crisis. Superintendent Ian Krimmer from the Schofields Fire Brigade praised firefighters for their bravery and said that in order to evacuate the residents many firefighters had to crawl across the floors and feel their way along the walls, with the thick black smoke making it almost impossible to see their own feet. In the unfolding disaster the community spirit was evident as passing motorists stopped to help transport frail residents to safety; locals from the area brought blankets and rushed to the aid of the elderly residents; Quakers Hill Anglican Church threw open its doors providing a sanctuary; shopkeepers from the local area anonymously brought in all sorts of food and supplies to the church in case people needed them; and police officers drove ambulances to help free up the paramedics.

I spent some time at the church and talked to ministers from local congregations and with the family members of those who were at the church. Residents from the nursing home who were able to walk to the church were assisted for a distance of 150 metres. In some ways they were lucky as they were able to move of their volition, whereas many frail nursing home residents were unable to do so. I talked to those people, milled around the room for a while and tried to give comfort where I could. I was surprised by the number of people I met who were doing wonderful things and who had come from everywhere to lend a hand. The collaboration between the local community, police and emergency service personnel revealed the character, generosity and bravery of community members as they rallied during the crisis. To date nine residents have lost their lives in that tragedy that occurred last Friday.

I pay tribute to Alma Smith from Quakers Hill, Lola Bennett, Ella Wood, Urbana Alipio, Caesar Galea from Bligh Park, Doris Becke from Riverstone, Neeltje Valkay from Quakers Hill and the two remaining victims who have not yet been formally identified. I say to the families and to those who have lost someone dear to them, to the 23 residents who remain in hospitals around this city recovering or fighting for their lives, that our thoughts and prayers are with them in this difficult time.

TRIBUTE TO COUNCILLOR BRENTON BANFIELD

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [5.42 p.m.]: I pay tribute to Councillor Brenton Banfield who died on 7 November 2011 after a brave fight against motor neurone disease. Brenton was aged 62. I first met Brenton some years ago at a comedy trio Tripod concert. At that stage Brenton was the much-loved Mayor of Campbelltown and was part of the audience enjoying friendly banter with the comedians. Only after some time was it pointed out to them that this friendly, avuncular person was the Mayor of Campbelltown. Brenton and his wife, Ruth, were largely responsible for the construction of the building in which the comedians were performing. That night said it all about Brenton—fun, jovial, witty and also a wonderful community leader whose vision was a driving force for the construction of the wonderful Campbelltown Arts Centre. A former member of the board of the local health service, Brenton was also pivotal in the commencement of the medical school at the University of Western Sydney whose interns graduate on 23 December.

There is a bit of Brenton in every public leader in Campbelltown, regardless of political affiliation. At the recent swearing in of Anoulack Chanthivong as Mayor of Campbelltown, all councillors spoke positively of Anoulack. Sitting in the audience that night, the striking thing about Campbelltown council was not only how functional and respectful the behaviour was—in stark contrast to the behaviour in this place—but also how motivated every councillor was to work for the public good of Campbelltown. To a large extent that was due to the changes that Brenton brought to council by his presence and respect. Brenton respected everybody he ever met. He saw his political opponents as those whose beliefs were misguided rather than wrong. His brother, Lester Banfield, said he was a caring and honest man who made a real difference to Campbelltown. Brenton was the second of five children. His brothers, Lester and Kendall, spoke at his memorial service. Tom Shiner, branch manager, paid him this tribute:

He's gone, you can shed a tear and grieve that he's left this mortal coil or be joyful because you knew and were with him as he lived.

You can close your eyes and in a secret spiritual way saying he'll come back, or open them for all to see through, at the strength of his courage in adversity, his decency and principles and care of family first.

Your heart may feel empty, that you no longer can see him, so, make your heart full again because of all those good things you shared with him.

You can turn your back on tomorrow and live yesterday or you can be glad for tomorrow because of the love and joy you embraced with him yesterday.

Light the true spirit of his philosophy and belief of law cherishing his memory and let it live on.

Do what he would most want.

Not to be consumed by sadness and grief, but telling us all smile, open your eyes, love and go on, remembering that we are all part of everything.

VAIL ... Brenton Banfield
A good and decent human being.

As Brenton's brother, Kendall, said, "Rest your soul, the time has come to let you go, though destiny stole you away, won't let these memories of you fade." Eric Kontos, in his editorial in the *Liverpool Champion*, said that

every person says the same thing about Brenton—he was a nice man and a true gentleman. Brenton worked tirelessly as a councillor and as mayor but, most importantly, he led by example as a wonderful family man who adored his wife, Ruth, of 41 years. Brenton's boys, Evan and Trent, spoke movingly about their father at a get together at Campbelltown Art Gallery.

It is clear that Brenton's kindness and support were pivotal in the creation of Campbelltown as a positive place. The final quote that I remember of Brenton—and one that I have carried with me for most of my political career—is, "Just do the right thing and let the politics look after itself." That simple sentence embodies everything that needs to be said about Brenton. We are poorer for his parting but richer for knowing him. A gentleman and a thoroughly decent man, Brenton Banfield will go down in history of Campbelltown as one of the good guys. He will always be remembered as one of the founding fathers of modern Campbelltown and south-western Sydney as we know them today. The final song at Brenton's funeral was the Easybeats classic, "*Friday on my mind*". The words of that song, "I'm gonna have fun in the city, be with my girl she's so pretty", is certainly what Brenton did. May he rest in peace.

ORANGE ELECTORATE TAFE AWARDS

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.47 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House some exciting developments at TAFE in the Central West. Recently in Dubbo a number of TAFE teachers from Orange were honoured for their outstanding contribution to the organisation. Chantal Hawkins, retail teacher, Ashleigh Jones, professional development coordinator, Ian Manchester, horticulture teacher, Neil Milton, manufacturing teacher and the Orange members of the TAFE Western library team were all presented with director's awards at a ceremony in Dubbo. Ms Hawkins received the award for great initiative, creativity and care thus ensuring that students achieved success. Ms Jones was honoured for her commitment to ensuring the highest quality development of institute staff.

Ian Manchester, who teaches horticulture in Orange, was awarded for the way in which he delivers educational materials to industry clients halfway across the State and for his dedication to teaching. Neil Milton, who is a manufacturing teacher based out of Orange, was chosen for the director's awards as he goes beyond the call of duty to meet the needs of customers. The TAFE Western library team, which is part of a wider team from throughout the region, was recognised also for its exemplary service to staff and students. I commend Ms Baxter, director of TAFE Western, for the fine work that she and her staff do with respect to TAFE throughout the Central West.

I wish to mention a number of other exciting developments. Recently I attended the rollout and launch of TAFE wireless. TAFE Western students will now be able to browse the web wirelessly anywhere on the institution's 24 campuses after a \$1 million internet upgrade. Ms Baxter and I attended the rollout of that initiative which will give great flexibility for learning to TAFE students as they undertake more and more online teaching. It will be a great plus for TAFE students in Orange and all around the Central West. But it just does not end there with the TAFE wireless rollout. Recently I also attended the launch of TAFE's Connect program.

TAFE Western Institute launched its Connect program. The concept is that the campuses at Orange, Mudgee and Wellington will all be linked via video link. Students will be able to have lessons in any of those centres from one teacher based at one location. I was honoured to say a few words at the opening of the Connect program. It will be a great plus and benefit for students in the Central West as it is not always easy for young people to travel about these days. The perception today is that our youth are very mobile but that is not always the case. It costs a lot of money for students to move about the Central West. I am hoping that the Connect program will open doors of opportunity to TAFE students all around the Central West.

The Minister for Education and Communities, Adrian Piccoli, and I recently attended a ceremony in Orange for the Indigenous Police Recruiting Our Way [IPROWD] Program. Eleven Orange TAFE students were given an opportunity to train and work with police officers. IPROWD is a training program to assist Aboriginal people to gain entry to the New South Wales Police College at Goulburn. A number of students, including Tarren Smith, Caleb Sullivan, Lachlan Sainsbury, Brent Hignett, Dakota Bradford, Gray Periera, Lionel Wood, Jyie Chapman, Alice Beddoes, Ashley Murphy and Emily Ford participated in the program. The Minister for Education and Communities was delighted to attend the IPROWD ceremony. I congratulate all those students for participating in this worthwhile initiative.

I also note that TAFE at Orange in the Central West is adopting a very forward and flexible approach to teaching. It has mobile units which travel around the Central West to deliver classes to students who would not

otherwise be able to participate in these programs. Recently at the launch of the Connect program I witnessed the Barista Training School which travels around the Central West and prepares students for work as baristas in coffee shops. I commend Kate Baxter and her team at TAFE for their forward-looking program. They are looking to the future and moving with technology, which is commendable.

GLENAEON RETIREMENT VILLAGE SILVER ANNIVERSARY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.52 p.m.], by leave: Glenaeon Retirement Village, a large retirement complex in my electorate of Davidson, is just off Forest Way. It is surrounded by natural bushland and overlooks the largely undeveloped Oxford Falls valley. This month Glenaeon Retirement Village celebrates its silver anniversary, marking 25 years of progress—hence my desire to mark this occasion before the end of the year. In 1986 the complex started with just three units—one was the sales office and the other two were display units. Working to promote the village in those early days was now sales manager Heather Potts. Twenty-five years in any workplace is a significant milestone. So for Heather, Glenaeon's silver anniversary carries special significance.

By 1988 Glenaeon had 33 units. At least six of the residents from that time continue to live at Glenaeon today. This is testimony to the appeal of the village as a place to live and its success in delivering the facilities and services sought by older people. Today the complex boasts 221 self-care units and 50 serviced apartments. The serviced apartments provide three meals a day, as well as morning and afternoon tea, cleaning once a week and a change of linen. Facilities at Glenaeon include a clubhouse with a lounge area, an open fireplace and a library, an indoor heated pool and spa, a gym, a modern hairdressing salon, a beautician, a full snooker table and a resident workshop. It also features modern consulting rooms which doctors and podiatrists attend regularly. It has a village bus for shopping and outings and a restaurant serving home-cooked meals.

The village hosts a wide range of activities, including barbecues, aquarobics and other exercise groups, darts, scrabble, cards, croquet, table tennis, indoor bowls and ecumenical services. It also hosts the now famous biannual "Music at Glenaeon" concerts, attracting people from across the region and beyond to hear world-renowned professional artists. The event was begun three years ago by resident Suzanne Gleeson, who drew on her connections in the entertainment industry, including her many years with Musica Viva Australia. One of the most notable residents at Glenaeon is 81-year-old Ralph Schubert, who recently attended the Australian Masters Games in Adelaide with his wife, Lillian. He won gold in his age group for the eight kilometre cross country event and the street mile. He also recently competed in the Pan Pacific Masters on the Gold Coast, returning with five gold medals, a silver and a bronze and a new record for the 5,000 metre track event.

Other residents include Floris Verzijden, who was taken prisoner of war by the Japanese in World War II; Don Menzies, who flew Spitfires and Hurricanes over England and India during the war; and Anthony Cohan, who flew bombers in 67 raids from England over Europe. I have visited Glenaeon on many occasions, including for the Anzac Day services it hosts and the public forum on the retirement villages legislation in the last parliamentary term. I am pleased to regularly forward tickets to Glenaeon for the residents to enjoy the popular Premier's gala concerts. The Lend Lease owners, management and staff of the Glenaeon Retirement Village should be proud of their twenty-fifth anniversary.

More than that, they should be congratulated on creating an environment in which residents are happy to stay long term, where an employee remains with the company from its very early days and where residents can enjoy modern comfortable facilities. I understand there is great camaraderie and an excellent culture of volunteering amongst residents, as well as an extensive range of activities and entertainment experienced both within and outside the village. At a time when so-called baby boomers are nearing retirement age and the population is generally becoming older, excellent facilities such as those at Glenaeon Retirement Village will be in greater demand.

CARCOAR SCHOOL OF ARTS MEDIA CENTRE

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.57 p.m.], by leave: It gives me great pleasure to be the final speaker in the House for 2012. I take the opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Acting-Speaker Barilaro, on your appointment. Today I speak about the Carcoar School of Arts Media Centre, which was opened last weekend. For members of the House who do not know where Carcoar is, it is on the very edge of the Bathurst electorate. I have been a regular visitor to Carcoar in the past three weeks. I was there for the opening of the Carcoar Show and the Carcoar Running Cup Festival, which is a marathon event, and last weekend I was there for the opening of the Carcoar School of Arts Media Centre.

The media centre was a vision of the Carcoar School of Arts Committee. The centre was established with the assistance of a grant from the New South Wales Government. The New South Wales Government gave a grant of approximately \$40,000 to build a multifunctional facility of the highest quality. The media centre incorporates a picture theatre with the latest in digital projection, wonderful sound and a top-quality retractable screen. The couple of hundred people who live in this small community previously had to travel long distances to larger towns such as Bathurst or Orange to enjoy a movie. Now that they have the media centre, which has been equipped with the latest technology, they and people from surrounding districts can enjoy going to the movies in Carcoar.

The people of Carcoar will be able to enjoy the screening of the first movie in the coming weeks—*Red Dog*. A movie will be screened each month for the locals to enjoy. The centre is also going to be used for weddings, birthdays and other functions. Within the centre there is an education and lecture theatre, a wonderfully clear public address system and screen projection and a wireless connection for the internet. The centre has a quality training facility for professions and TAFE institutions and it has a giant high-definition television screen for allowing the Carcoar and surrounding communities to come together to share and celebrate the best of sport and other events of public interest.

I recently went out to the Carcoar school before it was officially opened to see how the giant screen would operate. The State of Origin was screened there, some grand final games as well, and only a few weeks ago the Melbourne Cup. By the time of the official opening we knew the facility would function well and will be enjoyed by the entire community. I congratulate the chairman of the School of Arts committee, Stephen Tos. I also congratulate the secretary, Ron Murray, and Andrew Baulch, who has done so much in the community since his arrival. It is wonderful that the constituents in the area have such a high-quality facility that they can enjoy. It is great for a rural community. In conclusion, it gives me great pleasure to be the final speaker this year and I wish everybody in this House a very safe and happy Christmas.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.02 p.m. until
Tuesday 14 February 2012 at 1.00 p.m.**
