

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 23 February 2012

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

COMPENSATION TO RELATIVES AMENDMENT (DUST DISEASES) BILL 2012

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 16 February 2012.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.12 a.m.]: I move:

That this debate be now adjourned.

Question put.

Division called for and, pursuant to standing orders, deferred.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

Question—That the following Community Recognition Notices be agreed to—put.

ENVY PERSONAL TRAINING CHARITY CHALLENGE

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Envy Personal Training for raising over \$6,000 for the Right Start Foundation as a result of the Personal Training Challenge Event held on 16, 17, 18 and 19 November 2011.
- (2) Acknowledges the hard work and dedication of Rob Mann, owner of Envy Personal Training, to make the event so successful.
- (3) Commends Mr Mann on his initiative to promote healthy lifestyles in the Wollondilly/Macarthur region whilst raising money for a worthy cause.

CONSTABLE THOMAS DODD AND PROBATIONARY CONSTABLE SEAN STOCKWELL

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends the work of NSW Police Officers from Camden Local Area Command that serves the Wollondilly electorate for saving the life of a local resident on Monday 14 November 2011.
- (2) Notes that Constable Thomas Dodd and Probationary Constable Sean Stockwell performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation when a man went into cardiac arrest.
- (3) Congratulates the two police officers for their efforts.

FISHER'S GHOST ART AWARD

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Alyssa Wheeler of Bargo and Ella Benson of Picton for taking out prizes in the 2011 Fisher's Ghost Art Award.
- (2) Acknowledges all the contestants of this art award and commends their skills.
- (3) Commends Bargo teacher Melissa Wheeler for her dedication to young Wollondilly artists.

PICTON CROCHET AND KNITTING CLUB AND PROJECT HALO

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends the Picton Crochet and Knitting Club for their contribution to Project Halo.
- (2) Notes that through Project Halo these volunteers create specialised garments for premature babies.
- (3) Acknowledges the important role that volunteers such as the members of the Picton Crochet and Knitting Club have in supporting other members of the community.

HEAR THE CHILDREN AND YVONNE KEANE

Mr RAY WILLIAMS—That this House:

- (1) Applauds the work of the Hear the Children Centre in Kellyville, an organisation devoted to early intervention for babies and children with hearing loss.
- (2) Congratulates Yvonne Keane Co-President of Hear the Children for being awarded The Hills Shire Citizen of the Year Award in recognition of her marketing, fundraising and event management activities undertaken on behalf of Hear the Children.

SUNFLOWER CENTRE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Sunflower Centre, Hunter Region's fellowship service for people suffering with schizophrenia, offers a telephone outreach service conducted by volunteers.
- (2) Congratulates all the volunteers who support the Sunflower Centre.

2BLEND CAFE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the 2Blend Café, Lambton, received an award from the State Government in recognition of its outstanding sustainability achievements.
- (2) Commends 2Blend Café for caring for the Hunter environment and community.

TRIBUTE TO MR OSCAR GARLAND

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes the passing of Mr Oscar Garland, World War II veteran and Cardiff RSL Sub Branch member, ALP Branch member, Freemason and Member of Lodge Enterprise.
- (2) Notes Oscar's contribution to the Hunter community and his proud role in the Defence Forces.

NEWCASTLE CITIZEN OF THE YEAR DAVID HORKAN

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates David Horkan the Newcastle Citizen of the Year for 2012.
- (2) Notes David's work in the community and dedication to the reopening of the Regal Cinema at Birmingham Gardens.

LAKE MACQUARIE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Swansea Men's Shed, Toronto Tidy Towns, Lions Club of Swansea, Faye Hawley, George Boyd, Kellie O'Sullivan, Andresen Karamus, Elyse Hudson and Damien McCabe were nominated for Lake Macquarie City Council Australia Day Awards.
- (2) Congratulates Faye Hawley, who received the Lake Macquarie Volunteer of the Year award for her efforts to raise awareness of suicide prevention in the Hunter.

MARIA ROBERTS AND ROADSIDE LITTER

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Commends Maria Roberts, of Wallsend, for helping the local environment by personally removing rubbish from Minmi Road each day.
- (2) Notes Ms Roberts' suggestion that driver education ought to include the prevention of littering from vehicles.

NOWRA SHOWGIRL COMPETITION

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Miss Natasha Larter on winning the 2012 Nowra Showgirl competition.
- (2) Congratulates all entrants in the 2012 Nowra Showgirl competition, Kristen Smart, Lucy Saeck and Claire Gyles.
- (3) Notes the sponsors of the event including Price Family Racing, Specsavers Nowra, Ray White Nowra and Bomaderry Bowling Club.

NOWRA SHOW

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Nowra Show Society on its organisation of the 2012 Nowra Show which took place on 10 and 11 February 2012.
- (2) Notes the efforts of committee members, including President Mr J Thomson, Vice President Senior Mr G Swan and Vice President Junior Ms P Thomson on their continued efforts to develop and expand the Nowra Show.
- (3) Congratulates all winners of events at the Nowra Show.

OUR BIG KITCHEN

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the significant work that 'Our Big Kitchen' in Bondi does for their local community and communities across Australia.
- (2) Congratulates Rabbi Dovid Slavin, his wife Laya and the Yeshiva Centre for the work they undertake in communities.
- (3) Notes Our Big Kitchen has been running since 2005 on donations of resources, goods and services.
- (4) Congratulates all the volunteers at Our Big Kitchen.
- (5) Notes the Kitchen is bridging cultural gaps in our communities and continues to help the most vulnerable in our community.

CALLALA BUSINESS CHAMBER AND TOURISM INC.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the formation of and the official launch of the Callala Business Chamber and Tourism Inc on 10 February 2012.
- (2) Notes the Chamber aims to encompass the retailers and businesses in Callala Bay, Callala Beach and Myola to promote local businesses and tourism on the South Coast.
- (3) Congratulates all members of the Callala Business Chamber and Tourism Inc, including President Alfia Rapicano.

SHOALHAVEN AUSTRALIA DAY CELEBRATIONS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the success of Australia Day events held throughout the Shoalhaven.
- (2) Congratulates Mrs Shirley Coleman on becoming the 2012 Shoalhaven City Citizen of the Year.
- (3) Congratulates former Ulladulla High School student Samantha Howcroft on becoming the 2012 Young Citizen of the Year.
- (4) Congratulates lawn bowling champion Sarah Boddington on receiving the 2012 Australia Day Sports Award.
- (5) Congratulates Kaitlyn Bryce on receiving the 2012 Australia Day Junior Sports Award.

ST GEORGES BASIN TRAILABLE YACHT REGATTA

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the St Georges Basin Trailable Yacht Regatta took place on 4 and 5 February 2012.
- (2) Notes this is the 25th Anniversary of the St Georges Basin Trailable Yacht Regatta.
- (3) Congratulates the Basin Yacht Club and the Sussex Inlet Yacht Club on organising the event.
- (4) Notes the sponsors of the event, including Ocean and Earth and the Sussex Inlet Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.

MONA VALE HOSPITAL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Mr ROB STOKES—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the outstanding dedication and efforts of staff and volunteers at Mona Vale Hospital.
- (2) Recognises the professionalism displayed by the staff and volunteers of Mona Vale Hospital during the introduction of a number of recent improvements.
- (3) Recognises the Pittwater community's support and admiration for these men and women.

TRIBUTE TO BERNIE MULLANE, MBE, OAM

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House:

- (1) Notes with sadness the passing of the Hills Shire's longest serving Shire President, Bernie Mullane, MBE, OAM.
- (2) Recognises Bernie's lifetime of public service and in particular his invaluable contribution to the development of the Shire over the course of his 32 year career in local government.
- (3) Offers its condolences to Bernie's family and friends.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all the award winners from the Wollondilly Australia Day celebrations that were held at the Picton Shire Hall.
- (2) Acknowledges the award winners: Eve Langham, Citizen of the Year; Tara Boyd, Young Sports Star; Colin Smith, Sports Star; Kade Clissold, Young Achiever; Leanne Zauston, Achiever of the Year; James Cleave, Young Citizen; Doreen Lyon, Senior Citizen; and the Wollondilly Cancer Support Group.
- (3) Notes the tireless efforts and contributions that the winners make to the Wollondilly community.

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Leanne Galae, Jack Bennett and Paige Hawkins who have been named in the top rankings for the HSC.
- (2) Acknowledges the great work of the teachers of these students in providing education so beneficial to the future of the students.
- (3) Notes that these three students have been successful in attaining their first preferences for university offers.

THE RUBENS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Menangle band 'The Rubens' after their single 'Lay It Down' was announced 57th most liked song on Triple J's Hottest 100 on Australia Day.
- (2) Notes that local band 'The Rubens' are currently in New York recording an album which will begin promotion in April 2012.
- (3) Acknowledges the significance that music has in the community and the support of the Wollondilly community for local artists.

CHRISTMAS CHARITY DRIVE

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends JJ Performance Smash Repairs and Bargo Hotel for hosting a Christmas drive in December and collecting gifts for Community Links and UnitingCare Burnside.
- (2) Acknowledges the effort of the organisers and the support of the community in providing for those who are less fortunate.
- (3) Notes that these gifts of toys, food and many more items were all distributed to local people throughout the community to enable them to enjoy their Christmas.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

PRINCES HIGHWAY

Debate resumed from 16 February 2012.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [10.13 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak in this debate on the Princes Highway and, in particular, congratulate my colleague the member for Kiama on his fierce advocacy for the Princes Highway over a long period of time, even before he became the member for Kiama. I shall not emphasise the second part of his motion in which he seeks to condemn the former Government because I acknowledge that much has been achieved on the Princes Highway before this Government took office.

However, since the Government took office—and in fact before—the Premier visited the Princes Highway and committed \$500 million to the Gerringong to Bomaderry section of the Princes Highway, a long-awaited upgrading of the highway. The member for Kiama is working extremely hard with landowners and councils to ensure that the project proceeds without any further delays. With respect to this Government's commitment to the Princes Highway, I refer also to the \$62 million project for the South Nowra section from Kinghorn Street south to Forest Road. This section of the highway has been the site of fatalities. Indeed the entire length of the Princes Highway has been the sight of hundreds of fatalities. We have justifiably heard a lot about the Pacific Highway; indeed, yesterday we heard a lot about that highway, but the Princes Highway needs our focus and direction.

The member for Kiama, the member for Bega and I will continue to fight for upgrades to the Princes Highway and we all have worked collaboratively in the past. The South Nowra project had fallen off the radar of the former Government but this necessary upgrade will commence soon, after some delay following the discovery of a frog colony. Those issues have now been resolved following close collaboration between Roads and Maritime Services and the Federal Government, and we are now on track to proceed with this much-needed project. This has been an issue for tourists, transport, Shoalhaven City Council and residents. On any given day the road is gridlocked and during tourist time it is a disincentive for anybody to travel on that section of the Princes Highway. It is a disgrace.

In addition to that section of the Princes Highway, I am pleased that the Government has committed \$100,000 for a safety review of the Little Forest Road-Princes Highway intersection. That is probably the most dangerous section of the Princes Highway in my electorate. The former Government could not resolve issues around that intersection. It upgraded the highway at the entrance to Milton but could not resolve the dangerous intersection in that location. I am pleased action is being taken now and I am grateful to the Hon. Duncan Gay in the other place for understanding the safety issues surrounding that intersection, and for his hard work and advocacy for the Princes Highway. Both he and the Premier have visited our electorates on many occasions.

The current Government has committed \$400,000 for the Termeil Creek Bridge realignment, a long-awaited project. The community had been up in arms about former plans for that realignment. We are working closely with the community and now those plans have been changed to the satisfaction of the community. I am pleased that this Government has listened to the community. I do not want to denigrate the former Government because I understand very good works were undertaken with the North Kiama bypass but in the electorates of Kiama, South Coast and Bega the Government took its eye off the ball. We need to refocus on the Princes Highway because it is important for our electorates and for the State.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [10.17 a.m.]: I contribute to debate on the Princes Highway. My colleague the member for Kiama and I have had discussions about this issue. Members opposite seem to have a

short-term memory loss. More than 60 per cent of the Princes Highway was and still is ranked as high risk and lives will continue to be lost and put at risk as long as the O'Farrell Government fails to allocate the substantial funds needed to fix it. The Government has allocated minimal funds. The Illawarra and the South Coast region are major freight areas with diverse freighting needs. That is no secret. The Howard Government should have been condemned for its failure to include the Princes Highway in Auslink's national network. The Federal Labor Government doubled investments in black spots because that is what Labor governments do; we deliver and we continue to deliver. At the end of the day Premier O'Farrell and his Government have a responsibility to get on with the job. That was an election commitment and Labor will be holding this Government to account.

When the New South Wales Liberals were in opposition they did not lift a finger to assist the New South Wales Labor Government. In fact, the Rudd Government provided more than \$10 million in funding to assist the Labor Government to get on with the job. The Hon. Duncan Gay, the Minister for Roads and Ports, has stated that his lot is getting on with the job and that this project was part of a \$62 million upgrade. I am yet to determine whether this is just another election backflip. Apparently the preferred tenderer had been selected and was to be awarded the contract in early December last year. I am not sure whether that has occurred. We are waiting to see what has happened. This Government certainly can talk the talk but I am yet to see it walk the walk on the Princes Highway issue.

This Government is incompetent and untrustworthy when it comes to the Princes Highway upgrade. When we were in government, the lot opposite refused to support the Princes Highway upgrade—no bipartisanship whatsoever. The O'Farrell Government's election promise was to inject a further \$200 million into roads and capital works projects, and specifically to fix black spot areas. Where is it and what is happening? The O'Farrell Government so far has failed to deliver many election promises. The people of New South Wales, particularly those in the South Coast and Illawarra regions, should be very concerned that the O'Farrell Government is backflipping on this election promise. Lives will continue to be lost and put at risk until the lot opposite puts its money where its mouth is.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [10.21 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Bega, South Coast, Shellharbour and Keira for their contributions to this important debate. As the member for South Coast said, this debate should unify all people in the Illawarra and South Coast regions. We are all committed across our electorates—Myall Lakes, Northern Tablelands, South Coast or Shellharbour—to ensure that infrastructure keeps local families safe and generates jobs. The member for Bega spoke passionately about the work being carried out on the section of the Princes Highway in his electorate, as did the member for South Coast, whom I commend for achieving a major investment to fix a significant bottleneck at South Nowra.

Work has commenced on that project at South Nowra in spite of the green and golden bell frog. It is a shame that the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act continues to get in the way of good infrastructure. Common sense must return to infrastructure projects so that governments can get on with the job of delivering for the people. This Government has awarded Fulton Hogan the contract to start work on the Princes Highway in August. I have a great deal of affection for the member for Shellharbour, but I must clarify for her that work will commence in August.

Ms Anna Watson: I have a great deal of affection for you, too.

Mr GARETH WARD: We have a mutual appreciation society in the Illawarra. That work will benefit my electorate and that of the member for Shellharbour, the member for Keira, the member for South Coast and the member for Bega because those projects generate jobs. When \$500 million is invested in such a project, no doubt a ripple effect runs through the entire community. Regardless of our location in the Illawarra and the divide that may exist in this Chamber, we are united in our commitment to deliver better infrastructure for our region. I look forward to continuing to work with all my Illawarra colleagues. This project is important to me as a major project. The O'Farrell Government gave a major commitment to this project—I remember standing on Mount Pleasant with the then Opposition leader, now Premier. I thank him in particular for his steadfast commitment to the Princes Highway.

Had there not been a change of Government and had there not been a leader with the integrity of Premier O'Farrell, we would not have this investment in the Gerringong to Bomaderry project nor the investment in the South Nowra upgrade, for which the member for South Coast has fought. My friend the member for Keira made some positive contributions on the Mount Ousley issue. I support his calls for that work. It certainly affects everyone on the South Coast. I commend the member for Keira for his advocacy publicly and in this place on that issue. Some sticking points come to mind. Last year on 19 December Kiama

council resolved, without advising me, to oppose service lanes in the first stage of the Gerringong to Bomaderry upgrade. I express my deep concern at the public commentary of Mayor Sandra McCarthy about the provision of service lanes. The fact is that Kiama council has put dollars before lives.

An independent investigation was conducted regarding the need for service lanes. That independent report detailed that the plans of the previous Government were insufficient to provide for safety. The south coast precinct committee convened meetings and talked about the need for service lanes. The fact that the council was aware of these discussions and chose to end the debate at the eleventh hour is deeply disappointing. I always will put the safety of local residents and their needs before those of Kiama municipal council seeking to count dollars before potentially lost lives. I am very proud of this major infrastructure project. I am proud also to be part of a Government that regards the project as important and necessary to develop jobs, investment and safer roads in the South Coast and Illawarra regions. I am proud to stand here with members who support this cause.

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

Motion agreed to.

DEMENTIA AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [10.26 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that dementia and Alzheimer's are claiming more than twice as many Australian lives as they did a decade ago; and
- (2) notes that the Hunter Medical Research Institute, the John Hunter Hospital and the Calvary Mater Hospital would appreciate more funding for research and development to combat this insidious disease.

In the 6½ minutes I have I shall outline some brief points to support more funding for research into dementia in the Hunter region. Of course, I shall focus on the Hunter region and talk about local volunteers' calls for more resources. I pay tribute to Professor Maree Gleeson, former Director of the Hunter Medical Research Institute [HMRI]. I shall refer to a media release of the Minister for Health, a quote from Conjoint Associate Professor Peter Schofield from Hunter New England Local Health District, a comment from Sally O'Loughlin, Regional Manager of Alzheimer's Australia NSW, some innovative research on dementia and sum up by urging this Parliament and the community to support more funding for further research into Alzheimer's disease. I commence with the reason for moving this motion. I read an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* entitled "Time to combat chronic illness", which stated:

The Hunter is facing a dementia epidemic with numbers of people living with the brain disorder expected to quadruple by 2050.

Advocates say the region is struggling to cope with demand, and an urgent injection of resources will be needed to combat the impending crisis.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, and the stress it places on carers and their need for extra support is important. Dementia and Memory Resource Centre volunteer and former carer, Jan Curry, said that more government resources would be needed to help address the expected surge in cases. We have undertaken brilliant local research. Another great article by Professor Maree Gleeson was published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in which she talked about medical research providing evidence for improved health care for all Australians. She spoke about the beneficial research conducted by the Hunter Medical Research Institute, particularly in other areas such as information for asthmatics, and she referred to the team of researchers that wins awards worldwide for its wonderful research,

My next comment concerns the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research who, in September, welcomed funds for the Hunter Medical Research Institute. I agree with the Minister. The health Minister also said that the New South Wales Government is committed to medical research, that the Hunter Medical Research Institute is a fantastic facility, and the New South Wales Government is glad to help build on research capabilities at the institute. More funding is needed for this wonderful resource that is being built on the John Hunter campus as we speak. Conjoint Associate Professor Peter Schofields said this about the need for more research on dementia, and for more funding and resources:

We are developing novel low technological ways of investigating individuals with possible dementia disorders that could be used by general practitioners. More research support would allow us to speed up this important translational work.

Sally O'Loughlin, Hunter regional manager for Alzheimer's Australia NSW, said in support of more funding that the Hunter region already has an estimated 8,000 people with dementia. As the population ages, the hammer blow of the looming dementia epidemic will be felt in the Hunter. We desperately need more support for research to help find a cure. I am sure that every member would agree. In November last year an interesting tidbit in the *Sun-Herald* reported on innovative research on an experimental stress test for the brain that shows whether a person is at risk of developing dementia. It has been trialled by Australian researchers. We need funding for this type of research. Scientists at the University of New South Wales were also involved in the research published in the *Journal of Biological Psychiatry*. We need more funding in our Hunter New England Health area and on the North Coast to support research to assist our doctors and nurses.

According to the *Newcastle Post*, there are different ways of treating Alzheimer's. One of the Alzheimer's treatments at John Hunter Hospital is provided by a comedian and humour therapist. He visits the hospital and aged care facilities to make the patients feel better about themselves. An article in the *Newcastle Post* yesterday reported that it has become apparent that humour may hold part of the answer to treating people with Alzheimer's disease. There are many different, innovative ways we can conduct research and let us not forget the benefits of humour and making people feel good. Fundamentally, today I voice my support for all the researchers at John Hunter Hospital, the University of Newcastle and the Calvary Mater, and to seek from the State Government more funding for research on Alzheimer's and dementia because it is clearly needed not only in the Hunter but throughout New South Wales.

Pursuant to standing orders business interrupted and set down for a later hour.

COMPENSATION TO RELATIVES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (DUST DISEASES) BILL 2012

Agreement in Principle

[*Deferred division*]

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The House will now proceed with the deferred division on the question: That this debate be now adjourned.

The House divided.

Ayes, 61

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

Noes, 21

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Debate set down as an order of the day for a future day.

DEMENTIA AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Debate resumed from an earlier hour.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [10.40 a.m.]: I thank the Member for Wallsend for bringing this motion to the House. This is an important issue facing our ageing population. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia in the elderly. It is a progressive and eventually fatal disease of the brain. It impairs higher brain functions such as memory, thinking and personality. Unfortunately, many of us already know someone suffering from a form of dementia and know the cruel grasp it can have on a loved one. My grandmother had Alzheimer's. It is a sad disease, particularly when the person is told what is happening and what to expect. But it is sad also for the people left behind: The ones who have to watch their loved one disappear slowly into a different world. Daily activities like making a cup of tea become a difficult task and memories are forgotten. Sadly, loved ones stop being recognised at a time when they may need to be relied on the most. Alzheimer's and dementia can affect anyone at any age, but is particularly prevalent in our older population.

The cause of Alzheimer's disease is not known and there is no cure. This is why it is so important to support research into this area. We have identified already some of the risk factors for Alzheimer's disease. We know of certain activities that may prevent or delay Alzheimer's disease and will also benefit people's overall health. In New South Wales 92,000 people currently live with dementia. National figures show that 269,000 Australians are living with it. This is expected to rise to almost one million by 2050, with 1,500 new cases diagnosed every week. It is the third leading cause of death in Australia. Without a significant medical breakthrough, this is more than an alarming statistic. It is the work of facilities like the Hunter Medical Research Institute, the John Hunter Hospital, and the Calvary Mater Hospital that are paving the way in dementia research. Funding such medical research is vital to help reduce and hopefully prevent this terrible disease from affecting so many. Anyone who has witnessed this disease in action would want to spare others from having to live with it.

I applaud the many service providers currently supporting those living with a form of dementia. It is not an easy thing to do, and it is worth acknowledging their compassion and patience in dealing with a largely unpredictable disease. HammondCare, an amazing facility, is just down the road from my office. Keith Morgan, the General Manager, took me for a thorough tour of the facility to show me what they have done to make their nursing home look more like a regular home. Each ward is broken down so that each looks and feels like a big house. It has two wings with a kitchen in the middle. The people with Alzheimer's living in the facility get to hear the regular noises of a home kitchen and not just have their meals delivered from an industrial kitchen. They get to smell dinner cooking. They hear the washing up being done, and the fridge opening and closing, and they can even help wipe up and put things away.

HammondCare takes such a different approach to other places. The facility has a small laundry so that once again, the sounds are reminiscent of home. There is a small lounge room and a safe walking path for those who need to wander. I was so impressed with this facility from the moment we rang the door bell to enter—another of those homely sounds—but I was even more amazed when I saw the individual bedrooms, specially designed and each with a big picture frame near the entry to each room. It is somewhere for photos, for a picture

of Elvis, or the grandkids. It helps the person with Alzheimer's to remember, but it also helps the nurses and visitors make conversation and to really understand the person who lives there, what they liked, who they are and especially how much they were loved.

As a family member of someone who suffered this disease, it is so lovely for me to know that the person taking care of my loved one really has an understanding of that person as a person, not just as the person the carer has now come to know. This attention and warm comfortable atmosphere, would, I am sure, help spouses and family members to put their loved one in care, if and when the time came. It is a hard decision to make and knowing they are in as familiar an environment as possible would surely help to make one feel better about the decision. What also helps at HammondCare is the self-contained units where spouses can live directly opposite the full care facility close enough to make it easy to visit.

I recognise those caring for a loved one with dementia. For many, it is heartbreaking to see a family member succumb to this destructive disease. And often, the person they once knew is only a shell of his or her former self. More must be done to support these carers as they care for their loved ones, and I know that it is a focus of the Home and Community Care program, which operates 112 services across the State. I know that many families keep their loved one at home for as long as possible. My family was one of them. Respite and support services are so important for carers to provide a moment's rest, a chance to let the carer concentrate on household tasks, to be with other family or friends and just to have a conversation. The Home and Community Care capital strategy is funding the construction of 16 purpose-built state-of-the-art dementia day care centres across New South Wales, with the final four being opened this year, which can only help.

Recent figures show that Australia faces a shortage by 2029 of more than 150,000 paid and unpaid carers for people with dementia. The financial strain on families is also felt when one must provide full-time care for their loved one. To replace all family carers with paid carers is estimated to cost \$5.5 billion per annum. In fact, dementia has an impact on every part of the health and care system. The cost to treat the disease is growing as more people are diagnosed and with an ageing population it is time to recognise the growing impact of dementia in our society. I encourage families to look for the warning signs, and for everyone to speak about this issue. I also place my support behind Ita Buttrose and Alzheimer's Australia in their efforts to raise awareness of this issue. I thank the Member for Wallsend for raising it today.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [10.45 a.m.]: At age 85 a third of people have dementia and a third will be a carer for someone with dementia. Dementia is the major public health challenge of the twenty-first century. After a diagnosis of dementia, the average survival period is three to four years; however, the range is from two to 20 years. One of the major problems with dementia is that drug companies are not interested in research as there will be no magic drug that will cure dementia. There is a variety of reasons for this, one of which is that the pathophysiology of dementia is longstanding, and many of the changes occur well before the early symptoms develop. As Professor Breitner said in the Parliament last year, the current epidemic is already baked in the cake.

Worldwide we spend 0.5 per cent of the total cost of dementia care on research and development. This means that dementia research, as it will never be funded by the drug companies, will be a public health problem. We know, as the member for Menai said, that Australia currently has 270,000 people with dementia, and that in 20 years that figure will be 600,000, and by 2050 it will be 981,000, costing then some \$50 billion in Australia. By comparison, the NSW Health budget for the whole year is only \$17.3 billion. Unless we can do something to prevent dementia on a population basis, and care for people at home rather than in hospitals, the health system will prove unsustainable.

Some 50 per cent of dementia cases are undiagnosed. About a third to a half of people with dementia have Alzheimer's disease, but there are up to 80 other causes, for example, vascular disease, Lewy body disease and fronto-temporal dementia. Many people have more than one cause for dementia—that is, many of one type or some of several. As the member for Menai said, it is the number three killer in Australia today, and it will be number one in 20 years time. We know that this epidemic is already baked in the cake and that the solution will not be found through a magic breakthrough. It will be similar to cot death research, in that we now see a third of the cot deaths that we used to because good public health research has changed the ways that babies are cared for. We need to do the same for dementia. We already know that exercise, weight loss, blood pressure control, better control of diabetes, sometimes improved diet—such as the Mediterranean diet—and, research suggests, the use of some non-steroidal drugs are effective in improving fronto-temporal and executive function.

The effect of memory training, such as Sudoku, is not sustained once it stops; that is, doing memory puzzles such as Sudoku helps while that mental exercise continues, but it does not affect the biology of the

dementia. It has three phases: an early phase of mild cognitive impairment, early dementia and gradual to late dementia, with death occurring sometimes within six months. In 10 per cent of cases Alzheimer's disease is familial, and a person's risk of developing the disease is doubled if a parent is affected. As I said, the dementia epidemic is already baked in the cake, but we do not spend enough money on research and development, and the drug companies are not interested. This will be core business for the medical research community over the next 20 years. I commend the motion to the House.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [10.49 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for raising this very important issue in the House. In her motion the member raises two important issues about dementia and Alzheimer's: the increasing prevalence of dementia and Alzheimer's among Australians, and the need for further funding to combat these sinister diseases. I thank her for providing me with the opportunity to comment on both those issues. Sadly, as has been pointed out, 269,000 people in Australia have dementia today, and that is projected to double by 2030. In New South Wales the prevalence of dementia and its predicted incidence is nothing short of alarming, and we should all be addressing that issue. I will focus, first, on my electorate of Port Macquarie because it reflects the trends in dementia across New South Wales and Australia. In 2011, of the 93 electoral divisions in New South Wales, the Port Macquarie electorate had the second highest prevalence of dementia, with 1,582 people affected. Tweed had the highest prevalence of dementia, with 1,782 cases.

What is even more frightening is that the predicted prevalence of dementia means that by 2050 the number of people in Port Macquarie who will be suffering from dementia will increase to 6,154, which is an increase of 289 per cent, and in Tweed the number of people affected will increase to 7,451, which is an almost 320 per cent increase. In Coffs Harbour, in the next 40 years the number of people suffering from dementia will increase from 1,221 to 5,142, and in the electorate of Wallsend the number of people affected by dementia will increase from 1,083 in 2011 to 3,721 in 2050, which is a 243.6 per cent increase. So there is no argument that dementia and Alzheimer's is claiming more lives, and all members of Parliament should be engaging with organisations within their communities, such as Alzheimer's Australia NSW, which are delivering vital and life-changing dementia services to those who need them.

I have spoken previously in this House about the wonderful work of Alzheimer's Australia and noted how privileged I am to work closely with that organisation as the co-convenor of the Parliamentary Friends of Dementia, along with my colleague the member for Macquarie Fields, Dr Andrew MacDonald. Alzheimer's Australia is the lead agency in advocating for the interests of people living with dementia, their families and their carers. Alzheimer's Australia NSW continues its fight to beat dementia by raising community awareness and understanding of dementia as well as providing leadership in dementia advocacy.

I encourage all members of this House, as I have previously encouraged my Nationals colleagues, to become a member of Alzheimer's Australia to assist that organisation in its tireless work—at a cost of only \$30 annually—and to join me as a dementia champion, which involves the simple task of acting now and supporting those people in their electorate living with dementia. Our support can help them with excellent initiatives such as the Memory Van, which travels all over New South Wales giving people living with dementia access to desperately needed information, support and counselling. One carer, whose husband and father were both affected by Alzheimer's, has said that the Memory Van is often the first port of call for people desperately seeking information, and it can make a big difference, particularly for those living in rural and remote areas.

Also, this important outreach service spreads the news about living a lifestyle that keeps the brain healthy and how to reduce the risks of developing dementia. There is no doubt that we need more funding to fight this disease, just as we will probably always need more funding for things such as cancer research. In closing, I again call on members to join me in supporting Alzheimer's Australia and to take the steps I have suggested to acknowledge that they share my views and appreciate the challenges we face as local members in addressing the needs of the increasing number of people who are living with dementia and Alzheimer's.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [10.54 a.m.], in reply: Madam Acting-Speaker, I thank you as the member for Menai, the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Port Macquarie for contributing to this debate. Those contributions indicate a strong commitment to combating this insidious disease in New South Wales. Madam Acting-Speaker, you made some wonderful comments. I was very sorry to hear that your grandma suffered from dementia. You obviously cared very much about her and I am sure that that alone ensures your great interest in combating the disease. It is important to note that 92,000 people in New South Wales live with dementia and that it is the third leading cause of death in Australia. I liked the story you related, Madam Acting-Speaker, about the aged care facility that created a home-like environment for people with dementia. It is important that people have the opportunity to die peacefully in pleasant surroundings.

The member for Macquarie Fields is a doctor and he takes an immense interest in dementia and Alzheimer's disease. He mentioned that by the age of 85 one-third of us will have dementia, which is really scary. I agree with him that dementia is the major public health challenge for the twenty-first century. The member for Macquarie Fields also outlined why drug companies are not interested in research. That is the reason why I brought this debate before the House: I could see that the researchers at the Hunter Medical Research Institute needed the kind of support that this Government can give—as opposed to drug companies whose values are often not the same as the researchers who work in our hospitals and other medical facilities. The member for Macquarie Fields also mentioned that there is no silver bullet to cure the disease but that there are ways in which we can combat it—with exercise, weight loss, blood pressure control and a better diet. The member summed up by suggesting that we need considerably more funding for research in this area.

The member for Port Macquarie is a nurse, and I understand and appreciate her passionate interest in dementia. She spoke of two important issues: the increased incidence of dementia in Australia and the need for more funding. She informed the House that Port Macquarie reflects the dementia trends in New South Wales and in Australia, but that because of its ageing population the community believes it needs more assistance in that area than in others. I was interested to note that 1,082 incidents of dementia have occurred in Walsend. That is the reason we must keep the Walsend Aged Care Facility open. I say to the Government: Keep your hands off the Walsend Aged Care Facility because I will fight you like I fought my own party when it was in government, and won. The member for Port Macquarie mentioned the wonderful work of Alzheimer's Australia. I am sure that all members will agree that it is a wonderful organisation that does a great deal for our community. I urge the House to support this motion. It is a very open-ended motion that simply asks the Government to consider more funding for research and development to combat the insidious disease of Alzheimer's in Australia.

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

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC UTILITIES PRIVATISATION

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [10.58 a.m.]: I move:

That this House calls on the Government to not allow any further privatisation of public utilities without a referendum being conducted.

I gave notice of this motion on 9 May 2011, and I acknowledge that a great deal of debate and activity have occurred in this area since that time. Notice of the motion was given in the first sitting week of the then new Government, but it has taken until now to bring this matter before the House. This issue is still very relevant and a hot topic, not just in New South Wales but nationally and internationally. At the time I gave notice of this motion I intended to focus considerably on the energy privatisation debate that was occurring—and I will still make some references to that—and the major concerns that had been expressed to me from the local government sector, in particular, and from community members about what will happen to water, especially its potential privatisation. I share that concern.

In 1999 Percy Allan spoke on the "Privatisation Stakes and NSW" at the Committee for Economic Development for Australia [CEDA] conference held in Sydney. I went back to that when I was researching this issue. The salient points that Percy Allan made in 1999 are as relevant today as they were then. I will revisit some of those points in seeking support from the House that there will be no future sale of public utilities without a referendum. Mr Allan is a former New South Wales Treasury secretary. He pointed out that the public mistrust of the privatisation process had not been helped by some governments stampeding privatisation legislation through parliaments without adequate legislation or debate, or using omnibus legislation to avoid having to submit specific privatisation proposals for parliamentary scrutiny and approval. In other words, they attempted to get around the community so cash-strapped governments could sell off something without considering the true consequences or impacts.

Mr Allan went on to say that the use of commercial-in-confidence clauses in privatisation and outsourcing agreements to shield them from freedom of information requests also makes the public suspicious that either underhanded deals have been done or that pecuniary interests outweighed public interest considerations. Mr Allan also said that proponents of privatisation and outsourcing within government should ensure that the commercial transaction between public and private sectors is transparent and accountable if public confidence is to be won. He was saying basically that we should let the wider community in on the

process. These assets are owned by the public and the public should have a rightful say on whether they are sold or whether the government keeps them and properly maintains them. The community has the right to have their say because they have paid for these assets through every bill they receive.

I acknowledge that a little bit of history is attached to the privatisation of power. It has been an ongoing issue for successive governments on both sides of politics. I recall that in 1999 in my first election the Kerry Chikarovski Opposition wanted to sell the power industry and give households \$1,000. I also recall the attempts by former Premiers Carr, Iemma and others in respect of privatisation. All of that was taking place without community involvement in the discussion. If we want to build trust within the community we must let them in on the discussion. Then we must sell the benefits to the community. Taking notice of the community is called good government. It is also called democracy.

During debate on the carbon tax—which I oppose—the Federal Opposition recently criticised the Prime Minister because she never took the issue to the people. While that is a valid criticism, a whole range of things should be taken to the people if they are to be consistent with that argument. Privatisation of public utilities is one of them. But do not just take my word for it. I urge every member of this place to send a survey to their communities asking for their views on privatisation and the current debate. Local members should ask their community how it would like them to vote in respect of the potential to privatise or in any way restructure water utilities. That should be put to the community because the community would have a constructive contribution to make.

Given the truncated times for debate I will not go through all of the statistics and surveys that were readily available to me to measure community opinion about these matters. There is now more distrust than ever of our political institutions. In fact, the debate in our national capital at the moment is concerning. The best way to address the problem is to re-engage with the community. We must ask the community for their opinion and listen to them. The community feels very strongly and passionately about public utilities. To oppose this motion is essentially saying, "Despite what the community says, we are going to ram through our agenda."

That is the exact problem that Percy Allan underlined in his comments. If we are bringing the community's view to Parliament we should ask for their views and listen to them, rather than shove the political backroom view down their throats. I commend this motion to the House as an opportunity to build trust and send a clear message to the community that we are going to put forward the proposal, sell it to the community and listen to what they would like us to do in light of the full facts being debated in the community. To argue against that is to argue against a fundamental principle of why we were elected to this place. I commend the motion.

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [11.05 a.m.]: I move:

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

"this House notes that:

- (1) the Government has been clear on its program to raise funds for infrastructure through the long-term lease of the Sydney Desalination Plant, Port Botany, and the sale of the remaining electricity generators; and
- (2) the Government is honouring its commitment to keep the poles and wires in public hands."

I congratulate the member for Northern Tablelands on his ongoing commitment to open, accountable and transparent government. I support his call for due process to be followed when matters are brought before the House—the body that has been elected by the people and for the people to serve their needs and interests. Those of us on this side of the House want to show that government and due process do not have to be the way that Labor made it for the past 16 years. I do not need to remind the House or those in the visitors' gallery of Labor's attempt to circumvent the Parliamentary process and to get around—

Mr Bryan Doyle: Proroguing.

Mr MATT KEAN: The member for Campbelltown is correct: proroguing Parliament is one example, which brings me to the botched Gentrader sale. That was a systemic attempt by the Labor Government to come up with a cynical system to ensure that the Gentrader model did not have to come before the Parliament. The result of that was a cost of \$1.8 billion to the taxpayers of New South Wales. When the principles of accountability and transparency are not adhered to it costs the public. With that money we could have rebuilt Hornsby hospital 20 times over. The waste services transaction is another example of how the Labor

Government tried to get around the Parliament. It tried to grab the money and run, but it was the then Opposition and the parliamentary process that delivered a good outcome for the community. So many examples of malpractice occurred under the previous Government, but this Government was elected to clean up the mess. It was elected with a commitment to make New South Wales number one again and to restore the State's economy.

The previous Labor Government left a mess behind for members on this side of the House. When we were elected people said we should expect the cupboard to be bare, but we did not expect Labor to have run off with the cupboard as well. Upon being elected we discovered quickly that there was a \$5.2 billion black hole in the State's finances. We found out that we may have to borrow to pay salaries and wages. The former Labor Government, now the Opposition, left this State in a parlous condition. It is disgraceful. Treasury forecasts that the triple-A credit rating would have, at best, been lost by 2013. We were elected to address that and we are taking steps to make it happen. We have enforced Labor's own wages policy, imposed voluntary redundancies and tightened up the Police Death and Disability Scheme, and our Jobs Action Plan will provide 100,000 new jobs to kickstart the State's economy.

But we will also make clear to this House our program of releasing funds for infrastructure. We took the Sydney Desalination Plant proposal to the election. It was an election commitment. The Port Botany privatisation proposal was a result of the Lambert inquiry and we will bring that before the Parliament. We are committed to keeping the poles and wires in public hands, but we will bring the sale of the State's electricity generating assets before the Parliament. Barry O'Farrell and the Coalition Government are committed to open, transparent and accountable government. We know that it will take tough decisions to turn this State around and clean up Labor's mess, but we are prepared to do that in an open, accountable and transparent manner. That is what we took to the electorate, and that is what we will deliver.

This Parliament was elected by the people to restore the State's economy, to rebuild New South Wales and to build critical infrastructure that we so desperately need, and that is why we will bring to the Parliament the decisions and actions to make that happen. We will follow due process and we will deliver on our election commitments, but we will do so by bringing our plans and decisions to the Parliament. We want to show the public of New South Wales that politics and government do not have to be run the way that Labor ran them during its 16 years in office.

We will also show the public and the people of New South Wales that government and politics do not have to be the way that the Federal Labor administration in Canberra is being conducted at the moment—an ongoing soap opera that is lurching from one disaster to the next, with deals done in back rooms by faceless men who are more interested in delivering patronage to their mates than delivering real outcomes to citizens and communities in New South Wales and other areas throughout the country. The member for Northern Tablelands has correctly called for more open, transparent and accountable government. Processes are in place to ensure that the public can have confidence in the integrity of the political process. That did not happen under Labor, but it will happen under the Coalition Government. We will continue to fight to ensure that people have a say, we will restore confidence, and we will deliver the outcomes that people expect us to deliver.

Ms Linda Burney: So you are going to bring the sale of every public asset to the Parliament, are you? Is that what you are saying—you will bring every sale to Parliament?

Mr Gareth Ward: Linda, you were at the Cabinet table, so you should be careful.

Mr MATT KEAN: The member for Canterbury was at the Cabinet table when Labor approved the proroguing of Parliament to flog off the State's electricity assets. Labor went outside the parliamentary process. Labor came up with a tricky structure to rob the State of billions of dollars that could otherwise have been used to build much-needed infrastructure. As I have said repeatedly, the member for Northern Tablelands has called for more accountable, open and transparent government. That is what the amendment is about. I am delighted to speak about open, transparent and accountable government. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [11.12 a.m.]: I support the motion. In spite of the extraordinary attempt at intellectual gymnastics by the member who preceded me in this debate, the motion does not call for transparency per se: It calls for a referendum. Perhaps the member for Hornsby should have thought about that before he mischaracterised the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands. The motion should be supported because this Government cannot be trusted with the public utilities of New South Wales. Public utilities are a protection for ordinary citizens against the excesses of the market. They are a protection for

ordinary people from being subjected to private ownership of utilities and the horrors with which the marketplace might confront them. Markets are generally regarded as good for the rich and powerful, but not for anyone else. The ideological underpinning of those who argue in favour of privatisations stem from eighteenth century economists and twentieth century ideologues such as Hayek whose ideology has been given concrete form by Thatcher and that butcher Pinochet with his cheer squad from the Chicago school.

Mr Gareth Ward: That is contemptuous.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: The contemporary advocates of such ideologues are the neoliberals, and I note the supporter of Pinochet is most upset. The motion should be supported because there are very loud voices in the Government espousing such neoliberal rhetoric. The cascade of leaks over the proposed privatisation established that a whole range of Cabinet Ministers wanted to sell the poles and wires. They wanted to sell off anything they could get their hands on. Apart from that religious zeal in some sections of the Coalition, other powerful factors are impelling the Government to privatise everything in sight—thus justifying the motion that is before the House. In essence, the Government has made promises that it cannot keep. The Government simply cannot build all the things that have been promised unless it flogs off everything in sight. As well as being without a mandate to do that, much of what it is doing will be short of logic.

Selling off revenue-generating assets, such as poles and wires, to replace them with assets that require ongoing expenditure, such as transport, is at best voodoo economics. The difficulty is that the Government has made those promises, but cannot keep them, so pressure will increase on the Government to flog off everything it can. That is why the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands makes incredible sense. Another reason to support the motion is that this Government cannot be trusted to adhere to its promises. It is untrustworthy. It does not matter how often it claims that it will not sell something off, it will go ahead and do that anyway. That commitment frankly cannot be believed. Before the election, at Lithgow the Coalition promised not to privatise electricity generators, but it has. Before the election, the Government promised the Police Association of New South Wales access to an independent industrial relations tribunal, but that commitment was broken.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: Clearly the member for Liverpool is misleading of the House. There was never a promise to privatise generators.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Liverpool may continue.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: That is not a point of order.

Mr Gareth Ward: I know that.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: The member for Kiama knows that, so my comparison with Pinochet rests. Prior to the election, the Coalition promised to maintain the Solar Bonus Scheme, but honoured that promise by introducing retrospective legislation to abolish the scheme. The Government then had to back down on that position. The Government could not even be trusted to be untrustworthy. Prior to the election, there was no word on the uranium industry, but now the Government is tearing off and going hell for leather to establish a uranium industry in this State.

Prior to the election, the Coalition demanded that the Government overturn Independent Pricing and Regulatory Authority [IPART] decisions on electricity pricing, despite legislation preventing it, but since the election members who consistently made those demands have not said one word about it. The Government cannot be trusted. That is why a referendum is absolutely necessary before public utilities are sold by this lot, the Coalition Government. In addition, they have form. I will be pleased to discuss in the short time that remains the extraordinary privatisation of both the State Bank and the GIO, which were regarded by reputable editors Bob Walker and Betty Con Walker as the two worst privatisations in this country, and that was done by this lot, the Coalition Government.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [11.16 a.m.]: If there is one person I love to follow in debate in this House, it is the member for Liverpool—the so-called authentic voice of socialism.

Mr Paul Lynch: As opposed to a Pinochet fascist.

Mr GARETH WARD: When we look at his record in government, he was the Minister for Energy who was part of the clandestine plot to privatise power in New South Wales.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: The member for Kiama is both misleading the House and lying. He perhaps ought to take into account the State Owned Corporations Act.

Mr GARETH WARD: Guess what? That is not a point of order.

Mr Paul Lynch: I know it isn't. I am simply returning the favour.

Mr GARETH WARD: Thanks, mate.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: I seek a withdrawal from the member for Liverpool. He referred to the member for Kiama as a fascist and I think he should withdraw that remark. It is unparliamentary.

Mr Paul Lynch: I am entirely happy, if people have glass jaws, to withdraw the term. The Minister certainly is renowned for having a glass jaw.

Mr GARETH WARD: The member for Liverpool has shown himself to be the gentleman that he is not. He spoke about gymnastics, but he has made more twists and turns than a red-bellied black snake on a barbecue when it comes to privatisation in New South Wales. He was part of the Government that did not care about democracy and was happy to shut down New South Wales democracy in this place to rush through a privatisation, which was hurting the very people that Labor claimed to represent. Labor claimed to be for the battlers of New South Wales, but they are for the union bosses of New South Wales and they have shown themselves in this House to be exactly what they are. The member for Liverpool was the Minister for Energy in that disreputable Government that made the Rum Corps look like a credible administration, yet he has the temerity to speak in this House about matters such as the Solar Bonus Scheme.

That scheme was meant to cost \$355 million, but it resulted in a \$1.9 billion blowout under Labor's disreputable administration, if that is what it can be called. In contrast, the Premier stood with the member for Bathurst in Bathurst and said that this Government would not privatise poles and wires, and we have kept that promise. The member for Northern Tablelands should be commended because he is a man of integrity. I know that when he placed the motion on notice there had been discussions about the integrity of government. Based on the previous administration, I can understand why he did that. I point out to the member for Northern Tablelands that it is not the system that is broken but, rather, the people who run it. When Labor ran it, we know what they did: They ran it into the ground.

I want to be part of a government that talks about integrity and honesty, and that is why we will stick to the commitments we have made. That is why we will continue our stance with respect to privatisation. We have said we will act on the generators; we have done that. We will continue to consult with the people of this State and we have established a mechanism for people to have a say on these matters. In this House if members bring forward a petition with 10,000 or more signatures debate can now occur. I encourage any member of this House to do that. I am glad that the member for Liverpool is now leaving the Chamber.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: I have not left the Chamber.

Mr GARETH WARD: I was just being optimistic. I am surprised that not more members of the previous Government are present in the Chamber to defend their record. I wonder where the member for Heffron is. She should be involved in this debate because she still has questions to answer with respect to power privatisation. People in my electorate who look at their power bills each month or every three months say that the actions of members opposite still affect families across this State. I hope that some time during debate on this motion Labor members come forward and explain to the public of New South Wales why they shut down this Parliament, why they thought they knew better about the assets of the people of New South Wales instead of consulting with them. Labor talks about consultation but when in government it never consulted. One should not look at what Labor says; rather, look at what it failed to do.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.20 a.m.]: I support of the motion. I pay tribute to Maggie Thatcher, who has gone down in history as the queen of privatisation and who has been quoted glowingly in the inaugural speeches of many members opposite. If it were not for Maggie Thatcher, I would not be in this place as a Labor member of Parliament.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: While I appreciate the member's contribution, as always, this is hardly relevant to the debate. I ask that you bring him back to the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Macquarie Fields may continue.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: In the brilliant movie *The Iron Lady* Meryl Streep, acting as Maggie Thatcher, said, "Your thoughts control your actions ... control your consequences." It is well known that the thoughts of members opposite are in favour of privatisation. Let me quote from *Hansard* the thoughts of one Liberal member of Parliament. The Hon. Peter Phelps stated:

... governments do not have money of their own. They take it from people in what is generally called taxation, but it might just as appropriately be called legalised theft.

That is from a Liberal member. He stated further:

What is the connection between a tax on alcopops, increasing the health insurance penalty, banning solar beds and restrictions on smoking? They are all a consequence of the socialist medical system in Australia.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: As amusing as the member for Macquarie Fields is trying to be, he should stay within the leave of the motion. It is pushing the boundaries to talk broadly about tax measures and comments made by a member in the other place. The motion refers specifically to privatisation. I ask that you draw the member back to the leave of the motion so that we can have constructive debate rather than waffle.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: To the point of order: I was actually moving on to the privatisation of the health insurance industry before I was rudely interrupted by the member opposite.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Macquarie Fields may continue.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I will quote from Peter Phelps, who was talking about health and the health industry. He said:

Let me put it plainly. Medicare offers moral justification for the Government to interfere in your life.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: I am loath to take a point of order, and I do so reluctantly, but the member should confine himself to leave of the motion. He is taking an extraordinary amount of time to get to the point. I ask that you bring him back to the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Macquarie Fields may continue.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Unfortunately, the member opposite has taken up a large amount of my time because the last two minutes of my speech are about the privatisation of the health industry, which is a major problem worldwide. Members opposite regard private enterprise as an article of faith. I hear, "Hear! Hear!" from members opposite. In some countries the private health insurance industry has dominance, such as in the United States of America, which spends 14 per cent of its gross domestic product on health and where life expectancy is much less—they are twenty-fifth in the world. New South Wales has a private public health system and we have the second-longest life expectancy in the world. That is because of our mixture of private and public health systems. Members opposite regard privatisation as an article of faith and by opposing the motion they simply prove that.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.25 a.m.], by leave: I support the motion that the House calls on the Government not to allow any further privatisation of public utilities without a referendum being conducted. This is a philosophic issue to The Greens. It is clear that the neoliberal agenda to support privatisation, which undermines jobs, the environment and service provision, is and was Labor and Coalition agenda. Unfortunately, both parties, with the exception of many members of The Nationals, have taken on this neoliberal agenda to undermine many in the community. We know that the Labor Party did not cover itself in glory during the privatisation debate. Lotteries and waste services were privatised, and we had the electricity privatisation debacle.

Although we have heard some fiery talk from Labor, it needs to rebuild and listen to the majority, as this motion points out. We know that if there were a referendum, privatisation would fail—and fail miserably.

The reason the Coalition has not supported the privatisation of wires and poles is not based on some philosophical view but on the enormous campaign within the community, led by Unions NSW, members of the United Services Union, and energy workers in particular, all of whom opposed to privatisation. There was a very courageous and brave move by rank and file members of Labor, unaffiliated unions, members of The Greens and others to fight with the community to oppose Labor's agenda and it was, in large part, successful because the majority of the population is behind them. This motion goes to the heart of those issues.

We know that privatisation of electricity undermines the ability of the State to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired energy. We know that coal-fired energy will have a future in New South Wales, but we should look at how we transition to renewable energy—how we support jobs, not privatising jobs and getting rid of people. It is important that the State and the electricity provider work cooperatively with households to reduce long-term growth and demand, and to curtail the upward pressure on household energy bills and emissions. These are important points when dealing with privatisation. Flexibility with privatisation is very clear, especially during a time of massive change in electricity generation and use in New South Wales. It is important that we focus not only on outcomes, such as revenue to government, but also on the impact of privatisation on communities and jobs. and the flexibility that privatisation excludes. When the Government forges ahead it will be interesting to see the type of return that is generated.

We know there is not a great deal of risk-taking capital around and it will be interesting to see whether the rivers of gold that the Government is expecting will actually be delivered. I conclude by supporting the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands and acknowledging that a referendum is a powerful way to see whether the Government has support. The Coalition won the last election because the former Labor Government was so incredibly hopeless that it was able to defeat it, but not with strong support for privatisation. If it were put to a referendum it would clearly fail. I conclude by thanking everyone in the community who participated in the campaign to ensure that important public utilities are kept in public hands. In particular, I thank the workers, and I know that members of the United Services Union are in the gallery. I thank their leadership, their organisers and their members, who have demonstrated such courage in standing up to the Labor Party and taking the measures to the broader community. The Greens will continue to support them.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [11.29 a.m.], in reply: I knew when I put this motion on the *Notice Paper* in May last year that it would stimulate some robust debate. That certainly has turned out to be the case. I thank the members representing the electorates of Hornsby, Liverpool, Kiama, Macquarie Fields and Balmain for their contributions to this debate. We needed to debate this issue in this place. I call them line-in-the-sand debates when the Parliament is asked a question on which it has to vote. The rhetoric is delivered, but in the end a vote is taken. The question is: Do you support consulting and empowering the communities, giving them a vote in the sale of a public utility? My answer to that question is yes. I have always said yes to such a question. If the amendment to the motion is carried, the answer to that question would be, "No."

I will not support the amendment, although I acknowledge the considerable amount of history on this issue. The amendment attacks the previous Government, but we could attack successive governments for the rest of the year about privatisation issues. My motion does not seek to outline the history of matters; it seeks to build trust with the community for the future. The community feels strongly about its ownership of public utilities. That is not a political comment; it is a statement of fact. If the local government community were asked about its concerns regarding water, as many members touched on during this debate, the uncertainty is clear. Why? It is because governments of all persuasions say one thing and then change their minds. We have seen recent examples of that at State and Federal level from two different sides of politics. To restore the community's trust I simply ask: What is wrong in asking the community in a referendum what it wants us to do with that public asset?

That procedure provides a number of safeguards for the democratic process. First, it makes government argue the case. It makes government say that these are exactly the issues we would like addressed, these are the impacts and these are the circumstances to the budget, the community and the workers. Second, it makes an Opposition argue against those cases on merit. To whom? The community, which, if this motion is passed, would get a vote on whether this is a good and valid process to adopt. I ask anyone to find me a problem with that process regarding a public utility or asset owned by the community. If anybody were to sell anything they believed they owned, surely they would think they would have a say. That is what this motion does.

It will build trust, it would be good government and it would create an extraordinary amount of accountability in the system, which our political institutions need right now. Supporting this motion would be a good news story for government and the community, and certainly would encourage people to engage in the process because they would have a say rather than be used as a vehicle to take parliamentary policies to the people. Whether or not they like it, this motion is about bringing the community's view to Parliament. That is why this institution, the oldest Parliament in Australia, was established. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 62

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

Noes, 21

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Question—That the motion as amended be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 62

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

Noes, 22

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion as amended agreed to.

NEWCASTLE JETS W-LEAGUE TEAM

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.49 a.m.]: I move:

- (1) that this House notes that Matildas contender Hayley Crawford was nominated W-League Jets player of the year; and
- (2) congratulate Hayley Crawford and all the W-League Jets players for the high standard they set in the Hunter for women in sport.

I will make a few brief points and I know that the contribution from both sides of the House will be supportive of the W-League. I will talk briefly about the history of Hayley Crawford, the W-League Jets in general, and the importance of women's involvement in sport in general. I will highlight the proposed football centre in the Wallsend area and the need for a facility for W-League to play on that has adequate amenities for both genders. After thanking the parents and community for their support in soccer I will say that we need to raise the profile of women in sport and get equal acknowledgment for women in sport. Let us start with Hayley Crawford and why I want to acknowledge her in sport.

It was unfortunate timing that just after I gave notice of this motion, selections for the new W-League Jets team in Newcastle occurred. Hayley has made a decision to stop playing with the W-League Jets and to do something different—which is a shame for the people of Newcastle. I have attended every home game for the W-League Jets for a number of years. I enjoy watching men play sport—and soccer in particular—but I really

enjoy watching women play sport. I have been and will continue to be an advocate for more funding and support for female soccer players. I can testify that the Hunter has produced some of the greatest Matildas players in history.

Unfortunately, at the end of the W-League competition, we came fifth out of the seven teams. Canberra, which has a very strong team, won again. But the W-League Jets have a number of players of note, and I would like to commend them. We had world-renowned Matildas goalkeeper Melissa Barbieri, World Cup award winner Ariane Hinks and Australian striker Lisa De Vanna, who played some really spectacular games. I had the pleasure of seeing those W-League matches hosted at Adamstown Oval. We also have some young local contenders rising through the ranks of the Women's Premier League, and I look forward to seeing them play not only for the W-League Jets but also with the Matildas in the future. The reason I move this motion is to raise the profile of women in sport generally, but particularly in soccer. Even women of note who play for the Matildas often have three or four jobs and perhaps go to university in order to earn a living and study while playing sport. That is a pity.

People of the male gender of equivalent ability playing in A-League teams often are paid very well. Hayley Crawford, a former student of Glendale High School, like many of her counterparts in the W-League and the Jets, attends many community events and is studying at university to become a physical education teacher. I know Hayley will be an excellent physical education teacher—probably one of the fittest in New South Wales. She is yet another talented person from the electorate of Wallsend. Hayley and many others have to work and study in order to fund their soccer playing. That is a pity. I suggest that the federation ensure that players of the calibre of Hayley Crawford are funded to play soccer, so that they do not need a number of jobs to support their love of sport, and so that we spectators will have the enjoyment of watching them play for their teams.

I thank all the wonderful parents involved in not only women's sport but soccer generally. Mums and dads get up early in the morning to clean the fields, ensure the quality of the greens and clean the amenities. The member for Newcastle and I have been lobbying for more toilets at Adamstown, where the W-League Jets have been playing—if that is the field that the W-League will be playing at in future. About a thousand people besides me watch soccer, but the oval has only two female toilets. The line-up at half time is incredible. I suggest the Government consider installing more ladies toilets at Adamstown Oval. That is just an aside, but I am sure the member for Newcastle totally supports finding ways to raise funds for those sorts of things. If you want to support women, you should support good facilities for them.

Hayley Crawford has been a wonderful advocate for the W-League as well as for the Hunter and women's sport. We commend her as a former Matildas player and Matildas contender. Hayley is known as a wonderful striker. Helene O'Neill, a member of the board of Northern New South Wales Football, has made comments in support of Hayley and her ability as well as other W-League players. We look forward to a wonderful season next year, and a better season for the Jets. I look forward to many wonderful goals that we can all enjoy. Hopefully, next year we will have a more successful season.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [11.53 a.m.]: I join the member for Wallsend in congratulating W-League Jets players on their efforts in this year's competition. As the member mentioned, though they came fifth of seven, they had an outstanding season. I agree they had some key players in their team who have done exceedingly well not only at a local level and inter-league level but also nationally, representing this wonderful country. The W-League provides women with an opportunity to participate in sport at the elite level. I also agree with the member for Wallsend: it is about time that Australia and the State, in league with Football Federation Australia, looked critically at any opportunities that exist to provide additional funding so that these wonderful athletes will not have to work as hard as they now do in their day-to-day jobs, but enjoy some of the fruits and support of the sport enjoyed by their male counterparts.

I note that the W-League's inaugural season commenced on 25 October 2008, with Queensland Roar becoming the first W-League premiers. The Newcastle Jets, the women's league team, was also established in the 2008-09 season, and is currently coached by Mr Wayne O'Sullivan and captained by Ms Hayley Crawford. Ms Crawford has been an exceptional player and her efforts in the field have been rewarded with her nomination as Jets Player of the Year, an award she took out in February this year. Because of her outstanding commitment to her team and the sport, Ms Crawford was again appointed to the Westfield Matildas preliminary squad, an achievement first accomplished eight years ago.

Hayley has had a continuing and outstanding career for many seasons. I agree with the member for Wallsend that Hayley Crawford has performed exceedingly well for a very long time. That should not be

surprising when we are talking about someone from the Hunter region, because the region has a great sporting tradition, not only in men's and women's football but in some of the alumni in the rugby league and rugby union worlds. I might mention as an aside that the Hunter's most famous footballer, Craig Johnston, and I were very good friends 20 or 30 years ago. In those days no athlete in soccer had the opportunity at a local level to improve himself or herself, and Craig had to go to the United Kingdom to play in order to progress in the sport. He has been an outstanding representative of the Hunter region, and in his own right put football, or soccer, on the map within the Hunter, particularly in Newcastle.

Hayley Crawford has made 15 national appearances since her debut at the age of 17 years and, as was mentioned by the member for Wallsend, has achieved fantastic results on the field while in the final stages of a teaching degree at the University of Newcastle, where she is studying to be a physical education teacher. Hayley is an outstanding community member who spreads her many talents across the gamut of society in Newcastle and the Hunter region. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate another W-League Jets player, defender Thea Slatyer, on her inclusion in the Matildas squad, along with all players in the league. They are excellent ambassadors for all young people, not only for Newcastle and the region but for the State and Australia. Many young girls spend a lot of time watching these wonderful athletes play and are longing to follow in their footsteps.

I agree with the member for Wallsend about raising the profile of women in sport, particularly in the Hunter region. I had the privilege, over the years that my young son was playing for the Adamstown Rosebuds, of assisting some of the young female team members who work and play at a local level. The quality of these young women athletes, as well as the young men who participate in football and soccer, is outstanding. I personally would like the women's league, particularly Jets players, to play at Hunter stadium. While they are looking at some of the suburban grounds, the city should contemplate these teams playing even curtain-raiser games to the Jets games. That would be outstanding for the women's league.

I also take the opportunity to compliment Hunter Sports Group, which has developed some very strong youth programs in the team that it looks after, particularly in soccer and rugby league. I know that in the soccer sphere its youth development programs attract both males and females. It is a great testament to Hunter Sports Group that it is spending a lot of money helping youth development within the Hunter region, particularly through soccer for young men and women. Finally, I mention a stalwart of soccer in our region, Helene O'Neill. I have spent many a day talking to Helene about the outstanding female athletes we have in the Hunter, particularly in football. I compliment her on her excellent efforts over many decades in supporting and pushing female sport, and I congratulate her on her inclusion on the board of the Northern Football Federation League. I also congratulate the member for Wallsend on her excellent motion.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [12 noon]: I join the member for Wallsend and the member for Newcastle in recognising Hayley Crawford for her outstanding contribution to women's sport in Australia through soccer, and in particular the W-League Jets in the Hunter area. I note that both speakers gave a good history of Hayley's participation in sport and made a number of comments about issues relating to sport in the Hunter region. The member for Wallsend spoke about the recognition—or in some cases the lack of recognition—of women in sport, particularly the lack of financial support traditionally for women's sport.

When we think about some of the great names of women in sport in Australia, we can go back as far as 1912 when two Sydneysiders, Fanny Durack and Mina Wylie, were the first Australian women to win gold and silver medals, respectively, at the Stockholm Olympic Games. That was the first-ever swimming event open to women at an Olympic Games. I make that point because there is a fine tradition of women excelling in sport in Australia. A social change took place in the 1930s, and women and sports lobby groups began to spring up around the country. High on their agenda was the need for more women's sportsgrounds. Fanned by a new wave of confident and empowered women fresh from universities where they had enjoyed the spoils of the suffrage movement, women's sport began a new era: sport was played, administered and promoted by women, for women. The inequities for women in sport in Australia are amazing, and I found a story that demonstrates it. Traditionally, financial support for women in professional sports has been virtually non-existent. Women began lobbying for more prize money as stories filtered through of gross inequities.

In 1984 a triathlon held in Geelong, Victoria, offered prizes to both female and male competitors. The first woman home received a bike and the first male to finish received two return tickets to Hawaii. That certainly demonstrates the inequities that existed then, and still exist. It is still the case that many professional sportswomen sometimes have to work in more than one job to support their passion and their skills in the sporting arena. As the member for Wallsend pointed out, it is no different in soccer. As we all know, soccer is a

huge participatory sport across our electorates, for both men and women. We are all sad that the Matildas did not qualify for the Olympics for the first time since the 1980s. I hope that will spur on administrators and people involved in supporting women in sport, particularly soccer, to have a good look at more ways to support them. Hayley Crawford is a trailblazer and I congratulate her. I congratulate the member for Wallsend on bringing this motion to the Parliament.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [12.04 p.m.]: I, too, join the member for Wallsend and other members of the House in congratulating all women in sport, who are great role models for young female athletes across New South Wales and Australia. These ladies devote themselves to the game, rising early to train, often working all day at their places of employment and then training again every night. Their dedication and commitment is outstanding and they should be commended and applauded. I also commend the employers of these athletes, who I understand can offer flexibility, compassion and understanding when it comes to the demands of professional athletes. Additionally, these sportswomen are subject to injuries, including dislocated fingers, strained wrists and elbows, bruised hips, grazed knees—

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Sprained ankles.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: Sprained ankles. Yet they are out there again and again, proving to be great sportspeople and an inspiration to young players everywhere. Soccer, or football—depending on who you speak to—is one of the most popular sports for both men and women. It should be noted that FIFA is helping to popularise the game by increasing public awareness and conducting information campaigns to help women overcome social and cultural obstacles, with the ultimate aim of improving women's standing in society. I hope to see that achieved in the near future.

Football, or soccer, has been a trailblazer in that regard and it is certainly my view that football, perhaps more than any other team sport, has broken down the barrier between men's and women's sport. As other members have noted, the Matildas have played a strong role in that. The whole country has got behind the Matildas over the years, and it is a pity they did not qualify for the Olympics this year. However, they can be very proud of their track record over a very long period.

It would be remiss of me not to inform the House about the role that one of my local high schools has played in women's sport, particularly in football. Hunter Sports High School is one of the educational jewels in my electorate. I will relate the achievements of some of the wonderful female athletes who have attended Hunter Sports High School. The girls team won the Bill Turner trophy in 2005, 2006 and 2007 in a competition that some 400 to 450 schools across New South Wales participate in every year. Having such a strong track record marks the strength of the targeted sports programs at that school. I congratulate some of the coaches involved at the school: James Pascoe, who is the Newcastle Jets youth team coach, David Lowe, Roy Capitao, Joanne Peters and Jim Foley. They have all played a role in developing football at the school.

It would also be remiss of me not to inform the House about the strong history of football in the Hunter Valley. We now have the Jets, and those of us who love our football can well remember the fantastic strike that won them their first premiership a couple of years ago. Prior to that we had the Newcastle Breakers and, going back some time—I am sure the member for Wallsend and I have would have crossed paths then—we had the KB United days, with such football luminaries as Joe Senkalski gracing what was then known as the International Sports Centre. Football has a very strong history in our region and the member for Wallsend can be very proud of the achievements of some of the athletes from her electorate. On Wallsend No. 1 Oval I have certainly been on the receiving end when Greg Geise hit the ball over the camphor laurels and into a neighbouring street. Wallsend has a very strong sporting history. This is an excellent motion and I am very happy to speak in support of it.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.08 p.m.]: I concur with all the remarks that have been made in this debate. The motion has been covered in some depth and intelligence by other speakers, and I will not seek to undermine that. While doing some research prior to speaking today I came across possibly the worst website in the world—the website of Football Federation Australia. Nothing on that website informs people about its history or its background and there is nothing of any topical interest about what happened in the past—it is only what happened last week or yesterday. One of the big worries about that website is that it kept steering me back towards the men's A-League no matter what I clicked on. Quite frankly, I was not interested in the men's A-League; I was trying to find out about the women's W-League.

The Football Federation Australia copped a huge spray last week from Clive Palmer during his explanation to the rest of the world that it has five executives who are each paid \$5 million a year, while the

National Rugby League is run by one executive who is on less than \$1 million a year. I suggest that Football Federation Australia should use some of that \$25 million to improve its website so that fans like me can get some useful information from it.

Generally in the wider community women's sport comes second to men's sport. I ask people to think about all the fields and facilities that are provided in their local government areas and about who gets to use them. My electorate of Cessnock is full of soccer, rugby league and cricket ovals that soak up quite a bit of council resources through things such as mowing, care and maintenance, fertiliser and topsoil. In Cessnock perhaps only the hockey field is shared equally by males and females. Even though the soccer field is also shared, males use the field 80 per cent of the time. By comparison, the netball courts receive almost no maintenance and upkeep other than that which is provided by the local netball community.

From the perspective of taxpayers and ratepayers, women's sport is entitled to lay claim to more than it is currently getting. Some of the most popular women's sports are walking and swimming. I wonder how many communities in New South Wales offer wide, extensive walking tracks and networks and/or venues where people can swim all year round. There is certainly not much of that in my electorate. Female ratepayers are entitled to ask for more from their council. Why should a council deliver so much money to maintain male-dominated sporting facilities but not provide the same for females? That issue had not occurred to me until I was asked to speak on this motion. I will take up the issue with my local council because equity is needed.

It is unfortunate that we never see W-League soccer players in the headlines for the good things. But we also never see them in the headlines for the bad things, which is testament to the ability of those players to conduct themselves in accordance with the high level of behaviour that we expect from role models and athletes of their calibre. I congratulate the women's W-League and all sportswomen. It is unfortunate that we hear only about the women who become world champions. That is quite a height to have to reach to gain coverage in the Australian mass media. That saddest part of the debate on this motion is that only women who make it to world champion in their sport gain any media coverage.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [12.12 p.m.], in reply: I congratulate members representing the electorates of Newcastle, Canterbury, Charlestown and Cessnock, and thank them for their contributions to the debate. I agree with the member for Newcastle who said that all in the Hunter share in the success of the Jets. The elite skill level of the W-League Jets is something to behold. One needs only to look at Cheryl Salisbury—one of the most capped soccer players in Australia and a former Matilda—to see that we have some great players and a great history in that sport. The member for Newcastle also mentioned Hayley Crawford. We are all proud of her history. She is an excellent ambassador for women's sport in the Hunter. Craig Johnston was also mentioned. I remember him quite well as one of our notable male players in the Hunter. It is sad that he had to go to the United Kingdom to fulfil his career ambitions.

I agree with the member for Newcastle that the W-League Jets are excellent ambassadors for their sport. As the member for Cessnock said, we never hear about them doing silly things because they are far too sensible. As women, they would certainly never behave the way some male footballers do—and thank heavens for that. The member for Newcastle also mentioned sporting facilities for women. As I said previously, while the supporters at Adamstown Oval are fantastic, it is not sufficient to have 1,000 spectators and only two female toilets. I hope that we will improve Adamstown field if the W-League Jets are to continue playing there.

The Hunter Sports Group also deserves acknowledgement. My friend Helene O'Neill could not be a better advocate for women's sport in the Hunter. The member for Canterbury gave us an excellent history of women in sport in this State and this country. She is right that we need to acknowledge and greatly improve upon the lack of financial recognition and support for women in sport in New South Wales and in Australia. As I mentioned, it is not fair that somebody of the calibre of Cheryl Salisbury, who is from Lambton in the Hunter, had to work in order to fulfil her dream to play for the Matildas. I do not know how she did it. The member for Charlestown also commented on the fact that the W-League players are great role models. I join him in commending them for their dedication and commitment. I also agree with the member for Charlestown that Hunter Sports High School has given us many excellent sportspersons. I have been fortunate to attend a number of the Bill Turner Trophy presentations held at Edgeworth Oval, or Edgie as it is known locally. The Hunter sportswomen do exceedingly well at those awards, which is not at all surprising.

The member for Cessnock spoke about improving the Football Federation Australia website in general and for the W-League in particular. I agree with him. All of us who were looking recently for more information found the website difficult to navigate. I also agree with him that women's sport has unfortunately come second

to men's sport. We need to turn that around. In general, we need to turn around our support for all women's codes, including netball, which is very popular. Netball is a great sport in which it is easy for all women in New South Wales to participate. I was hopeless at it, but I support it 100 per cent. Finally, I thank all the parents and the community who assist in women's sport. Cheryl Salisbury and others would not be in the position they are today without the support of their parents. I urge support for this motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

Business of the House Notice of Motion No. 40 postponed by Ms Sonia Hornery.

INNER WEST LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.17 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the strong community support for the light rail expansion in Sydney's inner west and CBD including the GreenWay, a walking and cycling track with bushcare sites;
- (2) notes that substantial preconstruction work has commenced on the inner west extension and planning approval has been granted;
- (3) calls on the Government to commit to ongoing community involvement in the further design and construction phases; and
- (4) calls on the Government to ensure that construction occurs on time so that the inner west light rail extension is operational by 2012.

The inner west light rail extension from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill and the accompanying GreenWay walking and cycling shared path and bushcare sites are significant initiatives in my electorate and the wider inner west. They are positive initiatives that have strong community support. The actions of the O'Farrell Government are now placing at risk the timely completion of the inner west light rail extension. As we know, the Government has announced that it will not go ahead with the GreenWay project. This motion was put on notice prior to that announcement and I have no doubt that this will not be the last time that we debate this matter in the House. There is a petition signed by more than 10,000 residents and community members of the inner west calling for the construction of the GreenWay to go ahead.

It is concerning that the Minister for Transport has announced both a delay to the construction time for the inner west light rail extension to 2014 and has scrapped the planned funding for the GreenWay. This is despite incredible local community support and years of community action to see these projects come to fruition. When in government, Labor committed to a \$500 million investment in the light rail network for Sydney, including extending the existing light rail service from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill station in my electorate. This followed extensive community campaigning that was supported by me, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and member for Canterbury, Linda Burney, and of course the former member for Balmain, Verity Firth.

The inner west light rail extension will improve transport access and provide important cross-connectivity in the inner west. There will be nine new stops and it will allow passengers to transfer between light rail and a number of bus routes as well as railway stations at Lewisham and Dulwich Hill. It will also enhance local access and amenity along a rail corridor that is currently available but disused. Importantly, the GreenWay would have provided recreational and active transport opportunities for the local community. We often hear the Minister for Transport speak about active transport and how much she cares about making it part of the Government's plans for transport in Sydney, but when given the opportunity to implement active transport, the Government has been found wanting.

Labor has a very strong legacy in this area. We have provided all the groundwork for a terrific project and it is disappointing that the O'Farrell Government is presiding over a delay in construction and the scrapping

of the GreenWay. Our decision to extend the inner west light rail and GreenWay was warmly welcomed by people in the inner west when we announced it. People saw it as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to provide an integrated and environmentally sustainable transport corridor for inner west residents. The GreenWay was to be created as part of the light rail extension of the shared pathway running parallel to the light rail service. It would have created a north-south bush link and an urban green corridor that would have provided valuable habitat and stepping stones for native flora and fauna as well as important recreational opportunities for the people of the inner west.

Significantly, support for the GreenWay began as a grassroots initiative that gathered momentum in 2001. It continues to involve many community groups working together. Local environment advocates were inspired to develop the GreenWay project after seeing what was being achieved elsewhere in Australia and overseas. The inner west freight corridor seemed to be a natural fit, due to the long shallow rail corridor. The GreenWay has secured the support of local councils—Ashfield, Leichardt, Marrickville and Canterbury—and is now an integral component of key local planning strategies. The GreenWay would have provided significant recreational, environmental and transport benefits for the west. There are 23 schools within the GreenWay catchment, and the opportunities for families to cycle for both pleasure and transport in what is a very built-up urban area have been welcomed by the people of my electorate and the people of the inner west.

It is worth noting that substantial progress was made with the inner west light rail extension prior to the election, including extensive public consultation and a formal public exhibition of the environmental assessment and development approval by the Minister for Planning. Preconstruction work had commenced on refurbishing the track's end on the GreenWay, with the first part of the project to be from Marion Street, Leichardt, to the existing bike network at Lilyfield Road. The value of all this work and community support has been severely diminished by the actions of the O'Farrell Government, and the inner west community will not forget that. I call on the Government to commit to ongoing community involvement in the further design and construction phases. I have heard from residents in my electorate that the process of active consultation, which was underway when Labor was in government, seems to have largely ceased, with residents not being kept informed of progress. That is concerning local residents.

I am very concerned about the delays to the inner west light rail extension. People living in the west are the ones who will lose out because of the delays. The Government has said that rather than the project being completed by 2012, which was the previous Labor Government's commitment, it will now push out the completion date to 2014. The Government's reasons for this do not add up. The Government claims the reason is a cost blowout but, according to the Minister for Transport, Metro Transport Sydney will finance the costs associated with the inner west light rail extension and the costs will be repaid by the Government over the life of the contract. Given that information, it is difficult to see how the project cannot be completed until 2014. Media reports indicate that the chief executive of Metro Transport Sydney, Kevin Warrell, believed that the extension could be built in a year. The motion calls on the Government to commit to building the inner west light rail extension in a timely fashion, to meet the timeframe completion of 2012, to continue to consult the community, and to commit to building the GreenWay. The residents of the inner west deserve no less. I call upon the House to support the motion and to make sure that the GreenWay and the inner west light rail extension are completed on time.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [12.24 p.m.]: I acknowledge both the member for Marrickville for moving the motion relating to the GreenWay—although I detect a little cynicism—and the importance of the GreenWay to my electorate. There is certainly support for light rail in Sydney's inner west and the central business district as well as for the GreenWay and a walking and cycling track with bushcare sites. But in complete contrast to the approach adopted by the O'Farrell Government, Labor proposes projects but never delivers them—and I can provide a list. On the Opposition side of the House, we have fiction; on the Government side, we have facts. On the Government side of the House, we have cost analysis, but on the Labor side of the House, there is none. On the Government side of the House there is delivery, but on the Labor side there is just rhetoric.

I concede that many people in my electorate are disappointed about the deferral of the GreenWay, but they have to know the facts. In 2010-11 the State budget allocated \$103 million towards expanding the light rail network in Sydney. During the election campaign, the Coalition made a commitment that we would build the inner west light rail extension, and that is exactly what we will do. When the previous Labor Government rushed to announce the GreenWay, it must have known that it was just months out from an election. We stated that more work needed to be done to ascertain the cost involved and asked whether it made good transport planning sense to proceed with the project in isolation. We can now reveal that Labor announced the GreenWay

before any engineering work had been undertaken. That was typical. We have seen similar examples time and time again. Labor was absolutely clueless about costs and any construction issues. We have only to look at the metro for an example. The project was estimated to cost \$500 million, but what about delivery? Zilch. The Department of Transport updated the cost estimates of both projects. Do members know what the department found? Should I tell them?

Ms Linda Burney: Yes, please.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: It found that Labor had failed to do its homework before rushing out and announcing the GreenWay or the light rail extension. During the election campaign Labor promised that the cost of extending the light rail network from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill would be approximately \$120 million. The latest cost estimate is \$176 million, which is \$56 million more than Labor promised—or a 46 per cent increase.

Mr Kevin Conolly: Close.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: It is not bad—only 46 per cent out. Labor promised that the extended light rail line would be up and running by late 2012. The estimate, after relevant scoping, is now 2014. Labor went to the election promising that the GreenWay would cost taxpayers approximately \$30 million. That estimate was given prior to any engineering or designing taking place. Better cost analysis could be done on the back of a dinner napkin than is provided by Labor. Labor went to the election telling taxpayers that the total cost of those projects was \$150 million. The latest cost estimate is now \$213 million, which is \$63 million more than Labor promised.

Ms Linda Burney: What's your point?

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: For the information of the member for Canterbury, it demonstrates that Labor will say anything to win an election—whatever it takes—including misleading the public about the cost of its promises. The public, especially taxpayers, expect and deserve a government to show leadership and to carry out well-designed and proper transport planning, but Labor failed continually. As a result, taxpayers have paid the price. The latest advice from the Department of Transport is that if the GreenWay were to proceed now, it would further delay construction of the inner west light rail extension and would push out the completion date even further.

Owing to Labor's misleading costings and lack of planning, construction of GreenWay must be deferred so that proper integrated transport planning as well as engineering work and studies can be carried out. The inner west light rail extension is a transport priority for this Government and must proceed. We concede that the project must proceed, but it must proceed in a planned fashion. It makes no sense to continue in the footsteps of the previous Government. Labor attempted incompetently to build a cycleway network without an integrated transport master plan that includes active transport.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: It will never happen.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: It will happen. The people of New South Wales can trust this Government on transport. We are becoming a Government renowned for transport and infrastructure building. That is this Government's priority. In four years time I will show members opposite our record, but I will now go over Labor's record. I will give the example of the North West Rail Link. In 1998 Labor announced that it would be completed by 2010.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. The motion is about the light rail extension in the inner west; it is not about the North West Rail Link. I ask that you bring the member back to the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Drummoyne will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I am certainly returning to that because I am talking about transport and transport needs. I am talking about the lack of credibility of members opposite. I am talking about a project that Labor announced would be finished by 2010. In 2005 those opposite said it was delayed and would be completed by 2017. In February 2008 it was axed. In March 2008 it was re-announced to be built by 2017. In October 2008 it was axed again. This was the state of play by members opposite in government. It had no credibility. However,

this Government is determined to deliver proper infrastructure for this State, built on sound financial management and good economic policies, not something that was invented on the back of a napkin to win an election. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "occur" in paragraph (4) and inserting instead "in a timely fashion".

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [12.31 p.m.]: I join the member for Marrickville in speaking to the motion. It is important that Government members understand that these projects were not planned just in the last 12 months or two years: the community had lobbied for the light rail and GreenWay project for a long of time. I will not play politics because these projects are far too important to the inner west community. Extension of the light rail and the GreenWay project are supported by thousands of people in the inner west. Those projects have been supported and worked on by five inner west councils. I note that the member for Strathfield was mentioned adversely in his local newspaper for not bothering to turn up recently when the GreenWay group presented a signature signed by 10,000 persons. That shows contempt for the project and an incredible lack of understanding for the passion people have about the extension of the light rail. The planning has been over a long period.

I will focus on community consultation, which has decreased dramatically, in the time available. I well recall the member for Marrickville convening a community consultation meeting at Dulwich High School on the extension of the light rail, which was attended by more than 200 people. The expectation of the attendees and those in the inner west is that community consultation and involvement would continue. The question must be asked: Why has that not continued? Why have community consultation and updates on the light rail extension and the GreenWay project decreased? As the member for Marrickville noted, the completion date has been pushed out by two years. I am concerned that the completion date will be pushed out even further. No logical reason has been given for this delay. The member for Drummoyne made assertions about lack of planning and referred to the back of a serviette. I am sure the member for Marrickville will take up that point.

I am not sure who wrote the member's speech but it demonstrates his lack of understanding of what is involved in planning. The former Department of Transport and other agencies involved in the project would not have poor planning with a project of this size. The assertion beggars belief. In addition, the inner west community is concerned about changes made to the completion date and the uncertainty surrounding those changes. There is enormous concern about the Government walking away from the GreenWay project, which is critical for a range of reasons that will be debated in the House at a future date. These projects were not just plucked out of the air; people in the inner west have worked on them for more than 10 years. The Government has shown a lack of respect to people involved in the planning, and those involved in pushing forward the light rail extension and the GreenWay project.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [12.36 p.m.]: I address three points raised by the member for Canterbury. First, she should be reminded that this is not about community consultation or community needs; it is about delivering a project. It is simple. The people of New South Wales have spoken, demonstrating that Labor has no credibility in delivering projects. Secondly, with respect to the concerns of the inner west community, recently the *Inner West Courier*—the largest local paper for constituents interested in the GreenWay project and the inner west light rail extension—conducted an online survey that showed that 82 per cent of respondents out of 2,000 supported the deferral of the GreenWay project for the reasons put forward by the Government. Thirdly, the O'Farrell Government has been upfront—something lacking from the previous administration—about the inner west light rail extension and the GreenWay project: It will proceed with the inner west light rail extension from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill.

The former Labor Government said the light rail extension could be built by 2012 for \$120 million. Let the public record show the credibility of members opposite in citing figures like that. The planning approval for the project, granted by the previous Government, set the alignment of the shared cycling and walking path—the GreenWay. However, the Government has been careful about developing the GreenWay as part of the inner west light rail extension, and with good reason. On coming to government, Transport for NSW reviewed the work done by the previous Government on the light rail and the GreenWay project. There were, and still are, unresolved design issues related to the GreenWay project, which is causing delays to the light rail project. There were significant, complex engineering problems—something that the other side could not grasp—that would blow out costs if we stuck with the previous Government's plan.

We did our homework thoroughly and we considered the best way forward, unlike the previous Government. Metro Transport Sydney, our public-private partnership partner, in collaboration with Transport

for NSW has been doing detailed site surveys and engineering studies, including geotechnical investigations, to prepare designs for tender purposes. The priority for this space is dual tracks for the light rail and the necessary infrastructure to operate it. It is a public transport imperative. Under the previous Government's plan, building the GreenWay would include excavating through five existing road bridge footings while keeping the roads operating, building retaining structures in narrow sections of the corridor, constructing elevated support structures and relocating a number of existing high-voltage overhead powerlines. All of these are significant engineering imposts on the actual project itself.

Mr Jamie Parker: That happens when you build things.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: Members opposite had 10 years; I was told this was a 10-year project but they were not able to get it off the ground. These activities would create significant added costs to the GreenWay project estimate, as well as create additional cost and time risks for delivery of the light rail service extension. I repeat that for those who missed it: The O'Farrell Government is committed to a light rail network for Sydney. The inner west light rail extension is a priority. It can be, and is being, delivered without unnecessary delay. We are focusing on removing as much unnecessary delay as possible. The time and cost risks associated with the shared path have been removed to ensure that light rail construction can proceed as quickly as possible and be ready for service in 2014.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [12.39 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Marrickville on moving this motion. It is important that we examine the history of light rail, as other members have done. It was a huge community campaign that unified five different councils—Leichhardt, Ashfield, Marrickville, the City of Sydney and Canterbury. Labor, the Liberals, The Greens and Independents acknowledged the critical importance of light rail and the merits of the GreenWay project. I recognise also groups such as EcoTransit, which fought incredibly hard for an inordinate amount of time to convince the former Government to support light rail. I acknowledge the efforts of Labor members in the Chamber and the former member for Balmain, who deserves credit. She worked hard to see light rail implemented. Finally they convinced the Government after a decade of campaigning that light rail was not an evil Liberal conspiracy but a very useful and appropriate piece of infrastructure deserving of support.

Of course, we were delighted with the announcement and, conversely, incredibly disappointed when the Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian, announced the Government's decision. I met with the Minister and with local mayors. We sent a delegation to speak with the Minister. The issue attracts two approaches. One is that we do not want to slow down the light rail project because that is a priority. If we agree with that approach, then allocate the funding to construct it. If no money is allocated for future construction and the project is merely deferred, where is the budget? The fact is that there is no budget. This project is off to the never-never and looks like it will never be constructed. Although the Government has said it will leave the corridor intact, constructing the GreenWay after the light rail is operational places an incredibly difficult financial impost on the operator and will result in enormous commuter disruption. I am sure that Coalition members who have contributed to this debate realise they are in a difficult situation.

Mr John Sidoti: No, we're not in a difficult situation.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: Their situation is difficult because they want the light rail to be built yet the Minister for Transport will not provide the funds. More than 22 schools have been involved in the project, which will augment and increase commuter and leisure transport, provide safe routes and support local biodiversity. It is a wonderful initiative with incredible community support. The member for Strathfield said that the poll revealed some people were happy for construction to be deferred. "Deferral" is the active word, but the critical element is for money to be allocated in the budget. If the upcoming budget does not allocate funding, the project will not eventuate.

Mr John Sidoti: They allocated \$103 million.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I acknowledge that interjection. Labor did under-allocate. From my understanding, assertions were made at the estimates hearing that the project was under-allocated. If that is true, where is the funding allocation for the GreenWay if it has truly only been deferred? I call on the Government to support the motion of the member for Marrickville to ensure construction forthwith of the light rail. The first quarter of 2014 is an incredibly long time to wait for a piece of infrastructure to be built. If it takes two years to build five kilometres of infrastructure when the railway line is there already, God help the Government building the North West Rail Link. If it takes 2½, almost three, years to build a light rail facility when the tracks already

exist and the upgrading had commenced, on the Government's foreshadowed time scale it will take about 32 years to build the North West Rail Link. This Government has to get the agencies working, provide a clear commitment, and invest in light rail and the sustainable public transport future we all desire.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.43 p.m.], in reply: I have listened carefully to the contributions of all members in this debate and thank them for speaking to this motion about the inner west light rail extension. I do not support the amendment moved by the member for Drummoyne, which reveals the Government's true intention: If I understand the amendment correctly, not only does the Government now seek to remove from the motion any reference to the light rail being operational by 2012, but also it is committing to no time frame. The member for Drummoyne has moved that all words after "occurs" in paragraph (4) be replaced with the words "in a timely fashion". What does that mean? The Government has shown its true intention: Not only is it committed to not completing the light rail extension by 2012, but now it is not even prepared to have the motion state that it will be completed by 2014. The Government will not commit to a time frame.

Inner west residents will be extremely disappointed, but not surprised because that has been their fear all along. The Government simply is not committed to completing this project on time and is not committed to inner west residents. We saw the same result with the scrapping of the GreenWay project. Now we have the Government's failure to commit to a firm time frame for the extension of the inner west light rail. All we have heard from Government members today are excuses. It is all well and good to assert in this Chamber that costs have blown out and, therefore, the project will take longer to complete, but where is the evidence to support this cost blowout? When the Minister was questioned about this during the estimates hearing she failed to produce evidence to demonstrate a cost blowout.

I take up the point of the member for Balmain: The Coalition does not seem to understand that it is now in government and has responsibility. If there is a blowout in costs, as the Government claims, why can it not find additional funds to make sure this project is completed on time? This project will bring benefits not just to inner west constituents and residents in my electorate but also to those in the electorates of Balmain, Canterbury, Drummoyne and Strathfield. If the Government genuinely believes there is a cost blowout for this project, it is incumbent on it to find additional funds. That is what being in government is all about. The reason the Government is not providing additional funds is that its response is just a smokescreen. There is no cost blowout delaying this project.

Put simply, the Government does not care enough about inner west residents to deliver this project on time. I return to the report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in which the Minister confirmed that the company, MTS, was paying for the extension to Dulwich Hill and that the Government would repay those costs over the term of the contract. If that is so, as the Minister has said, why can the extension from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill not be finished until 2014? It is unclear why the Government claims there is a blowout in costs. More importantly, it is unclear why the Government cannot make this project happen by 2012 so that the residents of the inner west and Sydney have the benefit of this very important transport and recreational project.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 59

Mr Anderson
Mr Annesley
Mr Aplin
Mr Ayres
Mr Baird
Mr Barilaro
Mr Bassett
Mr Baumann
Ms Berejiklian
Mr Bromhead
Mr Brookes
Mr Casuscelli
Mr Conolly
Mr Constance
Mr Cornwell
Mr Coure
Mr Doyle
Mr Elliott
Mr Flowers
Mr Fraser

Mr Gee
Ms Gibbons
Ms Goward
Mr Grant
Mr Gulaptis
Mr Hartcher
Mr Hazzard
Ms Hodgkinson
Mr Holstein
Mr Humphries
Mr Issa
Mr Kean
Mr Notley-Smith
Mr O'Dea
Mr Owen
Mr Page
Ms Parker
Mr Patterson
Mr Perrottet
Mr Provost

Mr Roberts
Mr Rohan
Mr Rowell
Mrs Sage
Mr Sidoti
Mrs Skinner
Mr Smith
Mr Souris
Mr Speakman
Mr Spence
Mr Stokes
Mr Toole
Ms Upton
Mr Ward
Mr Webber
Mr R. C. Williams
Mrs Williams
Tellers,
Mr Maguire
Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 22

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! It being after 1.00 p.m. the House will now proceed with committee reports.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICE

Report: Inquiry into the Parliamentary Budget Office

Debate resumed from 16 February 2012.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [1.02 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak in this take-note debate on the report of the Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office. I commend and thank all my fellow colleagues, both in this House and in the other place, who spent countless hours travelling, attending meetings and reading about 1,000 pages of documentation, including reports and submissions, in the course of the committee's deliberations that led to this report. The most telling part about the report presented to the House is the foreword by the chair, who recognises that Labor and The Greens members of that committee were anything but supportive of much of the content of this report. I appreciate that the conclusions of this report on the Parliamentary Budget Office, indeed any committee of this House or any joint committee, follow consideration, reconsideration and investigation.

The fact is that those materials and investigations, the testimony of Mr Tony Harris of the Parliamentary Budget Office and comments made in this report acknowledge that every organisation across the world is incredibly supportive of its parliamentary budget office. They talk about expanding those offices, and resourcing them properly. Importantly, they talk about the integrity that a parliamentary budget office brings to a Parliament. Quite frankly, it means that one cannot go shooting one's mouth off and making ridiculous promises, because those promises will be tested and costed. Consequently, one must put forward genuine policy. Therefore the Parliamentary Budget Office is a good thing.

Certainly, the submission of Mr Tony Harris—a public document referred to in the report—identified the benefits of having an ongoing Parliamentary Budget Office, and noted it could even provide what we refer to as a "blue book"—a list of basic costings. How much does a schoolteacher cost? How much does a preschool cost? This enables the major parties to know that if they put another 500 teachers into the system, it would cost, say, \$35 million. Alas, none of that was taken on board in the writing of this Parliamentary Budget Office report. I recognise that this report on the Parliamentary Budget Office has got us to one end. I cannot think of any way to put it better than Mr Adrian Piccoli, who spoke on the issue on 19 October 2010, when he said:

There is no reason for the process to cost \$3 million a year over the four-year budget cycle. Why are we going to let this process cost \$12 million over four years? There is absolutely no reason for that and no reason why the process should go on for longer than six months.

So I spent between 50 and 70 hours of my personal time and it cost this Parliament and the people of New South Wales, say, \$30,000 or \$40,000 to put the Parliamentary Budget Office committee together. Everybody spent hours and hours doing their work and travelling. However, the report is a reflection of the words of Mr Adrian

Piccoli on 19 October 2010. We could have saved everybody a lot of time, worry and stress, and saved a lot of money, and arrived at the conclusions expressed by Mr Piccoli on 19 October 2010. It is a pity that this is the committee's report on the Parliamentary Budget Office. But so be it when a government has the numbers. This Government has the numbers.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [1.06 p.m.]: I comment on the report of the Joint Select Committee on the Parliamentary Budget Office. In the conduct of the inquiry the committee was required to consider the purpose of the Parliamentary Budget Office and whether the terms of the Parliamentary Budget Office Act 2010 are appropriate. The committee was also to consider the role of the Parliamentary Budget Office, its functions and powers, structure, staffing and resources, and its accountability and oversight mechanisms. I would like to give a little of its history. The Parliamentary Budget Office legislation was passed by Parliament on 28 October 2010. It did not become operational until 3 February 2011.

Under current legislation, the Parliamentary Budget Office has three main functions. They are to prepare costings of election policies for parliamentary leaders and independent members in the period prior to a State election; to prepare non-election costings of proposed policies for members of Parliament at any other time during the year; and to provide members of Parliament with analyses, advice and briefings of a technical nature on financial, fiscal and economic matters. However, prior to the 2011 State election the Coalition chose to use an alternative consultant for the costing of election policies, simply because the Parliamentary Budget Office did not come into operation until early February in that year—less than two months before election day. The Parliamentary Budget Office costed a number of election policies of the Labor Party. However, the earliest costing requests were not received until 10 March—just two days before the Parliamentary Budget Office was required to complete a draft budget impact statement relating to the policies. That is the history. I return to the report.

During its inquiry the committee received 13 submissions. Those were from a range of stakeholders, including political organisations, business groups, unions and international agencies. The committee also held a public hearing during which it heard evidence from former Acting Parliamentary Budget Officer Mr Harris. Unfortunately, given that no other Australian jurisdictions had established a parliamentary budget office at the time of the inquiry, the committee did not have any opportunity to receive evidence about Australian parliaments that had established a similar office. However, I note that after the conclusion of the committee's inquiry the Commonwealth Parliament passed an Act providing for the establishment of a Federal parliamentary budget office. The committee received a number of submissions from other jurisdictions around the world, such as Canada, the United Kingdom and The Netherlands. Those jurisdictions had established agencies that were comparable to the Parliamentary Budget Office or perform some functions similar to those of the Parliamentary Budget Office.

However, it should be noted that all those agencies were from national or Federal jurisdictions. It was difficult to determine whether any State or provincial governments had successfully implemented a similar body. It was an important focus of the committee to ascertain how the taxpayers of New South Wales would be best served by such an agency. There were nine recommendations and in the time I have left I will reiterate the three key recommendations of the report: that parliamentary leaders be required to submit all their publicly announced election policies for costing by the Parliamentary Budget Office; that the Parliamentary Budget Office operate for a period of six months prior to each State election; and that the sole function of the Parliamentary Budget Office be to prepare election policy costings. I commend the report to the House.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Report noted.

STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURE COMMITTEE

Report: Adoption of the New Sessional Orders

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): As the contents of this report were substantially dealt with during debate on the adoption of the sessional orders on 14 February 2012, with the leave of the House I propose to put the question forthwith.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report: Legislation Review Digest 10/55****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.12 p.m.]: As Chair of the Legislation Review Committee, I take this opportunity to comment on the recent Legislation Review Digest report tabled on 21 February 2012. This is the tenth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. The tenth digest examined eight bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 14 February 2012. The committee made no comment in respect of issues set out in section 8A (1) of the Legislation Review Act 1987 in relation to three of the bills. One bill had a commencement by proclamation clause and it is standard for this committee to comment when the commencement date for a bill is not established in the legislation. The committee has referred elements of two of the eight bills to the Parliament for consideration. Those bills are the Crimes Amendment (Consorting and Organised Crime) Bill 2012 and the Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Bill 2012. I will now speak briefly on those bills.

The Crimes Amendment (Consorting and Organised Crime) Bill 2012 amends the Crimes Act 1900 in order to criminalise various activities on the grounds of an individual's involvement in organised criminal organisations and outlaw gangs. Such activities include participating in particular organisations or conversing with convicted criminals. The committee referred to Parliament issues relating to the impact the legislation may have on people who have been convicted of an indictable offence. The committee also raised the potential impact of the legislation on individuals who have not committed an indictable offence but who are in contact with convicted offenders. The committee discussed whether the definition provided for "consort" is adequate, and the absence in the legislation of a definition for "organised criminal activity".

The legislation gives police the power to provide official warnings to persons who communicate with persons convicted of indictable offences. As these warnings are not subject to appeal, the committee referred to the Parliament whether this constitutes a non-reviewable decision. The committee referred to Parliament various elements of the Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Bill 2012 relating to the committee's obligations under section 8A of the Legislation Review Act. Issues raised include whether an individual subject to an interim control order should be informed of the details of the court that will be hearing the application, and the relationship between control orders and the presumption of innocence. Further, the committee discussed possible impacts that this bill may have on the freedom of association, the right to privacy, the right to work and natural justice. Lastly, the committee noted the absence in the legislation of a distinction between adult and child offenders, and referred this matter to Parliament.

Whilst the committee has made notes in regard to the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 and the Mining Legislation Amendment (Uranium Exploration) Bill 2012, it made no adverse comments in relation to the requirements under section 8A of the Legislation Review Act. The committee advised that it does not have any concerns with the postponement of the repeal of both the Local Government Regulation 2005 and the Apiaries Regulation 2005. In conclusion, I remind the House that the digest aims to assist members in their consideration of bills and to highlight the issues that the committee considers when it reviews bills that have been tabled in the House. The committee's role is set out in section 8A of the Legislation Review Act and the committee can only consider legislation in accordance with that section. In relation to regulations, the committee cannot take any matters into consideration other than those found under section 9 of the Legislation Review Act.

I thank the members of the committee—the member for Swansea, the member for Rockdale, the member for Bankstown, the member for Parramatta and our colleagues in the other place the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps and Mr David Shoebridge—who have provided invaluable assistance in the scrutiny of bills introduced to this Parliament to ensure that the digest will continue to be of assistance to all members. I also thank the committee staff. There was a very short turnaround between last week and this week, and I congratulate them on having the draft digest ready for consideration by members. The convention of this committee is that it is not politicised, it is bipartisan and it is collegiate. I note that in the first take-note debate the member for Mount Druitt highlighted that convention and I am pleased that the members abide by it.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.18 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the tenth Legislation Review Digest report. I acknowledge my colleagues on the committee—the member for Rockdale, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Parramatta, the member for Swansea and my colleagues in the other place the

Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, Mr David Shoebridge and the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane—and thank them for their hard work. I understand that the member for Swansea has been unwell. I wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing him again. I praise also the hardworking committee staff who ensure that the digest is prepared each week. I note that there was a very quick turnaround over the past two weeks that would have put a great deal of pressure on staff to prepare the digest. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend this week's committee meeting due to child care and family responsibilities.

Once again, I express my disappointment that the chairman will not consider moving committee meetings to more appropriate times so that all members can attend, in particular, those of us who have to commute to Parliament and who have family responsibilities. I place on record my appreciation of the work done by the member for Cronulla and the member for Strathfield who chair the other two committees of which I am a member—the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Legislative Assembly Committee on Transport and Infrastructure.

As chairmen, both have been accommodating and sought to ensure that meeting times were suitable for all members of the committee, regardless of their political persuasion. Last week the chairman of the committee took it upon himself to criticise my speech in which I raised issues about the length of our meeting. That issue was raised also, quite legitimately, by Mr Shoebridge and the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane in response to concerns raised by a member of the public. The chairman felt I should have raised my concerns with him prior to raising them with him in the Chamber. I understand that the member for Myall Lakes has a glass jaw and so I will try not to upset him. It is interesting that the member should take such issue with my comments. In 2009 the member for Wagga Wagga, who was once a member of the committee, said:

I have offered some constructive criticism, complimented the Committee from time to time and have chastised the member for Londonderry who is the Chairman of this hardworking Committee.

Therefore, I am sure that the former member for Londonderry whilst chair of the Legislation Review Committee coped quite well with the chastisements of the member for Wagga Wagga. I note that the member for Myall Lakes has no problem making personal attacks. Yesterday in this Chamber the member for Myall Lakes made the following comment about me:

The member for Bankstown has the hide to sit opposite laughing and showing total disregard for people in western New South Wales and regional New South Wales—the battlers and workers.

I would never laugh at the people of western New South Wales. I have great respect for rural and regional communities and I know that many people in those communities are doing it tough. I advise the House that I was in fact laughing at the member for Myall Lakes. I note again that very few members of the Police Association have much to laugh about these days after the member for Myall Lakes betrayed his former colleagues and slashed the death and disability scheme.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: This is going beyond the ridiculous. I ask the member to come back to the point of the debate, which is a take-note debate, rather than playing childish games.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I uphold the point of order.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [1.22 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak in debate on the tenth Legislation Review Digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee. The member for Myall Lakes is a good and capable chairman who gets right to the point and who runs meetings in a fair, efficient and democratic way. As the chairman indicated today and previously, the Legislation Review Committee is a non-partisan committee that is not involved in political pointscore. It is especially disappointing that the member for Bankstown continues to use her—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order. The member for Parramatta has the call.

Dr GEOFF LEE: It is sad that the member for Bankstown continues to use her privileged position in this House to waste valuable time by trying to score cheap political points. Rather than focusing on the important work of this committee, the member for Bankstown is on a continual pointscore rant. The member for Bankstown should focus on the real issues that the committee discusses, deliberates on and then uses to produce its report. The reports are produced with the oversight and valuable contribution of the chairman and all, or nearly all, the committee members and its wonderful staff. I know that the member for Bankstown is

upset with the 8.30 a.m. meeting time. From my experience of business life, which is what I was used to before I became a member of Parliament, I do not think 8.30 is too early to start. We all live busy lives but we all make a commitment to come to Parliament.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order. The member for Parramatta has the call.

Dr GEOFF LEE: It is difficult for us all to start early and to sit late, but I put that commitment in front of other things in my life.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order. I do not want to have to name her or warn her.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I remind all members—I do not want to single anyone out—that the reports given in this House are supposed to be non-partisan, non-political and unconcerned with cheap political pointscore.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Bankstown is warned.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I also congratulate the chairman on his wonderful effort. He runs one of the two most efficient committees of which I am a member. Well done.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I call the member for Bankstown to order.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Report noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report: Report on the Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits October 2009 to June 2010

Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.27 p.m.]: This is the third report of the Public Accounts Committee and the first that reports on its vital role of following up on the performance audits of the Auditor-General. The committee's audit review process is designed to test the adequacy of actions taken by agencies in response to performance audits conducted by the Audit Office. The committee questions agencies about the measures they have taken in responding to the Auditor-General's recommendations. If we are not satisfied, or have further questions, we can seek more information or examine witnesses in a hearing.

The committee examination has proven to be a very effective means of comprehensively testing action taken on all performance audits and maintaining a high level of scrutiny of the agencies under review. This is particularly important as, once a performance audit is complete, the Auditor-General rarely revisits a particular audit. The committee's examination is the main way for agencies to explain publicly what has happened as a result of a performance audit. It adds weight to the audit process and gives further impetus to the overall scrutiny of public expenditure. It is important that appropriate operational changes are addressed and implemented in an open and transparent way and that this action is brought to the attention of the Parliament through the work of the committee.

The report I tabled on 21 February provides an examination of 10 audits conducted into: the handing back of the M4 tollway; government advertising; managing forensic analysis: fingerprints and DNA; Working With Children check; improving the performance of metropolitan bus services; injury management in the New South Wales public sector; improving road safety: school zones; access to overnight centre-based disability respite care; severance payments to special temporary employees; and Knowing the Collections: Australian Museum.

The committee held hearings in October and December last year. We heard from Transport for NSW in relation to the performance audit of the metropolitan bus service. We also questioned an official from the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care in relation to the audit on access to overnight centre-based disability respite care. At both hearings we also heard from officials and staff of the Audit Office. With some noted exceptions, the committee was generally satisfied that the responsible agencies are now meeting their

obligations and implementing the Auditor's recommendations. Throughout the process we became informed about the complexity of some parts of public administration and the difficulties agencies face in affording priority to audit findings, such as addressing a backlog in classifying exhibits in the Australian Museum.

The report makes 13 recommendations in relation to these audits. Several of them recommend that key information be published so that the public can be informed more fully about such matters as the level of compliance with government advertising guidelines and the performance of metropolitan bus services. We recommended that when the contracts for private bus services are developed over the coming months these should include comprehensive performance requirements to improve the experience of bus users. We recommended that the requirements for working with children checking be strengthened legislatively in order to create greater certainty that children are protected from those at greatest risk of causing them harm.

We also recommended that the lessons learned from the successful hand-back of the M4 from private to public hands be published for the edification of the public. Finally, one recommendation acknowledges the difficulty the Australian Museum was facing in implementing the audit recommendations because of a lack of funds, and proposes that the museum seek additional resources for this purpose. In conclusion, and cognisant of the time, I record my appreciation for the assistance provided by the Auditor-General and the Audit Office staff. I thank all my fellow committee members and the committee secretariat staff for their commitment to improving public accountability through our inquiries.

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

[Assistant-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.33 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.18 p.m.]

CRONULLA FISHERIES RESEARCH CENTRE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I direct my question to the Minister for Primary Industries. Why does she continue to refuse to meet with employees from Cronulla Fisheries, many of whom are present in the public gallery?

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. Earlier I welcomed all visitors to the gallery, but I will not tolerate a repeat of the behaviour we saw last year by visitors in the gallery. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. He will not incite visitors in the gallery. I understand the feelings and frustration of visitors in the gallery, but I remind them, as they would have been advised, that I will have no hesitation in removing them from the gallery if they interject or make any other such noise from the gallery. The Minister has the call.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: Employees of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre may rest assured that their concerns regarding the decentralisation project have been well represented to me. Unlike the hope-raisers opposite, I have never wavered from my decision or created any type of doubt about my decision to decentralise New South Wales Fisheries. The decision will have far-reaching benefits for the State's regional communities. For 16 years regional towns were robbed by members opposite of opportunities to be within a stone's throw of their bureaucrats while the public was miles from the department that delivered their key services. We are decentralising our staff at Cronulla to locations that the Champagne Charlies yonder have only seen on postcards. More to the point is that the Cronulla employees have had ample opportunity to voice their concerns to me through various channels, including direct correspondence, media interviews, their local members and the petition that was debated in Parliament. I am sure members opposite remember that.

Mr John Robertson: How many have you met?

Ms Anna Watson: She has not met any of them.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: Just last week I met with three staff members affected by the decentralisation.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I was happy to oblige those staff members with that opportunity because I believe that there are benefits of decentralisation. The meeting continued for approximately an hour and 20 minutes. It was a very lengthy meeting. It was one in which both sides were very firm about their understanding of what the decision would be.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order. I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the second time. I warn members that I will not tolerate disruptive behaviour.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I left those staff members in no doubt about the fact that the decision had been made and there was not going to be wavering on that very important decision. I listened to them express their fears.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order. The Minister has the call and will be heard in silence.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I also indicated during that meeting that their concerns regarding the decentralisation project have already been well represented to me. The staff are in no doubt that the decentralisation of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre will go ahead—nor should there be any doubt. The decision was made and announced by both the Deputy Premier and me approximately six months ago.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: Since we announced that decentralisation, we have made it very clear that this project will proceed.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: Unlike members opposite and especially unlike the former member for Monaro, who is now a member of the other place, I am not interested in taking the hardworking staff at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre on a wild goose chase. I have said it before and I will say it again: The decentralisation is going to proceed and it will deliver great benefits for regional communities in New South Wales.

PUBLIC SECTOR REFORM

Mr GREG APLIN: My question is addressed to the Premier. What action will the Government take to make the New South Wales public service more efficient and protect the public from unwarranted industrial action?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Albury for his question and his interest in these issues. The House will recall that yesterday the Treasurer and I released the interim report of the New South Wales Commission of Audit, the Schott report, which made it clear that when we came to office we inherited an inefficient and poorly managed public sector in New South Wales. The Commission of Audit report stated that there were systemic problems across the entire public sector, so once again it has been left to the New South Wales Liberals and The Nationals to clean up a Labor mess.

We have already taken steps to start public service reform. We have set up a Public Service Commission, we have abolished the unattached list and we have introduced a new wages policy. Today I can advise the House of further steps we will be taking to reduce inefficiencies in the public service and to strengthen the State's industrial relations laws. This includes, first, a significant increase in penalties for

contravening dispute orders made by the Industrial Relations Commissioner. We propose to bring our penalties into line with those of Queensland. The penalties will rise from \$10,000 for the first day of an offence to \$110,000 per day thereafter in line with the Queensland rules. The current penalties have not been changed since 1996 and it is time to update them so that unions will think twice before taking unauthorised industrial action. We are not going to stand by and allow unions to call wildcat strikes in defiance of the Industrial Commission and create havoc and turmoil for commuters, taxpayers and other people across this State.

Secondly, we will make changes to the Industrial Relations Act to give employees the right to join the union of their choice. Under present rules many groups of employees in a particular job can be denied that choice. This current restriction applies even where there might be several unions that overlap an occupation. We want to bring our laws into line with those of the Federal system, which allows employees to choose the union to which they belong. Thirdly, we are going to remove any doubt about the Government's ability to terminate public servants on the unattached list who do not have permanent jobs. As the House knows, the Labor Party allowed hundreds of public servants to sit around for years on end being paid when they had no permanent role. Under members opposite hundreds of public servants, costing tens of millions of dollars, were paid to do a job but they had no permanent role.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As we pledged before the election, last year we took action to eliminate Labor's unattached list but recently the New South Wales Industrial Court ruled that public servants could only be terminated when there was no "useful work" available, rather than the previous test which applied under successive governments of whether there were any vacant permanent positions available. We want to ensure that the public can have confidence that the best people fill public sector positions. That is critical in providing people across this State with the reliable and quality services that they deserve and they look to government to provide. Our changes will make it easier to shed excess employees unless they are the best people for available permanent jobs.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Shellharbour that she is already on two calls to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Given global economic conditions, given the challenges facing all governments across this country, we cannot sit back and allow the inefficiencies in the public service to continue. The Commission of Audit confirmed that the problems in the public sector had contributed not just to a deterioration in the State Budget but also to a deterioration in this State's ability to compete with other Australian States. We accept the overall findings of the Schott report and we are working on the detailed recommendations. In the meantime, the Government will take action to fix known problems in the public service so that it delivers better, and the best, outcomes for the people of this State.

ORICA PLANT INCIDENT

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment. In light of the findings of today's report that she failed to inform the people of Stockton about potentially dangerous chemical leaks from the Orica plant and this caused unnecessary distress for local residents, will she now do the right thing and resign immediately?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury has asked the question. She will come to order and listen to the answer in silence. The Minister has the call.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: It is good to have an opportunity to answer this question, although it is full of all sorts of ridiculous claims. The Government has acknowledged that the incident on 8 August caused by Orica was unacceptable. The people of Stockton and surrounding areas were let down; we have already acknowledged that. We have already acknowledged that there were failures in systems and in reporting requirements, starting with Orica taking so long to report. By the time I, as environment Minister, heard of it, certainly the Orica incident was a public health incident. We were certainly responding to a public health issue, and we were the lead agency by the time I spoke in Parliament.

However, the Government has acknowledged that this inquiry was unnecessary because immediately after the incident it took decisive action—action that could have been taken over 16 years by the last Government. This Government took action to understand the failures in systems that had been in place for

16 years under those opposite. The Premier immediately implemented an inquiry by Brendan O'Reilly. The Government has adopted all the recommendations of that inquiry. An upper House inquiry was established, but it was unnecessary. That said, as a former member of the upper House, I have a great deal of support for reports from Legislative Council committees, particularly when the members of those committees can rise above the political nature of the establishment and come up with good recommendations. The Government will respond to those recommendations in due course, as it must, within the next six months. But I doubt that that particular committee could rise above the political games being played with that report.

We know that the report of a breach of parliamentary privilege was leaked to the media yesterday. Nevertheless, we have taken decisive action in response to the Stockton incident. We established within a week of that incident an audit of the most hazardous facilities. An independent Environment Protection Authority is being established, and recruitment process is underway to appoint the chair of that authority. We changed the legislation, and did so with unanimous support, so that there is immediate reporting of pollution incidents. If pollution incidents are not reported immediately, a \$2 million fine will be imposed. We have undertaken the establishment of a new independent Environment Protection Authority board. Members opposite would be surprised about the level of support for that and also from where that support comes, because industry recognises its responsibilities.

I say to the captains of industry that they should understand that this Government has introduced strong legislation. As environment Minister I have established an independent Environment Protection Authority, the board members of which will be announced shortly, and that authority will be making changes that could have been undertaken by the last Government. Industry is on notice from this Government that we are watching. There is a great deal of scrutiny. The community must be told. I say to the chief executive officers of companies like Orica, "Do not surround yourself with lawyers; do not come into Parliament and use parliamentary privilege to make claims about phone calls that never occurred. Instead, take care and look at your responsibilities to your community because this Government is watching. Make sure that you man up and understand that this Government is scrutinising your activities." We have tightened regulations and established a strong Environment Protection Authority to do things that could have been put in place by the previous Government. The last seven environment Ministers should hang their heads in shame.

ELECTRICITY ASSETS SALE

Mr ROB STOKES: My question is addressed to the Treasurer. What action is the Government taking to fix the problems left behind by the former Government's electricity sale?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Pittwater for his question. He is an admirable representative of the northern beaches and one of the most honest, hardworking members in this place. It is great to have an honest government back in New South Wales, a government that makes a commitment to the people of New South Wales and does something radical—it keeps its commitment. In respect to the electricity sale, we have a clear example of the difference between the Government and the Opposition. In the lead-up to the last State election, the Coalition stated that there would be an independent inquiry into the gentrader mess that was left behind by Labor.

We said that we would retain the poles and wires in public hands and that we would implement the recommendations from that inquiry. That is exactly what we are doing. What was said by the former Premier in this House, and probably at this lectern in the lead-up to the 2007 election? He said, "There will be no sale of electricity generation." But for the ensuing four years those opposite spent every day trying to do exactly that. And what did we end up with? The proceeds of a sale of electricity generation output that the Auditor-General told us equates to 41 per cent of the value of the assets.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is almost \$2 billion less than the assets are worth. The O'Farrell Government is getting on with the job of fixing up that mess and building the infrastructure that this State desperately needs. Despite the scare campaigns from those opposite, our position has been very clear. We are undertaking a long-term lease of the desalination plant at Port Botany and we will get rid of the final generator in Cobbora coalmine, as recommended by the inquiry. Today we have given notice to deliver on that commitment. Why are we pursuing that commitment? Those opposite know the answer to that question. Because it puts downward pressure on electricity prices and releases funds for infrastructure.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is what we desperately need. Those funds will go to Restart NSW. Why is that important? Because \$1 of every \$3 that goes into that fund goes to regional New South Wales. The O'Farrell Government cares about regional New South Wales. For the first time in 16 years we have a government that will actually put dollars into regional New South Wales. Whether money is spent on the Pacific Highway or the Princes Highway, funds will flow.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer needs no assistance from Government members.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I wish to read just a couple of the many endorsements that this approach has attracted. First: "The right thing to do for New South Wales is to realise the value of these assets now and reinvest the proceeds in alternative assets." Who do you think said that? What expert said that? It was none other than Steve Whan. So he is on board. I read another endorsement: "Whether the Government remains in the industry or chooses to leave it will have no bearing whatsoever on two of those concerns, price and reliability." Indeed, that same person noted conclusively that the electricity reforms in Victoria led to a significant price decrease in that State. That is a very strong endorsement. Who could that be? Don't tell me. It was the middle managers' hero, the member for Maroubra.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. If it was such a good idea to liquidate the assets, why did you vote against the sale in 2008?

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. I call the member for Heffron to order for the second time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Another person, when talking about what to do with the electricity sector, said, "The private sector, not the Government, will decide where new investment in generation will occur." Those opposite know who that was. Who could it be? It was none other than the current Leader of the Opposition. The opportunity is here right now. Will those opposite follow the principles they have said are true? Will they support a process that puts downward pressure on prices and release funds for infrastructure or will they continue to play politics?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind Government members that Ministers do not need their assistance.

ASSISTED SCHOOL TRAVEL PROGRAM

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Was the automated payment system for contractors who transport children with disabilities fixed by last Friday, as recommended in the Boston report?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: On Monday I met with Chris Raper, former deputy director general of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, who has been charged with implementing the recommendations from the Boston report. I have every confidence that he will do a very good job. That meeting included the Director-General and other senior executives of the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities. I have directed the Director-General to hold meetings every week because I am absolutely committed to making sure that the recommendations are implemented. Any failures identified by Dr Boston will be fixed and we will make sure that the errors that occurred with the Assisted Student Transport Program do not recur.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. What is the Government doing to help New South Wales councils invest in their most important local infrastructure projects?

Mr DONALD PAGE: I thank the member for Tamworth for his question. I congratulate the member on the wonderful work he is doing in the electorate of Tamworth and his keen interest in infrastructure,

particularly in regional areas. We just heard from the Treasurer that a key focus for this Government is improved infrastructure whether at State or local government level. By way of background, members may or may not be aware that the former head of Treasury in New South Wales did a study into the economic sustainability of local government in 2006, and found that about half the councils in this State were struggling financially. He also found that as a result of that economic struggle there was a significant infrastructure maintenance backlog in local government areas. That was in 2006. Those opposite had six years to address that issue but what did they do? Nothing.

Government Members: Nothing.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind Government members that the Minister does not need their assistance.

Mr DONALD PAGE: By contrast, The Nationals and the Liberals, through the then shadow Minister, recognised that local government has serious issues to deal with in infrastructure backlog. The Government announced before the last election that should we be elected we would put in place an infrastructure renewal scheme which would provide interest-rate subsidies for councils if they choose to borrow money to improve their infrastructure backlog. The Government indicated it would provide a subsidy of 50 per cent of whatever interest was being charged on those loans. Unlike the former Government, which always made promises and then underperformed, this Government only promised to provide 50 per cent infrastructure subsidy. But we are providing higher than that—we are providing the first 4 per cent on loans.

At the moment the majority of loans are around 6 to 7 per cent, so the Government has made promises and then over-delivered. The Government will provide the first 4 per cent of any loan that a council takes out to overcome infrastructure maintenance backlogs. That was announced by the Treasurer in the Government's first budget—and what a good Treasurer he is. The Government announced \$70 million over five years would go towards the payment of interest subsidies. One of the strengths of this scheme is that it provides for a broad range of assets. Whatever projects a local government has—swimming pools, libraries, road, water supply or sewerage—those projects will all be eligible under the scheme. The Government expects that, depending on interest rates over the next couple of years, this will unlock about \$750 million to \$1 billion worth of additional investment in infrastructure across the councils of this State. I think that is commendable.

In terms of the criteria that apply, as I said a moment ago, obviously it will be a broad range of products and infrastructure, but also the loans will typically be of \$1 million or more. However, if a smaller council has two or three projects and they want to combine them to make a \$1 million project that is okay. I am pleased to announce that after having launched the scheme in the middle of January, 76 councils have expressed interest in participating in this scheme. Indeed, three of them are from the electorate of the member for Tamworth—Narrabri, Tamworth and Warrumbungle. Seventy-six councils—that is half the councils in New South Wales—have expressed an interest in participating in this scheme.

Ms Linda Burney: But have they applied?

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

Mr DONALD PAGE: I will come to that. About 66 of those expressions of interest have been for one single project of \$1 million or more and the balance of 10 councils have combined three or four projects to make up \$1 million. Those councils expressing interest have until 30 March to put in their applications. Given the infrastructure backlog we have in this State we will see many of the councils that have expressed an interest and other councils—now that they realise they are on a good thing, being able to have the first 4 per cent paid on their loans—will have their applications in by 30 March. For the edification of members opposite, this has been warmly welcomed by the Local Government and Shires Associations. I have not got time to read out the press release. [*Extension of time granted.*]

I will put on the record the supportive comments made by the Local Government and Shires Associations. In a press release dated 11 January Mr Ray Donald stated:

The Local Government and Shires Association of New South Wales have welcomed the commencement of the New South Wales Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme.

President of the Shires Association of New South Wales, Councillor Ray Donald, has acknowledged and thanked the Minister for Local Government—

I did not write this—

for launching the scheme which honours an important election commitment to local government in New South Wales.

He stated further:

This subsidy, as part of the scheme, aims to encourage councils to make greater use of borrowings to accelerate investment in infrastructure backlogs.

President of the local government association, Councillor Keith Rhoades, stated:

The LGSA have strongly advocated for the provision of low interest loans by the New South Wales Government to help councils deal with critical infrastructure backlogs. We are pleased that the latest scheme specifically targets these backlogs.

That is a strong endorsement from the local government sector. I take the opportunity to commend and thank the local government sector for their cooperative approach to the new Government.

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

Mr DONALD PAGE: The relationship between the local government sector and the previous Government was poisonous. When I came to this position the stories I heard about the disrespect that the former Government had for the local government sector were shocking. As a result of the Destination 2036 exercise, where we put all the local government players together, there has been a cooperative relationship.

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

Mr DONALD PAGE: The Government recognises that there are serious issues with regard to the sustainability of local government in this State and we need to work with the local government sector to ensure that we have long-term sustainability of local government. The Government wants local government to be as strong as it can be. Even five years ago—and the situation is worse now—half of them were struggling financially.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie): My question is to the Attorney General. Can you advise what action your department has taken to progress charges against and give certainty to former Nationals member of Parliament Steve Cansdell who last year admitted to falsifying a statutory declaration?

Mr GREG SMITH: I have no information on that; I will seek it.

SURF LIFE SAVING CLUBS

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: My question is directed to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. How is the Government supporting surf life saving clubs in our communities?

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY: I thank the member for his question. As a member of his local surf life saving club, he obviously has a genuine interest in the Government's objective to support volunteer organisations such as the surf lifesaving movement. I had the pleasure of visiting the member only last week to deliver the good news that the North Entrance Surf Life Saving Club was to receive over \$38,000 to assist in upgrading facilities at the club. The announcement was one of many that I was privileged to make, courtesy of the Surf Club Facility Grant Program, which is funded by the Government and administered by Surf Life Saving NSW. A total of 17 clubs up and down the New South Wales coastline will benefit from the Government's commitment to a volunteer organisation that is part of our world-renowned lifestyle. Clubs from the far South Coast, the South Coast, Illawarra, Sydney, Central Coast, the Hunter, the North Coast and the far North Coast receive much-needed financial assistance under this program.

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

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY: In addition to being a valuable community asset, these important club facilities are used as a base for vital beach rescue services, as well as surf carnivals and a wide range of community activities and education initiatives. The \$2 million grant program will not only assist in upgrading

facilities for members at these clubs, but will also indirectly assist the recruitment and training of new members to carry out the vital lifesaving work performed by the dedicated volunteer force of men and women who willingly give up their own time. These volunteers protect millions of people who enjoy the wonderful natural beach assets we are blessed with in this State and all around the national coastline.

Volunteers are the backbone of all sporting activities, and we need to encourage more people to become involved in surf clubs and other vital community activities. I am sure all members will agree that volunteering is not only vital for our communities but also important for the personal development of the volunteers themselves. In further recognition of the importance of surf lifesaving in New South Wales, I have been advised that the member for Wyong and the member for Pittwater are currently establishing the Parliamentary Friends of Surf Lifesaving.

In September last year I had the pleasure of opening the surf lifesaving season at Manly. This reinforced to me just how important this sport is to our community. Surf Life Saving NSW is the largest surf rescue organisation in Australia, with almost 73,000 members across 129 clubs. Members contribute over half a million hours of voluntary patrols annually. The value of these hours is estimated to be more than \$29 million. Surf lifesavers perform around 7,000 rescues and 140,000 preventative actions, and attend over 13,000 first aid cases each season. One of the most interesting statistics is the involvement of young people in this sport and community service. Junior activity represents over one-third of the membership nationally, highlighting a continued need to invest in the future of surf lifesaving and our young people.

To further illustrate the growth of the sport, just last week we saw the inaugural Australian Open of Surfing staged at Manly, and next month the New South Wales State Championships will be hosted at Kingscliff, on the far North Coast. I am very happy to confirm that, in addition to this current round of funding, the New South Wales Government has committed a further \$2 million in 2013 and again in 2014 to assist in providing the facilities and services required to enhance beachgoers' safety and to save lives. I am sure all members of this House will join with me in supporting the Government's commitment to support the surf lifesaving movement and raise awareness of water safety within the community, so it can continue its invaluable lifesaving work.

ABATTOIR ANIMAL CRUELTY

Ms CLOVER MOORE: My question is to the Minister for Primary Industries. Could mandatory closed-circuit television be introduced into abattoirs to stop grotesque acts of cruelty, given that the Hawkesbury abattoir was recently exposed for shocking animal cruelty and had been visited by enforcement bodies four times last year with no breaches found?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I thank the member for Sydney for her question. I want to say clearly and plainly: the New South Wales Government will not tolerate acts of animal cruelty. All abattoirs in New South Wales quite simply must comply with animal welfare requirements. This is not negotiable. This strong stance is supported by industry training programs and, where issues are suspected, strong regulatory powers for agencies such as the RSPCA. The New South Wales Food Authority also imposes strict conditions on licences to operate these facilities and checks compliance by conducting unannounced audits and inspections. I note that even those opposite have agreed that New South Wales government agencies have been swift and targeted in their response to the recent incident at Wilberforce. In any industry there may be rogue operators. But I do not want to take any chances.

On Thursday 9 February the New South Wales Government became aware of a range of serious allegations against the Wilberforce-based abattoir. These allegations were disturbing and involved both hygiene concerns and the serious mistreatment of animals. On the very same day, my department acted decisively, meeting with Department of Primary Industries animal welfare staff and the RSPCA Chief Inspector. That day the abattoir's prescribed brands were seized. As abattoirs cannot sell their meat unless it is branded, these actions effectively prevent this abattoir from processing meat and committing any further breaches of operating requirements. The Wilberforce facility's operation is being examined further by the Food Authority to determine whether its licence should be suspended or cancelled.

The abattoir is required to respond to these matters and will not be able to operate until the authority completes its investigation, with expert assistance from the Department of Primary Industries and the RSPCA, and makes its determination. The RSPCA also has commenced an investigation into this abattoir and will decide whether prosecution under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 is warranted after the investigation

has concluded. Following the incident I demanded that the New South Wales Food Authority ramp up its unannounced inspections and audits of domestic abattoirs in New South Wales so that consumers and farmers have confidence in the operation of domestic abattoirs across the State.

The New South Wales Food Authority has sent a formal notice to all New South Wales domestic abattoirs, reminding them of their obligations and responsibilities in ensuring the humane treatment of animals. The member for Sydney expressly asked about closed-circuit television operating in abattoirs. I have asked that the investigation being conducted by the RSPCA, the Department of Primary Industries and the New South Wales Food Authority also look at that matter. I want to have a very broad-scale investigation into the operations of small domestic abattoirs in particular. A review of 15 domestic abattoirs in New South Wales is being undertaken at this point following the breach at Wilberforce.

I want to assure the people of New South Wales that the New South Wales Government takes animal welfare very seriously. In fact, I want to update the House that in the past week alone eight unannounced inspections of the State's domestic abattoirs have occurred. The action to immediately shut down this facility demonstrates that the New South Wales Government will not hesitate in taking swift and decisive action when it comes to gross mistreatment of animals. The investigation of the Wilberforce abattoir is progressing and I will receive a full report upon its completion. I thank the House for its attention.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr JOHN BARILARO: My question is addressed to the Premier. Unlike the three-ring circus that is happening in Canberra, will the Premier outline to the House what can be achieved by a government with strong and stable leadership?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The question is clearly out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is for the Chair to decide whether a question is out of order. The question is in order.

Dr Andrew McDonald: May I suggest that the question is out of order because it contains argument, inference and imputation—

The SPEAKER: Order! The question is in order.

Dr Andrew McDonald:—which is outside the standing orders.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question did not contain personal reflections and is in order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Madam Speaker, of course I support your ruling, but I certainly hope you bear in mind the point of order from the member for Macquarie Fields the next time Labor members ask questions during question time. I thank the member for Monaro for his concern. I know there is concern across this country at present about the lack of stable and strong leadership. Those of us who have lived in this State for the past 16 years have seen it all before. It is a choice of image versus ideas. It is a choice of character versus charisma. It is a choice of spin versus substance. One cannot imagine how Labor will go because the last time it chose spin, charisma and image it had, in the words of the Leader of the Opposition, the most disastrous election result since the nineteenth century. Why do we need strong leadership? We need strong leadership to deliver to this State and to this country the sorts of services and environment that people need.

What have we done over the past two weeks to deliver that strong and stable government? We have introduced laws to ensure that police have the power to deal with drive-by shooting incidents across Sydney and we have modernised consorting laws, which those opposite ignored for 16 years. We have put in place a law to try to end the anomaly that those opposite presided over from 1996—an anomaly that incredibly allowed firearms owners to buy ammunition for guns they did not own, which was part of the 1996 national gun reform package but was ignored by those opposite. We also have sought to close the loophole that allowed criminals to change their names. The Attorney General and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services have been very strong on those three issues because it is about giving police the powers they need and the community the protection it deserves. What did Labor do for 16 years in those years? Zip, nothing, nada.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Instead of supporting police, those opposite continued to criticise and undermine them. They refused to acknowledge the job that police are doing—arrests are being made, charges are being laid and guns are being seized. In this sitting fortnight the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Transport have pledged to introduce a police security unit for our trains. There is no bigger issue affecting the people who use public transport—whether trains, buses or ferries—than the issue of security, and 600 dedicated, fully trained and authorised police will patrol our trains, buses and ferries to deliver the protection that people need. We know that is one way to encourage greater use of public transport. Last week we passed legislation to restrict donations to individuals, to clean up Labor's rotten, corrupt culture of decisions for donations. I am sorry the member for Wollongong is not in the Chamber to hear this. It is a process of restoring honesty, integrity and openness to government in New South Wales.

Mr Nick Lalich: What are you going to do?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Was that the member for Cabramatta? Was that the member for Cabramatta who has recently been referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption—not by a Liberal councillor, not by an independent councillor but by a respected Labor councillor, Mr Khoshaba? Mr Khoshaba, history reminds me, was the father of the former member for Fairfield.

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

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: It goes to relevance. It was the member for Smithfield.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. I have asked the Premier to return to the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I apologise to the member for Fairfield—he had the sense not to interject. As useless as socks on a chicken is one description I have heard of those opposite—but I will not say which ones. The fact is that the Minister for Health and the Government also have introduced a smoking ban.

Question time concluded at 3.04 p.m.

VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2011-2012

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variation of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2011-12 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of specific purpose payments and national partnership payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates for the Department of Attorney General and Justice, dated 23 December 2011.

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variation of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2011-12 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of specific purpose payments and national partnership payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates for the Ministry of Health, dated 17 January 2012.

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variation of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2011-12 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of specific purpose payments and national partnership payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates for the Department of Family and Community Services, dated 27 January 2012.

PETITIONS

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

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Pets on Public Transport

Petition requesting that pets be allowed on public transport, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

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**.

Pet Shops

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

Petition requesting the ban of pig-dog hunting in New South Wales, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

Petition requesting mandatory CCTV for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

Animals Performing in Circuses

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

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

Wyang Road Traffic Control Signals

Petition requesting traffic control signals at the intersection of Wyong Road and Central Coast Highway, received from **Mr Chris Spence**.

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**.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**Personal Explanation**

Mr NICK LALICH, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. The Premier is wrong in what he said during question time. I referred the matter to the Independent Commission Against Corruption, not Councillor Khoshaba.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Membership****Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:**

That:

- (1) Gareth James Ward be appointed to serve on the Legislation Review Committee in place of Garry Keith Edwards, discharged; and
- (2) a message be sent informing the Legislative Council.

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

NOXIOUS WEEDS AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Katrina Hodgkinson.

Agreement in Principle

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [3.08 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Noxious Weeds Amendment Bill 2012 is about improving the management of noxious weeds in New South Wales and, in turn, better protecting landowners, their neighbours, the community and the environment from the damaging effects of noxious weeds. The bill makes provision for improved regulatory powers to help minimise the risk of new weeds establishing in New South Wales, and for authorities to be able to deal more rapidly with the weeds if and when they arrive. The Noxious Weeds Amendment Bill 2012 also will strengthen the objectives of the Act and allow for special arrangements on Lord Howe Island. The genesis of this bill was a statutory review of the Noxious Weeds Act 1993, which was conducted in 2010. The bill has been developed after extensive consultation with the community, industry, local government and State government organisations. Sixty-four submissions were received.

Before I go further I will clarify that a noxious weed is a plant that is subject to a weeds control order under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 but it is only a noxious weed in relation to the land specified in that weed control order. The Noxious Weeds Act 1993 provides the regulatory framework for controlling noxious weeds in New South Wales. The Act sets out various processes for declaring, classifying and controlling noxious weeds. It requires occupiers of land to notify and control noxious weeds on their land and establishes local control authorities who are responsible for the management of noxious weeds in their local area. In most cases, this is the local or county council. The Act provides for noxious weeds inspectors and authorised officers and sets out their powers. The Act also makes provision for the establishment of the Noxious Weeds Advisory Committee. This committee advises the Minister on all aspects of noxious weed management, including declarations, allocation of grant funds, regulations under the Act and policy issues.

Weeds have a major impact on agricultural productivity and the environment in New South Wales. Weeds displace native species, contribute to land degradation and reduce farm and forest productivity. Weeds are a very costly natural resource management problem for farmers. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Natural Resource Management survey in 2006-07 found that agricultural businesses in New South Wales spent \$933 million and three million days on weed, pest, land and soil activities. It also found that weed management nationally comes at a cost of \$1.5 billion for Australian farmers. The report on the 2010 Statutory Review of the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 recommended making a number of amendments to the Act to improve its effectiveness. I now turn to these amendments in the bill.

The first proposed change is to strengthen the objectives of the Act so that they better reflect the current weed management policy and provide greater consistency with the NSW Invasive Species Plan. Two amendments to the objects of the Act are proposed. The first amendment is to extend objective 3 (a) (ii) to refer to preventing, eliminating and restricting the spread of both existing and new significant weeds. The current section 3 (a) (ii) refers only to restricting the spread of existing significant weeds and makes no mention of preventing or eliminating the spread of existing significant weeds. The second amendment is to objective 3 (a) (iii) of the Act. Currently this section refers to reducing the area in this State of existing significant weeds. While a reasonable objective "in principle", this measure is considered impractical, largely unachievable on a State scale, and not an appropriate indicator of how successful a weed control program has been.

In other words, while a successful program may reduce the density and impacts of certain weeds, the actual area affected by that weed may not be reduced. This bill therefore replaces the current objective in section 3 (a) (iii) to instead include the stated objective of effectively managing widespread weeds in this State. The next amendment in this bill is to clarify the area where a noxious weed is declared. The clear intention of the Act is that a weed may be declared noxious in a specific area or areas. Section 7 (3) as currently worded is ambiguous and could be interpreted to mean that once a plant has been declared a noxious weed in any part of the State, that plant is a noxious weed across the whole State. The bill proposes clarifying that a plant is considered to be a noxious weed only in the area to which the relevant weed control order applies.

The next amendment relates to a new ministerial power to prohibit or regulate the bringing into New South Wales, or a specified part of New South Wales, noxious weed material or anything else that the

Minister considers is likely to introduce noxious weed material into New South Wales or a specified part of New South Wales. Unlike other New South Wales biosecurity legislation, the Noxious Weeds Act is currently extremely limited in its power to prevent the entry into New South Wales of high-priority weeds, new weeds from other States and Territories, weed material or produce or anything else that may be contaminated with these weeds or weed material.

The Act focuses on weeds and weed material once they are in New South Wales. Currently, the only provisions in the Act that are concerned with weeds or weed material coming into New South Wales from other jurisdictions are the requirements to clean certain agricultural machines before they enter New South Wales from Queensland. These provisions are obviously limited in their application. The bill proposes amending the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 to allow the Minister, by order, to prohibit or regulate the bringing into New South Wales of noxious weed material or anything else that the Minister considers is likely to introduce noxious weed material into New South Wales. A person who fails to comply with such an order will be guilty of an offence with a maximum penalty of \$11,000. This amendment is about protecting New South Wales producers and the environment from the unnecessary introduction of weeds to New South Wales.

Occupiers of land are legally required to control noxious weeds if that land is subject to a weed control order. However, the occupier may not necessarily be the landowner. The local control authority should have a mechanism whereby they can quickly establish who the occupier is. This will allow the local control authority to more efficiently fulfil its obligations under the Act. It is proposed to enable a local control authority to, by written notice, require a private landowner whose land is subject to a weed control order to provide the local control authority with the name and contact details of the occupier and a description of the land. To make the amendment enforceable, the bill proposes making it an offence for failing to comply with any such requirement. The maximum penalty for this offence is \$2,200.

Under the Act, public authorities are already required to notify the local control authority of the name and contact details of an occupier of land that is owned by that public authority. However, public authorities are not required to provide a description of the occupied land. To ensure consistency in the Act and improve the information provided to local control authorities, the bill also proposes that public authorities be required to provide a description of the land that is occupied by each occupier.

Another important amendment in this bill will help reduce the risk of noxious weeds spreading into New South Wales from Queensland and other jurisdictions. Currently, under section 31 of the Act, certain types of agricultural machines subject to an order under this section that are being used for their intended purpose must be produced for inspection at the border of Queensland and New South Wales. Before that machine can lawfully enter New South Wales, the border inspector must certify that the machine has been cleaned as legally required. Currently, this includes grain harvesters, comb trailers, grain harvesting bins, augers and associated transport and pilot vehicles. There are, however, mining exploration machines and other machines and equipment moving from Queensland into New South Wales with a high potential to spread noxious weeds such as parthenium into New South Wales.

It is therefore proposed to amend the Act so that an order can apply to machinery and equipment more generally, not just to agricultural machines, and to machinery and equipment coming into New South Wales from any other State or Territory rather than just from Queensland. Other States and Territories have noxious weeds that may, in the future, be found to be spreading into New South Wales via mining machinery, for example. This amendment will allow action to be taken to require the cleaning and inspection provisions to apply in such circumstances. It then follows that inspectors' powers to require the treatment of agricultural machines to remove any notifiable weed material should be extended to "machinery and equipment" in general. It is also considered necessary that the offence of knowingly transporting, moving or using an agricultural machine containing notifiable weed material be applied to all machinery and equipment. The bill includes such amendments.

The bill also includes some amendments relating to weed management on Lord Howe Island. The Lord Howe Island Group was World Heritage listed in 1982 in recognition of its outstanding natural beauty and its exceptional biodiversity. The vegetation of Lord Howe Island is unique in that nearly half of its plant species are not found anywhere else in Australia. It would be advantageous to declare certain plant species as class 2 weeds on Lord Howe Island so as to protect the unique flora and status of the island. Class 2 weeds are those that pose a potentially serious threat to primary industries or to the environment and are not present, or are present only to a limited extent, in a region.

However, once a plant is declared a class 2 weed anywhere in New South Wales, certain sections of the Act are triggered in relation to that plant that apply across the whole State. For example, it is an offence to sell or purchase any class 2 weed material knowing it to be a notifiable weed anywhere in the State. It is also an offence to sell soil, turf or fodder from land if the person knows that there is a weed on that land that is notifiable anywhere in the State, and it is an offence to knowingly transport, use or move machinery or equipment containing a weed that is notifiable anywhere in the State. These offences apply anywhere in New South Wales, even if the plant is only declared to be a noxious weed on Lord Howe Island and is widespread on mainland New South Wales.

For the most part, this is considered appropriate given the seriousness of class 2 weeds. However, given the uniqueness of Lord Howe Island vegetation and its geographic isolation from mainland New South Wales, a mechanism is required to allow the Minister to declare a plant as a class 2 weed on Lord Howe Island only while ensuring that a person, class of persons, premises, machinery or equipment on mainland New South Wales can be exempt from certain provisions if considered appropriate. The bill includes a power for the Minister to make such exemptions. The statutory review concluded that there are insufficient powers in the Act to allow the investigation, management, identification and trace-back of suspected noxious weed material—for example, where there are no leaves, spines or branches to allow immediate identification of a plant species.

Currently, the Act gives inspectors various powers to investigate, manage, identify and trace back noxious weed material and material containing noxious weed material but no powers in relation to material suspected of being or containing noxious weed material. In practice, it can be difficult to identify certain plant material, such as seed in fodder and grain and bare plant branches used by florists. Those materials often need to be propagated until they become reproductive to allow definitive identification. This inefficiency will be overcome by amending the Act to extend the powers of inspectors to also enable them to examine, seize, detain, remove or destroy anything that the inspector reasonably suspects to be, or to contain, noxious weed material. I make it clear that the only powers of inspectors that are to be extended are those related to dealing with noxious weeds. That does not include extending inspectors' powers of entry to a property or premises. These powers of entry remain unchanged.

A further amendment to the Act allows inspectors to take samples of anything that the inspector reasonably suspects to be or to contain noxious weed material and to take photographs or video recordings of any such thing. These improvements will greatly assist inspectors in identifying and tracing noxious weeds. The Act does not expressly provide that inspectors have the power to take photographs and video recordings when investigating noxious weed matters. These modern technologies are an essential tool in measuring and documenting the spread of weeds. Taking photographs is a much more efficient way of capturing the spread of weeds than is manual plotting on a graph. They are also an objective and defensible way of documenting the presence of weeds during property inspections. Therefore, it is appropriate to amend the Act to make it clear that inspectors can take photographs and video recordings for the purposes of the Act.

The bill also includes an amendment to empower inspectors to require people to answer questions for the purpose of assisting the source or destination of suspected noxious weed material to be traced. The Act currently states that inspectors can require people to answer questions only if they reasonably believe it will enable them to trace the source or destination of actual noxious weed material. The Act currently does not require questions to be answered in relation to suspected noxious weed material. Also, the power is limited to situations where the inspector reasonably believes the answer may enable the source or destination to be traced. The amendment in this bill extends this important power to situations in which the inspector reasonably believes that the answer may assist with the tracing of the source or destination of the material in question.

Finally, the bill includes an amendment that will streamline and simplify delegation functions under the Act. Currently, local councils have been delegating certain functions in the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 pursuant to the delegation powers contained in either the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 or the Local Government Act 1993. For consistency and clarity, the bill includes an amendment that ensures that functions under the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 can be delegated only under that Act and cannot be delegated under the Local Government Act 1993. This will ensure that inspectors are not appointed under the Local Government Act. This bill proposes amendments to the Noxious Weeds Act 1993 to improve weed control and management across the State. They are sensible amendments that will deliver benefits to New South Wales landowners and the community. By taking action to address weeds, we can also improve agricultural sustainability and food security, primary industry productivity and the survival of threatened and endangered plants and animals, and deliver broad environmental benefits. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**BIRTHS, DEATHS AND MARRIAGES REGISTRATION AMENDMENT (CHANGE OF NAME)
BILL 2012**

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Smith.

Agreement in Principle

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.26 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Amendment (Change of Name) Bill 2012. The bill will strengthen change-of-name restrictions in relation to inmates, parolees, remandees, forensic patients, and serious sex offenders. Those people will be required to obtain the approval of their supervisory authority prior to applying to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to change their name. The proposed restrictions will prevent improper name changes by offenders, facilitate the effective supervision of offenders in custody and in the community, and protect the interests of victims of crime.

This proposal is consistent with the recommendations of the "Best Practice Change of Name" paper that I presented at the meeting of the Standing Council on Law and Justice in November last year. At that meeting, the standing council agreed to consider implementing the recommendations of that paper. New South Wales is leading the way in implementing the recommendations of the best practice paper and will continue to encourage other jurisdictions to follow its lead. The bill deems inmates, parolees, remandees, serious sex offenders, forensic patients, and others under equivalent supervision in the community to be restricted persons.

The bill provides that restricted persons must not make a change-of-name application to the registrar without having first obtained the written approval of their supervising authority. A failure to do so will be a criminal offence. The supervising authority in respect of forensic patients is the Mental Health Review Tribunal. The supervising authority in respect of all other restricted persons is the Commissioner of Corrective Services. The bill requires supervising authorities to notify the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages of all restricted persons. That ensures that if a restricted person fails to obtain the approval of their supervisory authority, the registrar will know to refuse that application. As inmates, parolees, and remandees are strictly monitored groups, it is appropriate that the Commissioner of Corrective Services should be required to approve an application for a change of name before it is made to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

No such approval is currently required and such offenders are free to change their name without the knowledge or consent of Corrective Services. Therefore, Corrective Services could attempt to monitor an offender in the community without even knowing their real name, or an application could be made by an offender for an improper purpose, such as to further an unlawful activity. This bill addresses those issues. Furthermore, there have been several high-profile cases in which people convicted of serious offences have attempted to change their name in a manner that is offensive to the victims of their crime. For example, in Victoria notorious paedophile Brian Jones attempted to change his name to "Shaun Paddick" while on parole. This was interpreted as an insult to his victims, whose hair he shaved when he abused them. Following this, the Victorian Corrections Act was amended to provide that parolees must obtain the approval of the Adult Parole Board prior to applying to the Victorian Registrar to change their name.

Under the Births, Deaths, and Marriages Registration Act, the registrar may refuse to register an application for a change of name if he determines that the proposed name is "obscene or offensive". However, the registrar may not be aware that a change of name application could be inappropriate without being aware of the full criminal history of the applicant, which the applicant may fail to disclose. In contrast, the applicant's supervising authority will be fully aware of the history and circumstance of their criminal offences. This body is in the best position to initially assess whether an application for a change of name would be offensive to victims of the crime or the community.

The proposed restrictions also apply to serious sex offenders subject to extended supervision orders. The Supreme Court may make such an order to monitor an offender in the community only if it is satisfied to a high degree of probability that the offender poses an unacceptable risk of committing a serious sex offence if he or she is not kept under supervision. The terms of an extended supervision order can include strict controls, such as requiring the subject of the order to reside at a particular address, not to engage in specified types of conduct

and to submit to electronic monitoring. As serious sex offenders are strictly monitored, they should also be required to obtain the approval of the Commissioner of Corrective Services prior to changing their name. This proposal is consistent with the approach currently adopted in New South Wales in respect of registrable persons under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act. The change of name restrictions in this bill are in addition to the restrictions under that Act.

Similar concerns arise in relation to forensic patients. A forensic patient is a person who has been found unfit to be tried or been found not guilty by reason of mental illness. Forensic patients may be detained in a variety of places, including correctional centres and mental health facilities, or they may be released into the community subject to strict conditions. Forensic patients are subject to a high degree of supervision and control by their supervising authority, the Mental Health Review Tribunal, as they may be a danger to themselves and the community. Therefore, it is appropriate that the approval of the tribunal should be required before a forensic patient can apply to change his or her name. Correctional patients, periodic detainees and others under supervision orders in the community, such as intensive correction orders or home detention orders, are also covered by the proposed restrictions.

It is acknowledged that there may be some circumstances in which restricted persons may apply to change their name for legitimate reasons. Offenders also may be victims of crimes and a change of name may be an attempt to escape identification by a perpetrator. Alternatively, a name change could be made for religious or cultural reasons. In some cases, a change of name can assist in the rehabilitation of an offender. Therefore, the bill provides that a supervising authority may approve a change of name application, but only if it is satisfied that the change of name is in all the circumstances necessary or reasonable. The bill also provides that a supervising authority must not approve a change of name application in certain circumstances.

These circumstances include when the proposed name would be reasonably likely to be regarded as offensive by a victim of crime or an appreciable sector of the community. For example, if an offender applied to change their name to that of one of their victims, a supervising authority could not approve this. A change of name application must also not be approved if it is reasonably likely to be used to evade or hinder the supervision of the applicant, to be used to further an unlawful activity or purpose, to jeopardise the applicant's or another person's health or safety, or to adversely affect the security, discipline or good order of any facility in which the person is held or accommodated.

The bill goes even further to ensure the safety of the community by extending change of name restrictions even after an offender has completed his or her prison or parole term in certain circumstances. In most cases when offenders have completed their sentence they are as free to change their name as any other person. A change of name can assist in rehabilitation by enabling an offender to successfully reintegrate and become a law-abiding and productive member of society. However, there is a group of serious offenders for whom continuing change of name restrictions are justified. Community concerns have been raised following some cases in which high-profile criminals have changed their name and have not been recognised in the community. The safety of the community must be considered paramount.

Therefore, the bill will extend change of name restrictions to any serious offender even after they finish their prison and parole term. Serious offenders are defined in the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act and are managed by the Serious Offenders Review Council whilst incarcerated. They include those at the high end of the offending scale, such as murderers and people sentenced to a non-parole period of at least 12 years. The sentencing court, the parole authority and the Commissioner of Corrective Services also may deem people to be serious offenders in appropriate circumstances. When offenders have completed their parole or prison sentences, they will not have a supervising authority. Therefore they may apply directly to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to change their name.

However, under the bill, the registrar will be required to obtain the approval of both the Commissioner of Corrective Services and the Commissioner of Police in deciding whether to register the change of name. The Commissioner of Corrective Services and the Commissioner of Police may only approve the application if they are satisfied that the change of name is reasonable or necessary in the circumstances. Furthermore, the bill provides that the commissioners may not approve of an application for a change of name in certain circumstances, which mirrors the applicable criteria in respect of restricted persons under the bill. This provides an important safeguard to prevent name changes by released serious offenders when there is good reason for the proposed change not to occur. The restrictions will continue for 10 years after a serious offender completes his or her sentence, unless he or she commits another offence attracting a custodial sentence, in which case the restrictions will be extended.

If serious offenders prove that they can reintegrate into society without committing further offences it is appropriate that change of name restrictions are relaxed. Evidence shows that recidivism rates drop off sharply the longer a person continues without reoffending. The bill provides that if the Mental Health Review Tribunal does not approve a change of name application by a forensic patient, the applicant will have a right to appeal that decision to a full panel of the Mental Health Review Tribunal. Similarly, the bill provides that if either the Commissioner of Corrective Services or the Commissioner of Police does not approve a change of name application by an offender, the applicant will have a right to seek review of that decision to the Administrative Decisions Tribunal. This ensures that there is adequate recourse for an applicant if those authorities make an incorrect decision.

Of course, decisions by the commissioners may be made on the basis of criminal intelligence or other security-sensitive information that should not be disclosed to the offender or the public. Therefore, the bill provides that security-sensitive information need not be disclosed by the commissioners when giving reasons for their decisions. Also, the Administrative Decisions Tribunal, when reviewing those decisions, is to ensure that such information is not disclosed without the approval of the commissioner who made the decision. The proposed restrictions strike an appropriate balance between facilitating effective supervision of offenders in custody and in the community, protecting the interests of victims of crime and allowing offenders to change their name for legitimate reasons where appropriate. I commend the bill to the House.

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

CENTENNIAL PARK AND MOORE PARK TRUST AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Robyn Parker.

Agreement in Principle

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [3.39 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now agreed to in principle.

This bill makes amendments to the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust Act 1983 to improve the environmental, financial and social sustainability of an important government asset—an asset that was used and enjoyed by the community on more than 11 million occasions last year alone, making this one of the most visited public parklands in Australia. Centennial Parklands comprises three parks—Centennial Park, Moore Park and Queens Park. It covers more than 360 hectares in heavily populated areas just five kilometres south-east of the Sydney central business district, and was once referred to by author Patrick White as "the lungs of the city".

The unique cultural values of the three main parks are recognised by their listing on the State Heritage Register. In my dual capacity as Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage I support and endorse this wonderful collection of parks. In addition, components of the parks have national, State and local heritage significance. Key to its significance is its iconic status in New South Wales and Australian history. As members will know, Centennial Park was created specifically to commemorate the 100th anniversary of European settlement in the colony, and 13 years later it was chosen as the site of the ceremony of the inauguration of the Federation of Australia. Much of what Centennial parklands covers today is what remains of the second Sydney Common, proclaimed in 1811 by Governor Lachlan Macquarie when he put aside 490 hectares of land.

Mr Gareth Ward: He was a visionary Governor.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Absolutely, he was a visionary Governor. In those days, 490 hectares of land was a significant allotment; Governor Macquarie showed great foresight by putting it aside for public benefit. However, what makes Centennial Parklands such a popular and iconic place in our community today is how it has evolved and adapted to remain relevant to the wants and needs of our community, while not losing its distinctive Victorian era identity. The parklands play host to a diverse array of activities and events ranging from sport and recreational to educational, social and entertainment. As I stated earlier, it is estimated that more than 11 million visits were made to the parklands in 2010-11. The Government is committed to strengthening the local environment and communities, and cutting red tape. This bill contributes to these goals by improving

the administrative efficiency of the trust and providing it with greater opportunities to seek enhanced revenue. A stronger financial position for the trust will ensure the long-term management and maintenance of the parklands for the whole community.

Many people will be surprised to hear that the trust is largely self-funded. It is to be congratulated on having more than 93 per cent of its recurrent budget of \$20 million derived from its commercial activities that include Moore Park Golf House, community events and more than 40 licences and leases for entities such as Fox Studios Australia, the Entertainment Quarter and Centennial Parklands Dining. The first proposal in this bill is to extend the maximum term of a lease the Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust can enter into from a maximum of 20 years to a maximum of 50 years. The bill also will allow a maximum lease term up to 99 years if the Minister approves. These are commercial lease arrangements—the amended maximum lease durations are similar to those in comparable Acts—that will enable the trust to enter into longer-term leases that will improve the commercial viability of private sector investment in the parklands. It is fitting that it is the Liberal-Nationals Government taking this step, recognising the necessity for strong, commercial lease operations and administration.

The ability for the trust to attract private funding is particularly important for the refurbishment of ageing assets, such as the E. S. Marks Athletics Field and the Moore Park Golf House, which require substantial investments to bring them to acceptable standards of safety and amenity. These investments could have been made over the past 16 years, but they were not. They face quite substantial financial input to bring them to a standard necessary for today's safety and public enjoyment. Without such funding, ongoing deterioration of these assets may lead to partial or full closure of facilities to the public. I am sure no member in the House or the public would want that to happen.

The second proposal contained in this bill will enable the trust to delegate its functions to State or local government agencies, as well as to persons of a class prescribed by the regulations. A delegate will now be able to sub-delegate to authorised persons if the delegate is authorised to do so by the trust. This will improve the ability of the trust to provide safe and secure parklands. A number of additional amendments in the bill will indemnify trustees against compensation claims, bring all landholdings into a single schedule, allow written resolutions of the trustees outside of a meeting and remove redundant provisions in the Act. The Act is currently silent on indemnity for trustees.

This bill introduces an indemnity provision so that trustees are not personally liable for compensation claims arising from injuries and damage to property incurred within the trust lands. The remaining parts of the bill cut red tape, which is a significant step by our Government, by bringing all the landholdings together in a single schedule and omitting redundant clauses. This bill will improve the operational efficiency of the trust so that it can continue to provide the community with a safe and attractive environment to enjoy. I wholeheartedly support these amendments. They will do a great deal towards assisting the trust with its financial viability, making sure that facilities offered within the parklands are up to the standard we expect today and continue the legacy that Governor Macquarie saw initially by handing over this land for public use. I commend the bill to the House.

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

BIOFUELS AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 22 February 2012.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [3.48 p.m.]: The Biofuels Amendment Bill 2012 removes the requirement from 1 July 2012 for primary wholesalers to ensure that unleaded petrol meets the standard known as E10—a biofuel that contains between 9 per cent and 10 per cent ethanol. This bill also contains consequential amendments to the Biofuels Regulation 2007. As a Liberal, I believe in choice and these changes give consumers the opportunity to decide what is best at the bowser. This Government should ensure that consumers have all the knowledge, all the information and, of course, choice. As the local member for Kiama, I am deeply proud that Manildra has a major production in my electorate. I grew up in Bomaderry, which is where Manildra has employed almost 300 local people. Manildra has provided for a major investment in our region that has led to jobs for families in the Illawarra and on the South Coast.

The New South Wales Government is working to achieve a secure, affordable and cleaner energy future. Investment in renewable energy will play a key part in this vision by encouraging strong regional development and creating jobs in New South Wales. Ethanol is good for jobs and good for investment; it is a significant part of our local economy. I am delighted with the New South Wales Government's commitment to regional development and to the ethanol industry. I sincerely thank the Premier for his unwavering support for the use of ethanol and the ethanol industry. I thank my friend and colleague Shelley Hancock, the Speaker, with whom I share a most beautiful region and also a passion for the ethanol industry. In particular, I thank Manildra proprietor Dick Honan, who has so frequently been let down by Government but has maintained his dedication to investment in our region. I support and share in his most creditable vision.

Biofuels are an important part of the clean energy future and will support industry and development in regional New South Wales. The former Labor Government introduced the Biofuels Act 2007 and the Biofuel (Ethanol Content) Amendment Bill 2009, which set a mandated minimum ethanol content for total petrol sales in New South Wales. The Biofuel (Ethanol Content) Amendment Bill 2009 set a timetable for all regular unleaded petrol in New South Wales to be converted to E10. That was due to take place on 1 July this year. This bill will amend the Biofuels Act 2007 to remove the requirement for regular unleaded petrol to be E10. There is much debate about ethanol and I must put to rest once and for all some of the fiction that has emerged in this debate. Manildra at Bomaderry converts industrial grade wheat flour into its primary products of protein and carbohydrate.

A by-product of the carbohydrate production is ethanol. Manildra's Bomaderry distillery is the largest ethanol producer in Australia, offering a range of grades suitable for all applications. Ethanol is commonly used in manufacturing for industries such as beverage, food, pharmaceutical, personal care, ink, cleaning and hygiene, surface coating and explosives. With concerns for the environment, the future supply of oil and the ever-increasing price of oil, ethanol has re-emerged as a popular alternative to fossil fuels. Today, many car manufacturers offer vehicles that run on either pure ethanol or blends of ethanol. There are also premium products such as E85, which is a blend containing 85 per cent ethanol and 15 per cent petrol, and E10, which is a blend of 10 per cent ethanol and 90 per cent petrol—or any blend in between.

Since Manildra commenced manufacturing ethanol in 1992 it has continued to expand its facilities to meet the ever-growing demand and provide an environmentally friendly alternative to fossil fuels. An important fact about ethanol is that, unlike fossil fuels, it is made from a renewable resource. Our hardworking primary producers can grow crops that will replenish themselves time and time again. The most common renewable fuels in the world are ethanol and biodiesel. They are used to blend with fuel in petrol and diesel. Ethanol contains oxygen that stimulates the more efficient combustion of petrol fuels in petrol and diesel engines. In doing so, renewable fuels reduce harmful petrol and diesel exhaust emissions that pollute the air we breathe and pose a risk to human health. Ethanol contains the fundamentals of alcohol—fermenting starches or sugars from an agricultural foundation.

I must correct my friend and colleague the member for Balmain in relation to his somewhat misguided comments in this debate. Manildra makes its ethanol from waste as part of an integrated manufacturing process at the Bomaderry plant. As part of this process flour is separated into gluten, protein and starch. The protein is removed from flour and is sold to food manufacturers worldwide. Starch is used by a number of businesses within the confectionary, beverage and paper industries. The residual starch from this process is converted to ethanol. The waste from ethanol production is turned into a protein-rich livestock feed that supplements the diet of hundreds of thousands of cattle in Australia and New Zealand, and also supplies the international market, making ethanol a truly green product—of the environment and for the environment.

Contrary to some of the statements made by those who oppose biofuels, ethanol has been used in cars since Henry Ford designed his 1908 Model T to operate on alcohol. Ethanol-blended fuel has detergent properties. These properties keep your car's fuel injection system clean, maximising vehicle performance. It is my strong opinion that biofuels can have very positive health effects. Air pollution causes respiratory problems such as asthma and lung cancer. Exhaust emissions from vehicles are a contributing factor to these conditions. Ethanol significantly reduces fine particulate emissions and toxic exhaust emissions, which are a major cause of respiratory problems.

Based on these health benefits, the Australian Medical Association and the Australian Lung Foundation support the use of a 10 per cent ethanol blend in all petrol. The American Lung Association and the Brazilian Government credit ethanol-blended petrol with reducing smog-forming emissions in major United States and Brazilian cities. Ethanol is important for our nation's energy security, as it reduces our reliance on fossil fuels.

Australia currently has a fuel trade deficit of \$19 billion a year on an annualised basis. This equates to spending more than \$2 million per hour on imported fuel. Whilst I am certainly not an expert on fuel and engine performance, what I do know is that in 2009 the V8 Supercars, Australia's peak motorsport series, recognised its benefits. It changed to E85, an 85 per cent ethanol blend, as a control fuel for all races, including the iconic Bathurst 1000 competition. Holden is following suit with its iconic Commodore.

I will make some comments in relation to enforcement. There is no point having an ethanol mandate if it is not enforced. The New South Wales Office of Biofuels must do much more if we are to ensure the mandate proposed by this Government is enforced. That is what the families in my electorate, who rely on Manildra, want to see. As the member for Kiama, that is what I want to see. I call on the Minister and the Government to ensure that this mandate is enforced. I turn now to the legislation. On the whole it is a good document, but I believe that more work has to be done. In relation to organisations such as BP this mandate can be enforced quite simply, because BP owns its own petrol stations. However Caltex petrol stations are franchised and in that respect it will be difficult to enforce this mandate. Work has to be done to ensure that those organisations also uphold this mandate.

If this Government is fair dinkum in supporting regional development, investment and jobs in this industry, these are the things that must be done. I place the House on notice that I will be watching to make sure that these things are done. I have every confidence in the Minister, who I note is in the Chamber, and I thank him for his commitment to the ethanol industry. In a spirit of bipartisanship I commend those opposite who have shown their commitment to the ethanol industry—not as much commitment as shown by this Government, but they are doing a great job in supporting this bill today. This bill will raise the ethanol mandate from 4 to 6 per cent. I hope the House can unite to support regional jobs, to support this important business and to support it for the right environmental reasons. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [3.57 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contribution to this debate. In particular, I thank the member for Riverstone, the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Wollondilly, the member for Vacluse, the member for Drummoyne, the member for Bathurst, the member for Albury, the member for Camden, the member for Granville, the member for Pittwater, the member for Tamworth, the member for Murray-Darling, the Minister for Western New South Wales, the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Clarence, the member for Parramatta and the member for Kiama for their insightful contribution to the debate.

I commend to the House the member for Kiama, who has been a tireless advocate for the ethanol industry and the development of jobs in his electorate. The member has yet again made another spirited contribution to debate in this House not only on a matter of public policy but strongly in support of his electorate and the employment opportunities for his electorate. The Biofuels Amendment Bill 2012 amends the Biofuels Act 2007 by deleting section 8, "Regular unleaded petrol to be E10". The bill makes several consequential amendments to sections 3, 16 and 24. The bill also makes a consequential amendment to the Biofuels Regulation 2007 deleting clause 4A, which specifies the start date of the requirements to be 1 July 2012.

The purpose of the bill is to remove the requirement that was to have begun on 1 July 2012 for primary wholesalers selling regular unleaded petrol in New South Wales to ensure that it is E10. By making these amendments, primary wholesalers will be able to continue to supply regular grade unleaded petrol that does not contain ethanol to service stations in New South Wales. Importantly, motorists will still be able to purchase regular unleaded petrol. This is important for the owners of older vehicles, boats and small engines that are not compatible with E10. And it will ensure customers with incompatible vehicles do not have to pay more for premium fuel.

The bill also eliminates the requirement for a complex and potentially inequitable regime of E10 exemptions for small businesses and marinas. It also negates a number of other potential inequities that would have been created in the petrol market. The bill has no impact on the requirements for volume sellers to ensure that ethanol makes up not less than 6 per cent of the total volume of petrol that they sell in New South Wales or for delivery in New South Wales. The 6 per cent volumetric mandate will continue to support the development of the local ethanol industry. We can all agree that is good for local jobs and the New South Wales economy. In relation to the point raised by the member for Liverpool and the member for Blacktown, that "pre-1986 vehicles are by far the most prevalent on the roads", that is patent rubbish.

A 2009 report by the University of Queensland found that the majority of E10 incompatibility in the Australian fleet is not being driven by pre-1986 vehicles but rather by post-1990 makes and models which are listed by the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries as E10 incompatible. The Roads and Traffic Authority confirmed on 7 February this year that there are 517,000 passenger vehicles, 94,000 four-wheel-drive vehicles, 70,000 light commercial vehicles, 19,000 buses and heavy vehicles and 90,000 motorcycles in New South Wales that are not E10 compatible. In addition there are approximately 100,000 trailer boats that are also not E10 compatible. This is the real issue, which Labor never came clean about: close to one million New South Wales consumers were going to face higher costs for premium unleaded petrol if regular unleaded was eliminated from the marketplace.

The member for Liverpool also claims that the legislation was drafted in a flexible manner. It has the same level of flexibility as Labor's original Solar Bonus Scheme—sounds good in theory but is not based on any practical reality. In relation to the points raised by the member for Cabramatta, we agree that biofuels can create jobs, improve air quality and reduce our reliance on imported oil. But benefits must be weighed against costs. The costs of removing regular unleaded petrol were high, and were to fall inequitably on drivers of cars that are not suited to E10. These are often students, pensioners and those in our community who can least afford it. The removal of regular unleaded petrol from the marketplace would be clearly unfair—unfair to the one million drivers, motorcyclists and boat owners who would be directly and immediately impacted by increased fuel costs.

The volumetric biofuels mandates that are retained in the Biofuels Act will continue to support the growth of the biofuels industry without removing consumer choice. The Premier has commissioned the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal to conduct an assessment of supply and demand for ethanol compared to the current 6 per cent volumetric mandate. This bill removes the threat of increased costs hanging over the heads of one million New South Wales consumers. This bill ensures that consumers will still have the choice of an economical fuel that is suitable for their vehicles, motorcycles and boats. I commend the Office of Biofuels in the division of Resources and Energy, I commend and thank Charles Perrottet of my staff for his assistance in this matter, and I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill agreed to in principle.

Passing of the Bill

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

MINING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (URANIUM EXPLORATION) BILL 2012

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 16 February 2012.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [4.04 p.m.]: The O'Farrell Government's decision to overturn the ban on uranium exploration is a massive betrayal. The chronology here is very clear, and this Premier's credibility is in shreds. First, the Premier misled the people of New South Wales about his plans on uranium. Now he is going to map uranium. Very soon he will mine it. If the Premier has been caught misleading the people once, why should anyone ever again believe a word he says? If the Premier can change his mind on allowing uranium exploration, suddenly everything is on the table. Allowing uranium exploration means the Premier is prepared to allow uranium mining. It means he is prepared to spur the growth of a nuclear energy industry in New South Wales. By opening the door to uranium exploration, he is getting ready to perpetrate an environmental crime. Both sides of politics have maintained a principled ban on uranium exploration and mining for 25 years. Twenty-five years ago, when uranium exploration was banned right here in the New South Wales Parliament, the then Labor Minister for Energy and Technology, Peter Cox, on introducing the bill said:

The clear objective of this bill is the protection of the health, safety and welfare of the people of New South Wales and the environment in which we live.

Last week, without warning or consultation, the Premier ripped up this law. In an instant, he abandoned a 25-year bipartisan and principled position. There was not even an official announcement for this massive backflip by the Premier. It took a leak to the media for the community to hear that the Premier will lift the ban on uranium exploration in New South Wales. The Premier says the uranium ban is due to "hangover legislation from the 1970s". He could not be more wrong. In 1986 the law was introduced into this Parliament because Labor and Liberal members were concerned that uranium mines and nuclear reactors were not safe for the people of New South Wales or our environment. They were worried about the potential release of toxic elements that could contaminate large areas of land and pollute our rivers. They were concerned that contamination would damage our land for literally thousands of years.

They knew then, as New South Wales Labor knows now, that there is no safe way to transport and manage nuclear waste. There is no way to safeguard the health of workers or the health of communities from it. In 25 years much has changed in New South Wales, but some things stay the same: uranium mining is still a risk. It can still damage our land and contaminate our river systems and the people of New South Wales do not want a bar of it. Make no mistake, the Government's decision to allow uranium exploration is a huge betrayal. The Premier made no mention of his intentions during the Coalition's election campaign. Surely people had a right to know, before they voted in the election, that Barry O'Farrell was about to rip up the neighbourhood or their prime farming land simply to dig up yellowcake. The Premier does not have a mandate on this issue. But, even worse, he actually misled the people. On 3 August 2011 the Premier told Adam Spencer in relation to overturning the ban on uranium mining:

On a scale of 1,000 things we have to do, it doesn't make the list.

Then on 4 August 2011 the Premier misled the Parliament—the gravest of all offences under our Westminster system. On 4 August 2011 I asked the following question of the Premier:

Is the Government considering repealing the longstanding ban on uranium mining and exploration in New South Wales?

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance. There is a difference between mining and exploration. I ask you to direct the Leader of the Opposition to keep his remarks within the leave of the bill, rather than talk about the Premier.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I have heard sufficient on the point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will continue.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question was:

Is the Government considering repealing the longstanding ban on uranium mining and exploration in New South Wales?

The Premier's response was, "No". But at the same time the Premier was out there pretending he was not even considering overturning the uranium ban. He had the Minister for Resources and Energy working the back alleys and laneways. As reported by Sean Nicholls in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Minister for Resources and Energy met the chief executive of the Australian Uranium Association, Michael Angwin, in mid-June 2011 to discuss overturning the ban. Mr Angwin then wrote to the Minister formally asking him to make any necessary changes to permit uranium exploration and mining in New South Wales. On 4 August, seconds after the Premier had ruled out that the Government was considering uranium mining and exploration, the Labor Opposition confronted the Minister for Resources and Energy with the fact that he had requested a Cabinet minute on this very issue. The Minister ducked, dodged and weaved before admitting the Government had sought advice. He concluded:

We do not propose to change the law on uranium mining in New South Wales.

Meanwhile, in the other place on 2 August 2011, the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, ruled out allowing the transportation of uranium on New South Wales roads. He said:

We will not be mining any uranium in New South Wales and nor do we have any plans to.

That was then and this is now. On ABC Radio last week the Minister for Energy and Resources said to Adam Spencer:

Exploration is to build up a databank. That's what you do. If the resource is there in commercial quantities then of course you will consider mining it.

Speaking to Simon Santow on *AM*, the Premier said:

We'd be mugs in the current economic climate where there may well be opportunities down the track for jobs and for revenue to ignore this opportunity.

This is a lesson for every voter in New South Wales who believed Barry O'Farrell when he promised to usher in a new era of accountability in government. Beware of this Premier when he says he has "no plans". It is his favourite form of weasel words; it is his version of John Howard's infamous non-core promises. Only a few months ago the Premier said he had no plans to overturn the ban on uranium exploration. But guess what? Last week he said that although he will allow uranium exploration he has no plans to allow uranium mining. He also says he has no plans to introduce nuclear power.

The Premier must think the people of New South Wales are fools. With this Premier you do not know what to believe. But there is one thing we all know about the Premier: this is clearly the first step in the establishment of a fully-fledged uranium industry in New South Wales. No government will grant permission for major mining companies to explore for resources unless it has the intention to approve mines down the track. Mining companies do not walk into a State and, because they are philanthropic, say, "We will look at where there might be a resource and then give it to you to deal with". Mining companies go into an area with an expectation that they will find a resource and then they will mine it.

The Premier has rolled out the red carpet for the uranium mining multinationals—just as he is preparing to roll out the red carpet for the coal seam gas companies—and has sent them a very clear message that they will have free reign in New South Wales,. This Premier does not have much time for renewable energy, but he is a demon when it comes to dirty energy. That is why this news is so alarming. We all know that uranium mines generate large volumes of long-life hazardous waste that is kept on site. We know that uranium mining pollutes groundwater with radioactive particles, heavy metals and acid. We know that uranium waste is toxic for 10,000 years and causes illnesses including cancer and genetic defects.

This is the Fukushima-type future the Premier is prepared to contemplate for New South Wales. The Premier should never be trusted when it comes to the environment—not after the chemical leaks at Stockton and not after the fiasco with Kemps Creek. The O'Farrell Government already demonstrated that it is hopeless at handling radioactive waste when it announced that hazardous material from a contaminated site in Hunters Hill would be dumped near homes in western Sydney. If the Government cannot even manage that small amount of waste, it has no chance of managing the mountains of radioactive waste that will be generated as uranium mines open up across this great State of New South Wales. The people of New South Wales did not vote for the Premier so he would dig up uranium in our backyards. I am sure the Premier does not want a uranium mine in his Ku-ring-gai backyard and he should not be dumping one in someone else's.

We are calling on the Premier to do the right thing and dump this plan, and dump it today. This is a breach of trust with the people of New South Wales who voted for the Premier on 26 March last year and had no idea he was going to drop this nuclear bombshell on them. The New South Wales Opposition opposes this bill because this Government has no mandate to do this, this Government is unable to deal with the issue of uranium mining and this Government has demonstrated yet again that it is led by a man who is untrustworthy and should not be allowed to continue as Premier of this State.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [4.16 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I support the Government's Mining Legislation Amendment (Uranium Exploration) Bill 2012. First, I congratulate my good friend the Minister for Resources and Energy as well as the New South Wales Government on introducing this long-overdue and very important bill. This is an important bill for the State of New South Wales, for the economy of New South Wales and for the people of New South Wales. It is an important bill because it is about making New South Wales number one again. It is true that post-Fukushima there has been a focus on uranium and nuclear energy. There is misplaced concern that the energy source is unsafe and there have been misguided beliefs about the future of uranium and nuclear energy.

Uranium exists in nature as a heavy mineral in the form of uranium oxide, mainly as U308. The ore is processed and the uranium is separated from the host rocks by milling and chemical leaching to produce what is often known as yellow cake—a mildly radioactive product which contains more than 99 per cent uranium 238 and about 0.7 per cent uranium 235. At a nuclear reactor, concentration of uranium 235 must be enriched to between 3 and 4 per cent to be able to sustain nuclear reaction, which is utilised to generate electricity and to produce radioisotopes commonly used in industry, research and medicine, especially for cancer treatment. In Australia more than 500,000 doses of therapy are given each year in the treatment of cancer sufferers.

Worldwide demand for uranium will continue to rise at an average rate of 3 per cent per annum as countries struggle to meet increasing demand for cheap and reliable sources. Demand is particularly increasing in the emerging economies of China, India, Brazil and Korea, and a strain is predicted on the supply of uranium at the end of 2013 due to the completion of the Megawatts for Megatons agreement between the Russian and United States governments. From 1995 through to September 2010, 400 metric tons of highly-enriched uranium from Russian nuclear warheads have been recycled into low-enriched uranium fuel for nuclear power plants in the United States of America. The first plant to receive fuel containing uranium under this program was the Cooper Nuclear Station in 1998, and the program has eliminated the equivalent of 16,000 nuclear warheads.

The Megatons to Megawatts government-to-government program goal of eliminating 500 metric tons of warhead material is scheduled to be completed in 2013. Currently, one in 10 American homes, businesses, schools and hospitals receive electricity generated by megatons-to-megawatts fuel. Where will the uranium required to replace that fuel come from? New South Wales is well positioned to take advantage of that situation by getting the ball rolling on uranium exploration. Furthermore, demand for traditional fossil fuel such as petroleum, both oil and gas, and coal will continue to rise in the near future. However, due to their finite nature and their effect on the environment, we cannot ignore the fact that we need to build our capacity to develop a clean energy alternative.

Having said that, we cannot ignore the fact that Sydney, New South Wales, Australia and the world cannot be powered by sea or wind alone. Uranium is therefore inevitable as an energy source. At present, New South Wales lacks oil and gas resources and is totally dependent on interstate and overseas suppliers to supply its needs. The cost of importing these products places huge pressure on the economy and the State budget. The other fossil fuel is coal and it is abundantly available in New South Wales. This State produces and exports some of the highest quality coal in the world. It is in great demand worldwide and is our major export commodity and the largest contributor to the State's finances. However, given the efforts of anti-carbon emission and climate change supporters, mining in Australia and in New South Wales in particular will face challenges in the future.

Coal seam gas is abundant in New South Wales, but exploration and development of this resource is facing challenges because of its possible adverse effect on agricultural land, water and the environment. Although the world is split on the use of nuclear power, the demand for viable alternative energy resources will continue to increase. As a result of the climate change issue, which is constantly attracting headlines, and advances being made in the safety and efficiency of nuclear technology, nuclear power is steadily becoming more attractive as an alternative energy resource because of its neutral effect on the climate. Uranium has been mined economically in Australia since 1954, but current production is confined to four major mines: the Ranger mine in the Northern Territory; the Olympic Dam mine; the Beverley mine; and the recently commissioned Honeymoon mine in South Australia. Nationwide there are more than 12 new uranium mining projects earmarked for development in other States that will generate an estimated \$2 billion in revenue.

In the early 1980s the Australian Labor Party opposed uranium exploration and mining in Australia. In 1984, the newly elected Labor Federal Government introduced the so-called three mine policy, which restricted Australia's uranium activities to the three mines operating at that time, namely, Ranger mine, Nabarlek mine and Olympic Dam mine. Reserves at the Nabarlek mine were subsequently depleted and it was later abandoned and the Beverley mine was approved and became the third mine. In 2007 the Labor Party abandoned the three mine policy and in 2009 approved a fourth mine—the Four Mile mine in South Australia—thus ending the 25-year ban on uranium exploration and mining in Australia. Subsequently, the Federal Minister for Resources, Energy and Tourism, Martin Ferguson, declared that increased uranium mining in Australia was inevitable.

In May 2011 the Labor Federal Government called on the New South Wales Coalition Government to repeal the ban instituted by the New South Wales Labor Government on uranium exploration with a view to better understanding and evaluating Australia's total uranium resources. Finally, the longstanding national ban on exporting uranium to India was lifted in November 2011, which resulted in the opening up of huge new markets. However, the former New South Wales Labor Government continued and the present Labor Opposition continues to oppose uranium exploration and mining in the State in direct conflict with the incumbent Federal Labor Government. That is no coincidence; it is in the Labor Party DNA to oppose productive policies aimed at strengthening the economy.

The Labor Opposition is opposed to making New South Wales number one again. It is also opposed to a stronger economy and to increasing revenue and spending. It is no surprise that New South Wales fell so far

behind with that mob in government; it is no surprise they were wiped out at the last election; and it is no surprise that they sit on the Opposition benches today. History will be the judge. The passage of this bill, which reverses a decades-long ban on uranium exploration in New South Wales, will encourage and attract increased exploration investment and will pave the way to establishing the scope of uranium resources in the State. Uranium exploration and mining is now permitted in South Australia, the Northern Territory and Western Australia. While uranium exploration is allowed in Queensland, mining is banned. Western Australia, which has massive mineral wealth, has no uranium mines, but a new mine is scheduled for approval in 2012.

Australia's uranium reserves are the world's largest, at an estimated 23 per cent of the world's total. However, Australia's production falls into third place behind Kazakhstan and Canada. In 2010-11 Australia's production was just over 7,000 tonnes of uranium oxide concentrate and worth about \$1 billion. It is only fair that the people of New South Wales be allowed to share in the potential wealth created by a mining boom—the wealth that other States are enjoying. With the news that we are hearing daily about job losses in the banking and manufacturing sectors, this legislation is welcome news because it will encourage growth and job creation in the far west of New South Wales. Vast uranium wealth is already being mined in South Australia, just over the border from New South Wales.

It is anticipated that similar geological features will be found on our side of the border in the vicinity of Broken Hill. The metallogenic map of New South Wales as produced by the Geological Survey of New South Wales indicates that Olympic Dam-type formations that are rich in copper, gold, iron and uranium deposits may exist in the vicinity of the Broken Hill area. There is no reason that we should not have the opportunity to create our own mining boom here in New South Wales so that we can fund our schools, hospitals, roads and rails, as well as the other infrastructure that our State so desperately needs. The approval of new uranium exploration licences in New South Wales will be subject to stringent existing safety and environmental frameworks established by Federal and State governments.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.26 p.m.]: I oppose the Mining Legislation Amendment (Uranium Exploration) Bill 2012, and I do so resolutely. The policy is wrong and eloquently demonstrates the untrustworthy nature of this Government. In short, it is dishonest. I note that, if nothing else, the contribution made by the member for Smithfield demonstrated that this bill is about a great deal more than exploration. The objects are:

- (a) to remove the general prohibition on prospecting for uranium in New South Wales
- (b) to enable exploration licences and associated permits (but no other licences or authorities) to be granted under the Mining Act 1992 to prospect for uranium
- (c) to apply to uranium prospecting the State environmental planning policy applicable to other mineral exploration
- (d) to vest all uranium in New South Wales in the Crown and to exclude compensation for that vesting
- (e) to make other consequential amendments.

This bill makes a number of amendments, including to the Uranium Mining and Nuclear Facilities Prohibition Bill 1986, which prevents exploration for uranium. The Mining Act 1992 will be amended to ensure that it specifies uranium as a mineral under the Act. I note that that makes it the same as any other mineral. The bill also amends the Mining Regulation to include uranium as a mineral. The Radiation Control Act 1990 will be amended to remove the provision dealing with applying for exploration for radioactive ores. The bill further amends the Mining Act to provide that all uranium in New South Wales is, of necessity, owned by the Crown.

There are a plethora of reasons to oppose this bill. The first is that it overturns a 26-year-old ban that has been supported on a bipartisan basis during that entire time. In addition, no substantive case for change has been made. The ban even survived the Greiner years. Mr Greiner regularly reminds the present Government that his was a government that did things rather than simply establish reviews. The only justification that has been posited for this change in policy is the totally spurious and intellectually inadequate dishonesty that because another political party's national conference decided to widen slightly the countries to which uranium ore mined in other States can be exported somehow means that exploration must be allowed in this State after a 26-year-long ban.

Of course, as a matter of logic that is preposterous. The fact that they mine uranium in Western Australia and the Northern Territory does not mean that we have to mine it here, but that is the essence of the illogicality of the Government's present position. The argument is made even more laughable because the

Government is essentially basing its policy decision on the resolution of a Labor national conference. The yellowcake munchers on the Government backbench keep telling us that they regard the Labor Party as irrelevant. Yet, all of a sudden, they are saying that our national party conference is the basis for their having to change their policy.

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

MARINE POLLUTION 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.

TAMWORTH BASE HOSPITAL CAR PARK

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [4.31 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure and it is an honour to speak on behalf of my community today. I congratulate the dedicated Tamworth Base Hospital Group, led by Kim Walsh, and everyone who took the time to sign the petition calling for a multistorey car park at the Tamworth hospital. This issue plagues hospitals around the State, and Tamworth is no different. I have worked at Tamworth hospital and know full well the problems that people face. Over the years there have been many complaints about the lack of car parking and there also have been many solutions offered—including looking at paid car parking at the hospital.

The challenge we face is that the hospital sits on a hill with the current main car park approach below the hospital. Stories abound of people having to park a long distance from the hospital and struggling to get up the hill either to the emergency department, the wards or the clinic building. It can also be very stressful. One mother told me the story of her son being taken to hospital by ambulance. She travelled by car and it took her a long time to find a parking spot, which was a long way from the emergency department. She was wondering about her son the whole time and just wanted to be by his side. Even for a young, fit person it is a tough haul getting up that hill, so spare a thought for the elderly, the disabled, the injured, the young and the heavily pregnant—and the list go on.

The Tamworth health services plan states that the total population in the Tamworth area is 77,000, growing to 79,000 by 2016. We need to ensure that we plan for that growth. Earlier I mentioned the aged. We need to look after them. They need to be able to park as close as possible to the hospital. The number of people aged 65 years or older across the northern part of the local health district is 15.3 per cent of the total population, or almost 30,000 people. This petition calls for a multistorey car park. In a perfect world, if we had loads of money and unlimited space, we could build what we want. I understand that, unfortunately, we lack those two key ingredients. However, that should not stop us from looking at opportunities and pushing for what we need. That is my job.

Timing plays a critical role in many aspects of what we do and the time is ripe to have this car parking discussion. We are in the middle of planning for a \$220 million redevelopment of the Tamworth Base Hospital. Construction is to start next year and it will be completed in 2016, so this is the perfect opportunity to get it right. I know that detailed planning is underway and that we are on track for a modern facility that will provide our communities with the ability to receive health services closer to home. I implore those who are doing this good planning work to keep their eye on the ball when it comes to the master plan. The planning for the immediate facility in the short term is detailed and comprehensive, and I know car parking is a major part of that. However, ideas come and go before the final sign-off. Again, I ask our planners to keep car parking on the high-priorities list.

While we are constrained by money and space, we need to be realistic that a multistorey car park may not be doable at this time. If it is not doable, I call for a significant increase in spaces to be made available. That is crucial. If we cannot have the multistorey car park I still want more car spaces made available for those using the facility. Having said that, if we cannot have the multistorey car park now, my community and I ask that planners think seriously about allocating space in the master plan for a potential multistorey car park in the future. If that space can be set aside then at least we can plan for it. I hope they are considering that in the master plan.

The Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, has taken a personal interest in this \$220 million redevelopment. I understand that she may be able to provide us with further information. I thank her for that. In the end, car parking is a critical aspect. It is no good at all if people's blood pressure goes through the roof when they are just trying to get to the hospital. After all, hospitals are about trying to help people get better, not worse. Congratulations to Kim Walsh and the Tamworth Base Hospital Group for putting this petition together. It is an honour to represent them today. Rest assured that we will not give up this fight.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [4.37 p.m.]: The petition reads:

The undersigned petitioners therefore ask the Legislative Assembly to consider inclusion of a Multi Storey Car Park in the planning of the redeveloped T.B.H.

It was received on 9 November 2011. The reply from the Minister for Health is dated 13 December—I note that the Minister will speak after me—and states:

...car parking will be provided in accordance with local and State planning guidelines. The project will include reconfiguration and expansion of car parking at Tamworth to support the Stage 2 development.

The letter also states that the \$220 million funding is part of the "NSW Government's Better Hospitals & Healthcare Plan". That is interesting because it does not mention that \$120 million of that is being allocated by the Federal Government. The Federal Government contribution is being airbrushed out of all State Government discussions about this project. I also refer members to a question without notice in the upper House on 7 September about the future planning of the Tamworth hospital and the \$3 million that has been allocated for planning.

One of the oldest tricks in the political book is for agreement to be reached about a new bridge, station or car park and the local member is then told to collect a petition. The petition provides a database and makes it appear as though the member has fought for something that had been agreed to prior. I know that after this debate the member for Tamworth and the Minister for Health will be asked whether any agreement had been reached before this petition was collected. I look forward to the Minister's reply. All political parties have done this for many years. Pardon my cynicism, but I would not be surprised if agreement had already been reached on this matter.

Mr Paul Toole: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. I ask that the member for Macquarie Fields not mislead the House by comparing the efforts of our Ministers to what occurred during the previous 16 years under the Labor Government.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: This is a worthy petition. It is a no-brainer that a multistorey car park needs to be built. The site is constrained, it is on a hill and there is no staff parking, which presents a significant problem for evening shifts. Tamworth Base Hospital is a principal referral hospital, for which there is very high demand. In 2009-10 the emergency department treated 44,000 people. The number of patients treated in emergency departments is going through the roof for a variety of reasons, one of which is the shortage of general practitioners in the area. A major complaint by outpatients about all outpatient services around the State is a lack of parking. It is clear that some form of multistorey car park will be required at the hospital.

However, the Minister should explain whether the car park at the Tamworth Base Hospital will be a paid car park because many multistorey car parks are now subcontracted to parking companies. We need to hear from the Minister in the near future whether staff and patients will be charged for parking at the hospital. It is important to have this information because many such car parks are subcontracted and it is very difficult to get a parking rebate for hardship cases. Parking charges can be a major impost on elderly people who have conditions such as cancer that require frequent hospital visits.

I look forward to hearing from the Minister that a multistorey car park will be built that will not charge. It is easier to go up than to go out because the Tamworth site is constrained and the only option that will meet the demand is a multistorey car park. As I said before, as a major regional hospital, Tamworth Base Hospital faces unique challenges. While the Minister did say that there will be parking in accordance with local and State planning guidelines, the Tamworth hospital needs more than that because, as a major referral hospital, it is unique. It requires more than is provided by the guidelines because the demand will continue to increase.

Because this hospital has greater demand than many other hospitals its size, it will require more spaces than are required by the guidelines. I look forward to the announcement—I expect it will occur at a politically opportune time—that the multistorey car park will go ahead and that it will be free. [*Time expired.*]

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) [4.43 p.m.]: I thank the member for Tamworth and the 10,200 people who signed the petition regarding this important issue. I was a little surprised at the Opposition health spokesman suggesting there was some problematic issue in relation to petitions. That is an insult to the petitioners that really should not have been made in this Parliament. As the shadow Minister and all on this side of the House would know, patient surveys show that car parking is a major issue for patients but also for staff. It is an issue that was all too frequently ignored by Labor but has been taken up by the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals.

Turning to the redevelopment at Tamworth, I was thrilled in my first week as Minister for Health—in fact, I think it was the second day—to be accompanied by the newly elected member for Tamworth on a visit to Tamworth Base Hospital. We stood outside the hospital with the then Federal health Minister, the Hon. Nicola Roxon, and announced that the funding for that hospital—the pooled resources of \$100 million from the newly elected State Government and \$120 million from the Federal Government's Health and Hospital Fund—would enable the \$220 million redevelopment to proceed. I have talked about that many times in this place and I have often mentioned how generous and how gracious I thought it was of the Hon. Nicola Roxon to say that it would not have happened if the State Government had not put its money where its mouth is. I am delighted that, at long last, we have been able to come together with the Federal Government to fund this hospital.

The hospital provides major new clinical services, including medical, surgical, inpatient beds, day surgery, paediatrics, maternity, emergency, including an emergency resuscitation bay, renal dialysis and oral health, and the list goes on. It is a major redevelopment. Currently it is in the schematic design phase and the tenders are expected to be issued in February 2013. It is a major piece of work. I will be pleased to join the member for Tamworth on visits during all stages of the project. I am pleased to announce that the master plan for the hospital includes space allocated for a multistorey car park, to be constructed by an arrangement with the private sector according to the Car Parking Strategy being finalised by the ministry. It is the same strategy that will deliver car parks to Nepean, Blacktown, Wollongong, Shoalhaven and Sutherland—all ignored by the former Labor Government.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BANKSTOWN POLICE AND COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUB

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.47 p.m.]: I inform the Chamber about a great local organisation based in Bankstown—the Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club [PCYC]. The Bankstown club commenced operations in Bankstown in 1963, during the Heffron Government. So it has served the Bankstown community for 49 years. I am proud to inform the House that last month I accepted an offer to become patron of the Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club. This year Senior Constable Danny Mikati became president of the Bankstown club. Senior Constable Mikati is well equipped to undertake this new role, and I commend the club for its outstanding choice. Leading Senior Constable Danny Mikati is well known in the Bankstown area, being a Bankstown local. He works also as the domestic violence prevention officer at Bankstown Local Area Command. I also commend Geoff Yates, the Bankstown club manager, and Bill Salmon, the vice president of the Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club, for their tireless work in keeping this great organisation running.

The Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club has a leading role in running crime prevention programs in the Bankstown area. The NSW Police Force is taking the initiative to work with offenders and those at risk of offending. I commend the work of Senior Constable Glenn Halloran, the crime prevention officer at Bankstown Local Area Command. One of the programs at Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club is the Traffic Offenders Program. This program caters to those found guilty of speeding, alcohol and drug-related traffic offences. The Traffic Offenders Program aims to reduce the likelihood of people offending or reoffending through education sessions that promote awareness of the influence of alcohol and drugs on driving ability. The program teaches other skills, including vehicle maintenance, road rules, understanding the law, understanding the roles of emergency services and understanding the consequences an action may have, from a victim's

perspective. Despite the efforts of police, community services and both sides of politics, on average 1,700 people die on Australia's roads each year. I commend the Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club for its role in operating this important program.

The club also hosts the Bankstown Older Women's Network. The Older Women's Network runs three days a week and caters to women aged over 55. The network organises group exercise activities such as jogging and yoga, as well as art and social events. The club also recognises the importance of encouraging social participation by our youth and runs several programs to cater for young people in Bankstown. These programs include youth breakdancing. The breakdancing group meets three nights each week to practise and to have breakdancing "battles". The group also competes in tournaments and represents Bankstown throughout Sydney. The club is taking a leading role in this year's Youth Week in Bankstown. The club is working in conjunction with Bankstown City Council to host the Bankstown Great Race.

The club also is working with the Smith Family at Burnside to develop a program to provide assistance to young parents in the Bankstown area. I understand this program will commence soon. I look forward to having an opportunity to see the results. The club also hosts a number of sporting groups, including various martial arts activities. Another great initiative is the Doing Time for Kids program in which local business men and women as well as community leaders spend time in a public "jail" in the local shopping centre to raise money for children's charities. I have encouraged the Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club to invite the member for East Hills, Mr Brookes, to be its first volunteer.

This year is the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Police and Community Youth Club of New South Wales Limited. I commend the Police and Community Youth Club for 75 years of service in New South Wales. I am sure that this achievement will be well canvassed in this place in the next few months. There are now 57 police and community youth clubs throughout New South Wales that provide sport, community education and entertainment to 85,000 members. Police and Community Youth Clubs are a great feature in many local communities throughout New South Wales. I again commend the Bankstown Police and Community Youth Club for its 49 years of service to my community. I look forward to next year's fiftieth anniversary celebrations.

LOWER HUNTER REGIONAL CONSERVATION PLAN

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [4.51 p.m.]: Lake Macquarie is one of the largest and fastest-growing council areas in New South Wales. Western Lake Macquarie is taking much of the Lower Hunter's growth, but in my opinion the consequential demand for conservation is not being met. Regional planning for the Lower Hunter has been a turbulent process. I understand the previous Government's broad development plan, the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy, is not entirely embraced by the new Government. Nonetheless, development that has been predicted for western Lake Macquarie is occurring, largely because it was in train when that strategy was prepared. While new development is assured, a matching increase in conservation remains only a concept. For example, as residential development and coalmining continue to expand, there is a pressing need to protect natural areas and consider the long-term future of areas that are subject to coalmining.

The junior partner document to the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy is the Lower Hunter Regional Conservation Plan, but there is a striking disparity as development plans are being realised and conservation plans for western Lake Macquarie remain essentially a wish list. The disarray of regional planning under the former regime is illustrated by publication of a second version of the regional conservation plan in response to a community group's Land and Environment Court victory over a former Minister for Planning. By setting aside agreements between the Minister and developers, the judgement negated the previous Government's preferred mechanism for land acquisition. The pressing need for conservation in western Lake Macquarie continues. It is time to implement a process that works. The Lower Hunter Regional Conservation Plan confirms the area's conservation values. On page 32 it states:

The West Lake Macquarie area supports a diverse range of vegetation communities, most of which are not yet adequately represented in the reserve system ...

The area provides critical corridors for these species between the Watagans and Lake Macquarie.

The conservation plan concisely states the area's importance and explains its value to the community. Two further paragraphs are worth quoting, the first of which states:

The ecological value of this area and public support for the stronger conservation of these values was highlighted in the draft conservation plan and in public submissions received. Of the 249 submissions received, 179 (72%) raised the issue of West Lake Macquarie and the need to improve the conservation status of this area. The absence of new reserves in this area dominated the consultation process and was the focus of significant media and community interest. Submissions highlighted the approximately 2500 hectares of Crown land near Awaba, which contains high conservation values.

A map on page 35 of the plan highlights the western Lake Macquarie area and describes it as having important wildlife linkages and diverse vegetation. The conservation plan continues by stating:

The Government's decision to prohibit open cut coal mining in the Lake Macquarie City Council area has created an opportunity to investigate conservation options for suitable public lands.

The opportunity cited emanated from public outrage that surrounded the 2006 proposal for an open-cut coalmine stretching from Awaba to Cooranbong. That same public outrage also erupted with the later proposal for an open cut and auger mine at Blackalls Park. Clearly, the public is sensitive to impacts of inappropriate forms of coalmining. This puts a great onus on the Government to make informed decisions on the type of mining that can be allowed and where it can be allowed. An appropriate balance must be struck between development and conservation in western Lake Macquarie, and this is acknowledged on page 32 of the conservation plan where it states:

Given the major conservation gains already being put in place via the new reserves that the Government has legislated or is negotiating to put in place in other parts of the Lower Hunter plan area, additional conservation areas in West Lake Macquarie are clearly the next highest priority for the future.

The plan commits the Department of Environment and Climate Change to working with the council to ensure appropriate zonings and to working actively to improve conservation of priority lands in western Lake Macquarie. It is apparent that the authority primarily responsible for conservation, which has been renamed the Office of Environment and Heritage, will seek environmental protection without necessarily acquiring land because specific mention is made of improved conservation practices on other Crown tenures, private land partnerships and sites for conservation offsets.

I advise the House, and in particular the Minister for the Environment, that there are significant areas of Crown land in western Lake Macquarie that boast the qualities and strategic importance identified in the regional conservation plan. While there may be automatic consideration of the costs recorded in transferring land from one agency to another, it is also correct to say that there is no net effect on the statewide budget. Accordingly, I ask the Minister for the Environment to advance the processes involved in transferring ownership to permanently protect the conservation values rightly identified by her department.

RIVERSTONE SCHEDULED LANDS

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [4.56 p.m.]: I wish to update the House in relation to exhibition of the draft regulation that concerns paper subdivisions. Recently I was delighted to welcome news from the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure that the New South Wales Government had placed the draft regulation on exhibition. The draft regulation will allow paper subdivisions to be developed, and Riverstone is likely to be one of the first cabs off the rank. The situation relating to paper subdivisions, which are referred to in my electorate as the scheduled lands, is a complex one dating back more than a century. Paper subdivisions are planning anomalies throughout New South Wales whereby generations ago, and prior to the introduction of modern planning schemes, land was subdivided for housing.

Housing has not been permitted on scheduled lands in the period since subdivision due either to a lack of infrastructure, changes in development standards, or zoning of the land. In the case of Riverstone, in the 1880s land was subdivided into narrow but long lots for terrace houses that were intended for meatworkers at the local abattoir, but at that time the development did not proceed. The subdivided lands have existed on planning schemes ever since, but provided no scope for development. I understand that after World War II the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme picked up the issue in western Sydney, and it was at that time that the lands became known as scheduled lands. I understand that the term derives from the fact that their future development was scheduled under that scheme and subsequent schemes.

In my electorate of Riverstone the issue has been compounded because the scheduled lands are situated within the North West Growth Centre. In more recent times that meant that the precincts were not able to be developed until the precincts had been formally released by the department and the lands appropriately zoned. So for decades landowners have been unable to do anything to their land. Typically lots in paper subdivisions were subdivided into lots with very narrow frontages of possibly nine metres or less, but the blocks were very long and were unsuitable for modern development. Certainly lots in Riverstone are of that type. The multiplicity of the mum and dad owners of the lots throughout the affected areas has made the raising of capital to meet development costs extraordinarily difficult.

The draft regulation that will allow a public authority, such as Landcom or a council, to use the model that has been developed in the regulation to amalgamate smaller lots into more viable parcels to use an element of land trading and rearrangement of boundaries, provided that the public authorities can secure majority landowner support within an affected parcel of an accumulation of lots. The regulation allows an element of land trading for better lot configuration and to provide land for access roads in lieu of cash levies, overcoming both configuration issues and the difficulty of raising levies for development.

I congratulate Landcom on its work with landowners in developing the model for this draft regulation. The majority of owners of affected lots in my electorate will be delighted that action is finally being taken to unlock the opportunity to develop their land and to address the need for housing in Sydney. The exciting news locally is that once the regulation is finalised Riverstone is likely to be one of the first areas in New South Wales to adapt the model and unlock the development potential for local landowners. I have spoken with landowners about this announcement. They have welcomed the news that the Government is finding a way forward. One landowner I spoke to said:

What most people want is action and development. The fact that government is now acting in a supportive and proactive manner is really fantastic.

The announcement has come after decades of deadlock but, unfortunately, in that time many landowners have relinquished their land. Some land was forfeited to council because of the inability of landowners to pay rates, while other land was sold for less value than was hoped to be achieved out of despair that development would ever come about. The O'Farrell Government is finally getting on with overcoming the problems associated with the scheduled lands. This exciting initiative is a key part of the future of the district. I look forward to seeing the regulation finalised. I congratulate the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure on tackling this complex issue, which former governments have avoided for years. By pursuing reforms such as this and making hard decisions the Government is doing all it can to address housing needs in New South Wales. The O'Farrell Government will make New South Wales number one again.

DAMM'S BRIDGE

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.01 p.m.]: Last week the Deputy Premier and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services delivered on another election promise by the Liberal-Nationals Government when he announced Mr Steve Toms as the State's first Cross Border Commissioner. For too long border communities such as the Albury electorate have faced unique and often complex issues that have been left to fall through the cracks. Today I want to outline one of those issues, one that does not affect too many people but one that nevertheless must be resolved and will no doubt be referred to the Cross Border Commissioner.

Damm's Bridge is a bridge constructed over the Indi River, which forms the State boundary between New South Wales and Victoria above the junction of the Indi with the Swampy Plains River, which then forms the Murray River. The bridge provides access for one property owner in Tumbarumba shire in New South Wales. The property is accessed directly from Victoria and has no practical access in New South Wales. Damm's Bridge was built in 1963 and was funded by development grant No. 3102 from the then Department of Main Roads.

Tumbarumba Shire Council believes that the funding was made available following representation from the Victorian State Government, as the Hon. Tom Mitchell, MLA, Victorian member for Benambra, lived nearby. It appears that the Upper Murray shire, on the Victorian side of the structure, undertook all maintenance, with costs recovered from the Victorian State Government until at least 1988. In 1988 Tumbarumba council was formally advised by the Department of Main Roads that council would be responsible for the costs of repairs to the bridge. The bridge now needs major maintenance works, which have been costed at \$300,000.

The Damm's and Tom Groggin bridges cross the Victorian State boundary. Other bridges across the Murray are the responsibility of, and are funded by, State roads authorities. Tumbarumba council raised the issue with the then Roads and Traffic Authority, which advised it was not a matter for it but to take it to the Border Anomalies Group. In this manner it was referred to the regional coordinator of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and council subsequently met with the Minister for Roads and Ports last year. Tumbarumba Shire Council received advice from the Land and Property Management Authority that the bridge was constructed on Crown land without authority and was not connected to any legal roads within New South Wales. In 2009 the authority concluded a letter with the words:

There does not appear to be any simple solution to Damm's Bridge.

Let me explain a little more about this complex issue in a remote part of New South Wales bounded by the Kosciuszko National Park. Damm's Bridge is a three-span bridge over the Indi River, which forms the State border. It is the only access to Mr Ross Damm's dairy farm. It is used by a range of traffic, from light vehicles to heavy trucks, including a B-double milk tanker. According to Mr Ross Damm, a load of 45 tonnes on a semitrailer once travelled across the bridge but the Murray Goulburn Cooperative currently run a 19-metre B-double milk tanker to pick up a maximum of 6,000 litres of milk from Damm's dairy. The farm is the first for collection to minimise the load on the bridge. The bridge has concrete abutments, two concrete piers supporting steel girders, timber lateral beams and timber longitudinal decking. The centre span is the longest at 22 metres. In recent years the timber suffered white ant attack but this was controlled by a baiting program.

The centre span of the bridge requires strengthening to bring it up to current structural standards. The timber beams and timber decking are at the end of their life and require replacement with steel or concrete. As I mentioned earlier, this bridge was constructed in 1963 under a development works grant under the Main Roads Act 1924. In 1989 the Roads and Traffic Authority issued a letter to all councils declaring that the works constructed under the scheme were now fully the responsibility of councils. The Damm's property is private land to the bank of the river on the New South Wales side, and from that point to the high water mark on the Victorian side it is Crown land. The bridge is therefore on Crown land. But a spokesman for the Lands department told council that the Lands department is not a road authority and it will not take ownership of the bridge. In a letter in 2009 the Land and Property Management Authority stated:

There may be some public use of the bridge to access the Kosciuszko National Park however there is no right to cross Freehold lands of Damm's and the bridge is not connected by any legal roads within New South Wales. This again presents a concern. No record can be found of Land and Management Authority (formerly Department of Lands) ever granting consent for the construction of the bridge.

The letter continues:

In order to authorise the bridge, Council may consider an easement over the Crown land. Council may also regard the bridge as not being essential and seek the removal. There does not appear to be any simple solution to Damm's bridge.

I am sure Mr Damm and his family would not welcome any suggestion that the bridge be removed. So the Cross Border Commissioner has a time-consuming practical problem on his hands, a problem left unresolved over the years and clouded by bursts of bureaucracy.

MOOREBANK INTERMODAL FREIGHT PROPOSAL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [5.06 p.m.]: On 14 September 2011 I spoke in this place about my opposition and that of the community to two freight terminals or intermodals being built in Moorebank. The concerns I mentioned then continue today. I remain concerned about air pollution and the health effects that might be caused, I remain concerned about the extra trucks and traffic that could be added to our local roads, and I remain concerned about the noise and light spill that might result. There is not a Minister in this building that has not heard me talk of these concerns. The Liverpool community is working hard to raise awareness of these developments and the potential impacts they are likely to have on the community. One local resident in particular, Roy Carter, has been busy coordinating the "thousand signs campaign", with the aim of distributing 1,000 protest signs across the area. He and a group of concerned residents have been putting up no intermodal signs all over the community.

On occasion I have not agreed with the way in which the Liverpool City Council has voted on this issue. I would have liked the council to have supported the request to the Federal Government for an independent environmental assessment—something that has been publicly requested by the community. In response to community opposition to the intermodal, the council printed and distributed a number of its own no intermodal protest materials around the community, including bumper stickers and posters. As most promotional materials do these days, a website was featured for people to visit to learn more about the campaign. The website *www.nointermodal.com* is controlled by Liverpool Councillor Jim McGoldrick, and this is where we find trouble. Instead of the site being used as a community information site to fight the intermodal, Jim McGoldrick has used the platform to express some personal opinions unrelated to the campaign. The comments have nothing to do with the intermodal. They refer to the upcoming council elections and make reference to the religion of some of the current councillors.

I place on record that I believe the comments are derogatory and have racial undertones. Besides the damage they were surely written to inflict to those councillors, they also take the attention off the fight against

the intermodal. The very issue Councillor McGoldrick says is the most important, he is only serving to dilute. The comments distract from our fight. Liverpool City Council has publicly thrown its support behind this campaign and spent the good money of ratepayers on promoting the website. It is unfortunate that anyone who now logs on to the site will see this personal tirade. The content is completely inappropriate for a council-endorsed campaign and I can only hope that visitors to the site ignore that section.

If Councillor Jim McGoldrick's comments distract, confuse or, at worst, turn people off this important fight I will make sure people know why we lost some community support. This is a fight that I have spoken about in the House. I have met with many Ministers about it, I have publicised it in my own brochures and I have even put one of the one thousand signs in my office window. I am also involved in collecting signatures on a petition to submit to this place. After so much work by so many people in the community I would hate to see the actions of one individual weaken the public's support for this campaign. I believe this campaign verges on racist fearmongering and it has no place in this fight. I call on council to address this situation and to take whatever action is necessary to hold Councillor McGoldrick accountable for his actions.

JEWISH HOUSE CRISIS CENTRE

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.10 p.m.]: On 9 February 2012 I visited Jewish House in my electorate of Vaucluse to help unveil a plaque to celebrate the refurbished crisis centre. Jewish House was established 26 years ago by brothers Roger and Anthony Clifford. The brothers donated a house on Flood Street in Bondi primarily for a counselling service for teenagers affected by drug and alcohol abuse. Since that time Jewish House has grown into a welcome refuge for a diverse range of people. The centre now includes crisis accommodation, a telephone counselling centre, group therapy sessions and lectures on a wide range of topics that help attendees with day-to-day living.

The services at Jewish House are interlinked with each other and can provide clients with a wide range of support services. These include a 24/7 crisis line, counselling, chaplaincy, mediation, crisis accommodation, pastoral care, financial counselling and a resource centre. Jewish House has established itself as an important outlet not just for the Jewish community but also for any member of the broader community who needs the support that Jewish House can provide. The centre is now recognised, including by the New South Wales Government, as a leader in social welfare crisis management. This is a testament to the tireless work of Rabbi Kastel, the Chief Executive Officer of Jewish House, and the board of directors, led by Gary Cohen and Roger Clifford.

The motto of Jewish House is "People helping people" and indeed that is exactly how it operates. It is not systems helping people; it is people helping people and it is the people who contribute to providing each service at Jewish House who deserve congratulations and recognition. In fact, a large number of people who help to provide the services at Jewish House are volunteers. Recently they have called for more volunteers to staff the 24-hour crisis line and were gratifyingly overwhelmed with the response. Many who have offered their voluntary services do so with personal experience of the generous assistance that Jewish House has provided to loved ones or friends. They want to give back—again it is people helping people.

As the State member for Vaucluse I have seen firsthand the commitment of Jewish House to assisting the community in any way possible. I have worked in partnership with Jewish House to assist the residents of Vaucluse in need of crisis accommodation and care. But my firsthand knowledge of Jewish House goes back further than that. Even before I became the Liberal candidate for Vaucluse I visited with Rabbi Kastel to see how it worked, and whilst I sat with Rabbi Kastel his phone rang several times with calls from people in need. His generous assistance was hands on and it was immediate.

Not only does Jewish House prove its commitment through the services it provides; it is actively engaged in holding events and fundraising very successfully to ensure the continuation of the support it delivers. Fundraising is always a challenge for not-for-profit organisations that have tight budgets. However, the unique and important work that Jewish House does resonates with so many people in the community that it has loyal and generous support. Of course, more support is always needed. Through actively seeking partnerships Jewish House has been able to forge relationships with a diverse group of organisations such as the Prince of Wales Hospital, the University of Sydney and the NSW Police Force in order to promote its services and attract clients who might be in need. Jewish House works closely with the private sector, in particular with Sydney Clinic. It is a model of partnerships that fills important gaps for those in crisis.

Jewish House must continue to be recognised and supported as an innovative leader in social welfare crisis management. I have great pride in representing the electorate of Vaucluse where such a leading

organisation resides. Jewish House received a grant of \$53,000 in 2009 under the New South Wales Government's Community Building Partnership Program to ensure that the crisis accommodation facilities were upgraded. In 2010 Jewish House was awarded a grant of \$66,000 to fit out the new counselling rooms at Bondi. Those grants recognise the important work that Jewish House does. It deserves the commendation of this House for providing services and filling gaps in crisis accommodation, not only for residents in the electorate of Vaucluse but also for the broader community. I commend the work of Jewish House to the House today.

TRIBUTE TO CHRIS BARTLETT

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [5.15 p.m.]: Today I remember the life of Chris Bartlett and I offer my condolences to his family and friends. Chris lived in Earlwood and was a constituent in the electorate of Canterbury, but he was so much more. I pay tribute to him for the contributions he made to the community and the environment in Sydney's inner west. Chris migrated from England as a boy and worked as a schoolteacher in Sydney before he retired. He was one of the most passionate, dedicated environmentalists I have ever met. Chris was deservedly awarded Canterbury City Council's Senior Citizen of the Year Award in 2009 for his efforts in founding and organising the Mudcrabs, an eco-volunteer group that has been protecting and cleaning the Cooks River since 2005.

Mudcrabs is an incredible organisation of like-minded people; Chris was the leader of that group. Chris also worked with the Inner West Environment Group, the Wolli Creek Preservation Society, GreenWay Bushcare and Conservation Volunteers Australia. He was driven by a concern for the natural environment and an interest in animal welfare. Everybody has their favourite places in the towns and cities where they live. Sydney is particularly beautiful, with so many places across the city where people can be inspired. The Cooks River is one of mine, especially at first light. Walking on the path that follows the river all the way through the inner west, from Botany Bay and Tempe all the way to Strathfield, is a pleasure enjoyed by families, joggers and people from across the city, in particular people living along the river.

The walk offers green relief in the middle of the urban sea of roofs and roads. Chris Bartlett and the Mudcrabs were responsible for much of the bush regeneration along the river. The Cooks River is well known and has a difficult past: In days gone by it was basically a sewer and a dumping ground for many industries along the river. Chris was best known as the famed founder of the Mudcrabs, an eco-volunteer group affiliated with the Cooks River Valley Association. Peter Munro, President of the Cooks River Valley Association, summed up Chris's work when he paid him this tribute recently:

Chris had an encyclopaedic knowledge of native plants, particularly those Indigenous to the Cooks River Valley.

Rosedale Reserve was the site of Chris' initial riverside work and stands as a living example of how a barren piece of riverside land can be transformed into a natural bush setting.

Chris' dedication and passion for natural resource management was an inspiration for much of the bush regeneration that has occurred along the Cooks River.

The Mudcrabs group has grown to more than 450 members who give up their weekends and holidays to remove garbage and litter from the waterway, to restore the shoreline and to plant native plants along the river. I commend the members of this group for their knowledge, passion and dedication. Our community has lost a friend and my sincerest thoughts are with Chris's family. The Cooks River has lost a friend, but Chris Bartlett's very being is in the banks of that river as a permanent reminder of his work. Canterbury City Council is considering ways to make a permanent dedication to Chris, such is the respect with which he is held in the community. A couple of weekends ago a celebration of Chris's life was held at Rosedale Reserve—the area of Chris's initial riverside work—where many people spoke, music was played and poems were read. It was a lovely afternoon; it was sad but it was a celebration of Chris's life. He was so young and his illness was so devastating, but his eco-volunteer group and its work is a testament to the life of Chris Bartlett.

MAGDALENE CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.20 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge and congratulate Magdalene Catholic High School in my electorate on the fantastic results students achieved in the 2011 Higher School Certificate. Magdalene Catholic High School was established by the Diocese of Wollongong in 1999 to serve the parishes of the western Macarthur region. The school commenced in temporary accommodation at Mater Dei in 1999 under the excellent leadership of foundation principal Alan McManus, who is now the head of school services for the Diocese of Wollongong. In the same year the diocese purchased the current site in

Smeaton Grange from the Patrician Brothers. Smeaton Grange House on the site has been renovated and converted, and is being used as the school's administration building. Originally built in 1891, the restoration project was possible only as a result of a generous grant from the Campbelltown Catholic Club.

The Campbelltown Catholic Club has been extremely supportive not only of Catholic schools in our area but also of many other organisations and charities, and I commend the club for this. I single out the Catholic club director, Mary Ellen Bland, who represents the club extremely well at all community events. On Friday 17 February I was invited to Magdalene Catholic High School for a ceremony in recognition of its high achievers in the 2011 Higher School Certificate. Magdalene did very well last year, as it always does, with 34 high achievers in total recognised on the day. I can say sincerely that every time I attend a Magdalene school event I always walk away believing that it is a wonderful school, that the teaching staff, led by Principal John Lo Cascio, are dedicated and that clearly the school is providing the community leaders of tomorrow.

The outstanding achievers for the 2011 Higher School Certificate are: Kimberley Angangan, an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR] of 95; Danielle Assetta, an ATAR of 94.3; Kristina Bajac, Clare Barrington, Elizabeth Blaker, an ATAR of 93.25; Lauren Bostock, Candace Broadbent, an ATAR of 90.85; Dylan Byrne, Dominic Cavasinni, Carly Chittendon, Lauren Da Silva, an ATAR of 95.05; Molly Durrington, Michael Fitzgerald, an ATAR of 98; dux Leanne Galea, an ATAR of 99.35; Matthew Gallagher, an ATAR of 91.3; Chelsea Gerada, an ATAR of 95.5; Estelle Grech, an ATAR of 95.5; David Hamilton, Jeremy Heggie, an ATAR of 91.40; Madelaine Joyce, Christy Lo Cascio, an ATAR of 98.25; Rebecca McCarthy, Michael Messina, Erin Moore, an ATAR of 93.25; Olivia Moore, Nicolette Morabito, an ATAR of 92.70; Bernadette Neasy, Megan O'Sullivan, Rebekah Patterson, an ATAR of 91.55; Lindsey Roberts, Heather Rosevear, Madeleine Sharp, an ATAR of 96.65; and Alystra Sinclair, Rebecca Watts, an ATAR of 95.00.

All these students achieved exceptional results in the Higher School Certificate or a particular subject. These hardworking and focused students are a credit to Magdalene, their families and, most importantly, themselves. I congratulate all on the great results they achieved in their 2011 Higher School Certificate. It was a pleasure to meet these students. I am sure every person in attendance was extremely proud of all the Higher School Certificate students and the high achievers. School communities play a huge role in supporting and nurturing students to achieve their goals, with staff and students from Magdalene being one of the finest examples of this.

I thank Magdalene Catholic High School Principal John Lo Cascio, guest speaker former school captain from the class of 2007, Matthew Crilly, students, parents, friends and, of course, the 2011 Higher School Certificate high achievers for allowing me to participate in recognising the achievements of these fine young men and women. It was a privilege to attend and I wish them every success as they enter the next phase of their lives. I have every confidence that these young men and women, whether they join the workforce, go to university or TAFE, or have a gap year, will be extremely successful leaders within their chosen career paths and fields. Congratulations to Magdalene Catholic High School on these outstanding results.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CROSSING BICENTENARY

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [5.24 p.m.]: The year 2013 is a very significant one for the Blue Mountains and, indeed, for the whole of Australia. In 2013 we will commemorate the bicentenary of the crossing of the Blue Mountains by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth in 1813. This crossing is relevant not only to the Blue Mountains but to Australia as a whole as it marked the opening up of the interior of the country for the struggling young penal colony of New South Wales. The mountain range west of the colony was considered impenetrable, with several unsuccessful crossing attempts. Gregory Blaxland was a pastoralist who was keen to find new pastureland for his sheep, and he petitioned Governor Macquarie to mount an expedition to cross the Blue Mountains. William Lawson was a trained surveyor prior to joining the New South Wales Corps and was an experienced colonial officer. William Charles Wentworth, whose portrait hangs in this Chamber, was the Acting Provost Marshall at the time.

Following the ridge line, they crossed the mountains with a small expedition of a local guide, three convict servants and four packhorses. The expedition left Blaxland's farm at South Creek on 11 May 1813. Following the ridge along a route—roughly the route of the now Great Western Highway—they reached Mount York on 28 May 1813 and descended into the Kanimbla Valley—or Hartley Valley as it is now—and climbed Mount Blaxland on 31 May 1813. Subsequent to the expedition's crossing, Governor Macquarie commissioned the surveyor George Evans to confirm the discoveries, his expedition reaching the present site of Bathurst. In

July 1814 Macquarie commissioned William Cox to build a road to the interior. As I alluded to in my inaugural speech, Cox built the road over the Blue Mountains with a gang of about 30 convicts and overseers in a matter of six months, while the Great Western Highway has taken more than 30 years to complete.

I am told that the upgrade to a dual carriageway from Lapstone to Katoomba will be completed by 2014, weather permitting, in time for the bicentenary of the building of Cox's road. I might add that this Government has committed the necessary new funding to enable the upgrade to be completed. Today, remnants of Cox's road still exist. The best example is at Mount York, which I trekked last weekend with a small party of interested historians. Dr Siobhan Lavelle from the Royal Historical Society, a professional historian, Mr Bill Evans, who worked with the former Roads and Traffic Authority archaeological office, Bruce Ferrier, Daniel Myles, Mayor of Blue Mountains City Council, Councillor Chris Van Der Kley and all members of the Blue Mountains City Council Crossings committee, our local Federal member, Louise Markus, and I made up the modern-day expedition, walking the descent from Mount York. It was a 2½ hour trek with breathtaking scenery and fascinating history.

I am very much indebted to Siobhan and Bill for their excellent commentary of the history, bringing it alive as we went. We observed the convict pick marks, the fencing sockets and hewn gutters. The track was rough and rugged even today. As I walked the road I reflected on the difficulty of the terrain. The explorers and road builders were truly determined and remarkable men. Bill Evans is a person of immense historical knowledge and, being a local resident, is passionate about the local history. Bill regaled us with the fact that parts of the descent were so steep that the carts beat the bullocks down the descent.

To stop this from happening in later days, the drays dragged large trees that were cut down at the top and dragged to the bottom to slow the drays and prevent injuring the animals. The trees were then discarded at the bottom and regularly burned to remove the build-up. I do not think we could do that today. This living history was certainly a great way to appreciate the difficulties and hardships of those early explorers and settlers. It was a very informative way of promoting the bicentenary of the crossing of the Blue Mountains, which will be celebrated from Bathurst to Blacktown but more particularly in the Blue Mountains in 2013. One of the intended events will be a commemoration at Mount York, along with descendants of the explorers. I invite all members to come and participate.

HEADSPACE MID NORTH COAST

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.29 p.m.]: I should like to compliment a group called "headspace Mid North Coast", which is managed by a just and upright young man named Jesse Taylor. Recently, I visited headspace in its new premises, from which, unfortunately, it is finding it will need to further expand. Headspace is an organisation that helps young people from ages 12 to 25 years with mental health and wellbeing, general health, youth worker support, and connections to education, employment, alcohol and other drug services and, as its brochure states, much more. On the day of my visit I noticed a number of young people attending to consult medical practitioners and psychiatrists. People with problems who do not wish to consult with their parents, other relatives, employers or school peers or staff can be assured of anonymity and receive assistance. This assistance helps them through their schooling years and life generally, and to avoid self-harm. During my visit we discussed the possibility of expanding the services. In correspondence to me Jesse said:

Following on from our discussions, we have begun to investigate the benefits and feasibility of **headspace** Mid North Coast providing early intervention drug and alcohol services to youth in the region. We are particularly keen to meet the needs of young people aged 12-16 years who are currently not being serviced by existing government and non-government programs.

Further to the lack of existing services, an early intervention drug and alcohol service for youth in the region is essential given:

- In NSW in 2007, 17% of 14-24 years olds reported using an illicit substance in the past 12 months.
- In 2008 the prevalence of ever having used cannabis/marijuana, amphetamines, ecstasy and hallucinogens among male and female students aged 12-17 years on the North Coast ... was above state averages.
- In NSW in 2005, 26% of males and 16% of females aged 16-24 years consumed alcohol at levels that placed them at risk of harm.
- In 2008 the prevalence of alcohol consumption by male and female students aged 12-17 years on the North Coast ... was above state averages.

headspace Mid North Coast follows an evidence-based model in the delivery of health interventions. The proposal for early intervention drug and alcohol services to Mid North Coast youth is based on the following evidence:

- Substance use early in life increases the likelihood of substance abuse (in terms of frequency and drug-related problems) in adulthood.
- The only early intervention strategy with any level of evidence of positive outcomes for youth is that of early screening and brief interventions with the goal of encouraging behaviour change through motivational interviewing principles.
- Alcohol and illicit drugs were estimated to cost the Australian community approximately AU\$25 billion in 2004/05.
- The delivery of effective early intervention services to youth has considerable potential to lessen current and future harms and social costs to individuals, families, businesses and the community.

As with all existing **headspace** Mid North Coast services, it is anticipated that any early intervention drug and alcohol services for youth would work collaboratively with existing services to ensure no paucity or duplication of services for the community.

I commend Jesse and those who work with him. On the day I visited, psychiatrists and psychologists from Southern Cross University were giving up their time to help. A doctor also was in attendance providing a medical service to young people with a number of problems ranging from unwanted pregnancies through to drug use or abuse or just problems at home with family. The organisation has positive programs in place. I looked also at the results of some painting classes that had been held and the artistic ability of some of those troubled young people is phenomenal. Headspace intends to hold an exhibition of its works in the near future to try to give these young people some self-esteem and encouragement for future work. I commend Jesse and the group of people at headspace for the great work they do. I will be writing to the Minister for Health and other Ministers asking them to give all the support they can to this fantastic service that is delivering such great outcomes for the Coffs Harbour community.

VISIONCARE PROGRAM

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.34 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the suspension of the VisionCare program by the O'Farrell Government effective 29 February 2012. Most importantly, I shall dispel some misinformation by Minister Goward about the program. Providing spectacles and vision support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community—low income earners and financially disadvantaged people—is something the New South Wales Government has done for over 60 years. In 1992 the Greiner Government arranged for VisionCare, a non-profit organisation, to take over running the program from the Department of Community Services. Mr Jim Longley, Minister for Community Services at that time, said:

The program is very closely monitored, the arrangements have been drawn up with inbuilt procedural safeguards so that we can ensure that the program is operating successfully. We have focused on the best way of delivering those services to the people who need free spectacles, of whom there are approximately 70,000 a year.

The program is administered by VisionCare in conjunction with the University of New South Wales. VisionCare's chair is Professor Brian Layland, OAM. The program was set up to be a demand-based program and, I emphasise, applies a stringent income and assets test to those who apply for its services. Only the very neediest receive the support of the VisionCare program. A quick survey of the *Questions and Answers Paper* shows that members were concerned that perhaps the program was too difficult to access. The current Treasurer asked a question on notice on 14 May 2010, which appears to uphold expanding the program.

The focus has been on need and the program to this day has been running very effectively on this basis with the same inbuilt procedural safeguards that Minister Longley referred to. The vast majority of users are pensioners, around 8,400; people with a disability with 41 per cent receiving disability support payments; and 3,176 people accessed its services through the excellent Aboriginal Eyecare Outreach program servicing remote communities. Costs have fluctuated over the years. In 2009-10 assistance was provided for around 73,745 people at a cost of \$4,790,101 down from \$5,314,667 in 2007-08 when it assisted 90,244 people. The program is hardly spiralling out of control. It is important to note that the program's budget has been prepared and managed by Family and Community Services. I make it clear that VisionCare has not overspent its budget.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: I have listened to the member for some time. I know that she is aware that the purpose of a private member's statement is not to make political statements, despite it relating to an important matter. The statement should relate to a matter in her electorate. I ask that that process be respected.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! I ask the member to return to her private member's statement.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: On that point, my electorate has many users of the VisionCare program. In fact, my electorate is one of the highest users. VisionCare has continued to administer its program responsibly using its stringent eligibility requirements, as it always has. For many years the department has allowed the program to operate under a budget overrun and chose to supplement it from other available financial sources, thereby assisting community members in my electorate. The Family and Community Services budget has not altered regardless of approving additional expenditure. My issue relates to the way in which the Minister has managed the program by suspending it halfway through. Therefore, people in my community have missed out.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: I have shown goodwill by listening to an important issue, but again I ask that political statements not be made in private members' statements.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the member to return to her private member's statement.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: Constituents have missed out as a result of the suspension of the program. On 20 October 2010 a question was placed on notice regarding the program's costs from 1995 to 2010. Clearly, the Minister knew at that time about the budget and how the program worked before she came into government.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: Madam Acting-Speaker, the member is canvassing your ruling in a most inappropriate way. I ask you to ask the member to adhere to your ruling or to sit down.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! I point out to the member for Auburn that this will be the third occasion on which I have asked her to return to matters relating to her electorate.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: There will be many people in my electorate who will miss out on accessing the VisionCare program, in particular, children. At this time of year a number of school-age children are identified with classroom learning impediments that require urgent and prompt resolution, and they will miss out.

DAVIDSON ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.39 p.m.]: Cultural understanding is one of the backbones of social harmony in our multicultural and fair-go-for-all country. There are many examples of people and organisations bringing awareness to worthy causes. Today I would like to highlight the proactive effort of children from Lindfield East Public School in my electorate of Davidson. I have spoken with the primary school students on a number of occasions about government and politics. I have found their intellect and thirst for knowledge to be outstanding and an encouraging indication of the quality of our future leaders. Lindfield East Public School caters for local children from kindergarten to grade 6 in a safe and caring learning environment with excellent grounds and facilities. The public primary school takes an inclusive approach under the direction of Principal Andrew Stevenson, providing support to students from non-English speaking backgrounds. English language skills are given extra attention for those who need it. In addition, extra language classes are taught in Mandarin and Hebrew. However, there is another initiative that is the purpose of my address today.

Since 2010, under the guidance of the school's staff, the parents and children of Lindfield East Public School have annually hosted children from Menindee Central School in rural south-west New South Wales on a cultural exchange. It is testament to the strength of the bond being developed between my electorate located on the North Shore of Sydney and country New South Wales in the electorate of Murray-Darling. Menindee Central School similarly hosts Lindfield East Public School students annually on a reciprocal cultural exchange. The two schools also engage in teacher exchanges. These allow teachers from Lindfield East Public School to gain insight into the rural way of life and the differing learning environment in Menindee, and vice versa.

Such is the commitment of staff at Lindfield East Public School that Deputy Principal Sakuna Pho gained his bus drivers licence so that he could chauffeur the Menindee Central School children around Sydney last November. Lindfield East Public School hosted 26 students and four teachers who were taken to many of Sydney's top attractions including Taronga Zoo, Chinatown, the Opera House, and Luna Park via a walk over the Sydney Harbour Bridge. The students slept in the library of Lindfield East Public School whilst the school's generous parents and school fundraising provided breakfast, lunch and evening meals for their guests. Some of the students from Menindee had not been to Sydney or the beach before, and through this project the lives of these children have been enriched. Special mention is made of Lindfield East Public School Captain Rachel Lowenstein who secured discounts for food and ticket costs for Menindee students through writing letters to companies for support.

In an additional recent exchange, Menindee Central School's sole English teacher, Jane Dunbar, was able to visit Killara High School at the end of last year to gain wider experience. It is hoped this exchange will help further improve the quality of English teaching for the children of Menindee. I note that many Lindfield East Public School students go on to study at Killara High School. I am aware that Killara High School students recently visited Vietnam on an international school excursion. They were involved in raising funds for refurbishing the school in the Halong Bay. I wish the students and staff of Lindfield East Public School, Menindee Central School and Killara High School all the best. May these wonderful schools continue to serve as an example of generosity and cross-cultural understanding in the future. I am sure that the Parliamentary Secretary for Tertiary Education and Skills, who is at the table, has duly noted those comments as they relate to her portfolio area.

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [5.44 p.m.]: We in this Government are serious about housing. We are a Government that is serious about governing for everyone and a Government that is not afraid to make responsible decisions when necessary. When we took office in March last year we had already identified certain areas that we believed could be arranged differently to better service New South Wales. As a result of this the Housing portfolio now has two Ministers, as those in this House would be well aware. Minister Goward is responsible for tenancy management, policy and planning and Minister Pearce is responsible for asset and maintenance services. The Government made this decision so that Housing NSW can focus on its core business of providing effective tenancy management services.

It is not just the Housing portfolio that has changed over time; it is also the very nature of housing as a service. Social housing has over several decades shifted from being a housing option for working families to becoming a safety net for low-income households with increasingly complex needs and high levels of disadvantage. Over 50,000 social housing dwellings in New South Wales are located in large estates. Many of these are poorly located and lacking access to public transport, shops, services and jobs. Living in a neighbourhood with a high concentration of disadvantaged households can create or compound individual or family disadvantage. For example, residents in a social housing estate may experience stigma or lack the social networks that can help people get a job or find out about training opportunities or community activities.

In my electorate of Wollondilly there is a component of Housing NSW estates. Constituents enter my office on a daily basis with requests for assistance or clarification of entry requirements. Housing, as I have mentioned previously, is something that I am intimately aware of and in which I have a personal interest. We must ensure that appropriate planning is undertaken. But it is not just Wollondilly that faces challenges; New South Wales as a whole also faces challenges in relation to housing supply and affordability. These challenges include: not having enough houses to meet current and future demand; a tight private rental market where rents continue to rise; and a significant number of low-income people paying more than half their income on housing. Housing insecurity not only causes stress but also creates uncertainty, which affects health, education, employment and individual and family wellbeing. Conversely, improvements in housing can promote better health, education and employment.

Government policy no doubt has an important part to play in addressing the issues and challenges for the future directions of social housing, both in improving people's experiences of social housing and addressing the shortage of housing in New South Wales. The National Affordable Housing Agreement and related partnership agreements provide the overarching framework to determine what housing services—including social housing—will be funded and delivered in New South Wales. The current national agreement started in 2008-09 and runs for five years. Discussion about priorities for the next agreement are getting underway in policy circles, and social housing tenants groups such as the South West Sydney Tenants Association and Shelter have a potential role to play in the development of a new agreement. Their experiences of housing can make an important contribution to future policy and funding priorities.

Addressing the problems of social housing estates and increasing housing supply are also important future directions for this Government. The New South Wales Government aims to better align the renewal of large public housing estates with broader urban renewal strategies and I was proud to discuss this with the Minister for Finance and Services and the Minister for Family and Communities Services recently in the Macarthur region. Solutions which both improve the living environments for social housing tenants and contribute to increased housing supply are possible through a more strategic approach to estate renewal. A mix of appropriate and affordable housing is needed in suitable locations across New South Wales to meet household needs and to help communities to maintain social cohesion, support local economies, and sustain a range of local services and businesses.

Housing remains an important issue in my electorate as well as across the State. It is vital that we have open communication channels with all areas of our community to promote social cohesion. In my electorate of Wollondilly we have partnerships such as Rosemeadow Ambarvale Community Interagency [RACI] that help promote this cohesion. This fabulous initiative includes, but is not limited to, individuals from organisations such as Youth off the Streets, Youth Solutions, TAFE New South Wales and Campbelltown City Council. I was proud to launch, late last year, their community plan containing well and truly over 100 recommendations on how to improve our local community. In fact it is where I grew up. An interagency such as this ensures that the community comes together with residents from the Department of Housing, government agencies and law enforcement agencies. They ensure that we keep in contact with one another and that communications channels are open, promoting a supportive and harmonious community.

It is vital that we ensure that the services that are needed are delivered to the people who need them. We must ensure services reach the estates and are not just line items in reports. I take this opportunity to praise the good work done by this agency and look forward to continuing my work with them in the future. I also acknowledge the hard work undertaken by the Minister for Family and Community Services. It is truly inspiring to see her work in this matter. I look forward to working with our hardworking Ministers to better service the people of Wollondilly and to be part of a Government that is proactive in its approach.

NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [5.49 p.m.]: The Hills shire has a unique character that its residents are determined to preserve. I can think of few other places that provide the same family friendly lifestyle as the Sydney hills. This is why I, like so many others over the years, made the move to the garden shire. Being such a great place to live, work and raise a family it is unsurprising that that our population in the north-west is booming. As a result, we have been screaming for infrastructure in The Hills ever since Jack Lang pulled up our railway to pay his London creditors. Finally, with the North West Rail Link, we will have a welcome development on this front. It needs to be made plain that every member of this Government is committed to the delivery of major projects in a way that does not disrupt local communities. It should come as no surprise that we will build the North West Rail Link without sacrificing the unique character of The Hills.

I was shocked to hear recently that some members of the community adamantly believe that the North West Rail Link will invariably result in the closure of the Castle Hill Showground and the end of the Castle Hill Show. Such wild and ill-informed speculation is reckless and creates unnecessary anxiety in the community. Having waited so long for this investment the last thing we need is unfounded community anxiety over the fate of the Castle Hill Showground. Let me make this crystal clear: The future of the Castle Hill Showground is assured and we recognise the immense value of the showground to The Hills community. The showground is a hallmark of The Hills way of life and is not going anywhere. The Castle Hill Show is one of the oldest traditions we have in The Hills. It started as a small agricultural exhibition in the 1880s and has now become an integral part of life in the shire.

The Castle Hill Show is much loved by the community and it is hard to imagine the district without it. Anyone suggesting that the Castle Hill Show could disappear due to the North West Rail Link just does not know what he or she is talking about. Yes, there may be mild disruption but this is unavoidable and, realistically, it is required if we want to be connected to the rest of Sydney by heavy rail. However, this will not even result in the closure of the Castle Hill Show. Speculation to the contrary being spread by some is simply false and as such should be ignored by the community. We must not let some pessimistic voices put us off the greatest investment ever made in The Hills, which will be of tremendous benefit for generations to come.

ROCKDALE ELECTORATE COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.53 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to be able to acknowledge today the 2012 Citizen of the Year, Young Citizen of the Year and Sports Person of the Year. All of the award recipients are from the Rockdale and Kogarah local government areas which fall within the boundaries of the Rockdale electorate. It was a privilege to attend the Australia Day citizenship ceremonies and presentations at Peter Depena Reserve, Dolls Point. These prestigious awards are an opportunity to recognise the individuals who have contributed enormously to our community. These men and women are an inspiration to others and are leaders in our community. They deserve the highest accolades.

Citizen of the Year awards are presented all over New South Wales on Australia Day and are reflective of the society that we are proud to be a part of. On Australia Day we celebrate our national day, our unique way

of life and the national unity that has brought us prosperity and security. We celebrate Australia's history, our rich and diverse culture, the rule of law, our national achievements and our highly evolved constitutional arrangements. It is noteworthy that recipients of these awards take time out of their lives to assist the lives of others and in doing so help shape Australia's future. It is people like these who, over the history of our nation, have contributed to New South Wales's and Australia's many achievements and helped form our social fabric.

In my electorate of Rockdale Mikall Chong of Bexley was awarded the prestigious Citizen of the Year award. Mr Chong's ongoing contribution to the St George Migrant Resource Centre and his dedication to assisting our diverse local community has made him popular in Rockdale. The role that people like Mr Chong play in our local community cannot be overestimated and I thank him for his service. Ms Elizabeth Mora, aged in her early twenties, was awarded Rockdale's Young Citizen of the Year award. Ms Mora's ongoing support of local charities and assistance to the community are highly valued. At such a young age I have no doubt that Ms Mora will continue to inspire other young men and women to become involved in community service.

Ms Keona Lee was awarded Rockdale's Sports Person of the Year for her achievements in the field of figure skating and golf. Ms Lee's older sister was similarly awarded Sports Person of the Year in 2005. Boxing legend Kostya Tszyu was awarded Kogarah's Citizen of the Year award. Kostya Tszyu settled in Rockdale in the early 1990s and has been an inspiration to many in the St George region. Only recently Kostya was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame. At the local level he is renowned for his love of our community and sharing his experiences. Norma Thornburn was named Kogarah City Council's Senior Citizen of the Year for her contribution to seniors in the community and for establishing the Kogarah senior's computer club at the turn of the century. Mrs Thornburn has been helping those over the age of 50 learn how to use computers and develop new skills. Mrs Thornburn has also made an enormous contribution working with Kogarah Meals on Wheels throughout her years in the area.

Jessica Guo was named Junior Citizen and Sports Person of the Year. At only 12 years of age Jessica is both a talented student and gifted athlete. I have no doubt that Jessica's star will continue to shine brightly. I extend my warmest congratulations to all recipients of these awards. They do not work for recognition or financial gain, they do it out of commitment to our local community and for that we thank them for their service and acknowledge them here in this place.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 5.58 p.m. until
Tuesday 6 March 2012 at 12.00 noon.**
