

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 29 March 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.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

MORISSET HOSPITAL

The SPEAKER: I inform the House that in accordance with Standing Order 139 the member for Lake Macquarie has submitted an amended motion.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [10.05 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that Morisset Hospital has cared for mentally ill patients since 1908 and that its capacity for mental health services is under-utilised;
- (2) notes that the site and its buildings have historical significance but are in disrepair and subject to vandalism and theft;
- (3) notes the recent implementation of measures to improve site security and measures to reduce the incidence of cruelty to the local kangaroo population; and
- (4) calls on the Government through New England Area Health, in their current strategic planning, to make better use of Morisset Hospital.

I thank the House for its indulgence in allowing me to move my motion as amended: I gave notice of the motion in May 2011 and I wanted to make it contemporary. Morisset Hospital has had a long and interesting history since its establishment in 1908 and formal opening in 1909. From a modest start with 78 patients accommodated in calico wards—so named because of the calico render on the walls—the facility grew to house more than 1,400 during the 1960s. The original site was selected for its ability to be largely self-sufficient. The extensive site—it was more than 1,300 acres at the time—incorporated the catchment of Pourmalong Creek, which ensured the water supply for what in many ways was a town in its own right. Much of that land became part of a grant to the Koompahtoo Aboriginal Land Council in 1995 and some was transferred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service, leaving the facility with about 70 hectares.

I admit to being somewhat sentimental about Morisset Hospital because I worked there for 24 years over a 27-year period and it is where I met my wife, Lyn, both of us having commenced working there in 1976. I met some extraordinary people during my time at the hospital, both staff and patients. The circumstances and stories of their lives and how they managed them have been important in making me who I am today. I know that anyone who works in the mental health sector for any length of time cannot remain unaffected. A book published in 2000 described the facility in its title as *A Private World on a Nameless Bay*. The book, which was researched and printed by volunteers who formed the Morisset Hospital Historical Society, included a foreword by former Medical Superintendent Dr Les Darcy. He wrote:

Two aspects of Morisset Hospital which stand out are family tradition and service to the community.

That is true. The book correctly describes the hospital in 2000 as a ghost of its former self and speaks of the many who are saddened to see what has become of a once great institution. Twelve years on, that is even more accurate. Throughout the site there are magnificent reminders of the history of the hospital in some wonderful buildings, a number of which are formally recognised for their historic value. As with other public buildings of the time, they were generally wonderfully built by artisans who often sought to incorporate ornate or grand features. Utilitarian needs to house water tanks, for example, became an opportunity to build elaborate features such as fenestrated copper-clad turrets. One of the best examples of historic buildings is the recreation hall, which sits in close proximity to and overlooks the lake.

This building was at the heart of so much of the history of the hospital, and in 2009 it was the venue for a centenary ball that was attended by many former hospital staff. I took a photo of those who attended the ball and they assembled in a way closely replicating a photo from a ball held in the hall in 1919 to celebrate the end of the First World War. That photo is now in the possession of the Morisset Hospital Historical Society. This is only a small part of the history of the site. However, to see what was once a facility with well-maintained buildings, roads, gardens and recreational facilities and to recognise the decline that is effectively a slow demolition by neglect is very saddening.

With changes in policy on the use of institutions such as Morisset Hospital, there has been a significant reduction in the number of clients and staff. That reduction has lessened activity and passive surveillance has made the site a target for theft, vandalism and, very disturbingly, animal cruelty. Securing a site such as this will always be difficult, but it is heartbreaking to see the area damaged by hooligans in cars or thieves in trucks. Just last year copper cladding on the turret of the recreation hall was stolen and at one stage people were repeatedly accessing the hospital grounds to kill and maim kangaroos that graze around the facility.

More than 200 kangaroos are thought to have been killed, with wildlife carers and authorities having to euthanase many that were left to die. Whilst this was widely condemned, the hospital at the time did not have the ability to deal with the problem. Since I gave notice of this motion last May there has been a big improvement in security of the site with the installation of control gates at two access roads. I am told that this is helping, but the gates themselves are now targets for vandals and were damaged as recently as last week. I acknowledge that local management and the Hunter New England Area Health Service have taken action and improved the situation.

Any thought of increasing the use of the site should not be based on nostalgia about its past or on current staff; it should be because it would be beneficial to some persons within the mental health system and because it can provide a wonderful therapeutic environment, the kind of which has been increasingly lost in New South Wales. These opportunities should not be ruled out because of the belief that institutions are bad because, while they can be, the reality is that society is full of institutions of one kind or another. We need to make sure that we do not create a system of institutionalisation—and there is a significant difference.

I acknowledge the improvements in mental health care over the years, many relating to direct provision and a better understanding by the community and medical staff within the field. A number of improvements should be noted in this Chamber, including the creation of a Ministry headed by the Minister for Mental Health. I acknowledge the Government's creation of the Mental Health Commission. I note the involvement of great Australians such as Professor Patrick McGorrie—former Australian of the Year and a visitor to this place—in raising awareness of the plight of people with mental illness. I also acknowledge the Parliamentary Friends of Mental Illness and thank the members involved in that friendship society.

We should look for better opportunities in relation to mental health generally, and sometimes we should look to the past. I believe this site could provide a magnificent opportunity, but not with the Dickensian buildings that are now there. We should look at modernising the facilities, perhaps detached villa accommodation—something that enables people to live with dignity in a therapeutic setting with the support they need around them for modern mental health services. Morisset Hospital is not remote from the community, it is quite close, and it is a community within a community. I believe it could be put to much better use and I call on the Government to see that that is considered.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [10.12 a.m.]: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his interest in this matter. For more than 100 years Morisset Hospital has provided assessment, care and treatment of people experiencing mental illness. I pay tribute to staff, as well as families and carers, who do an absolutely fantastic job in providing care and support to patients. Many mental health consumers who receive care and treatment at Morisset Hospital have severe mental illnesses that require long-term mental health

inpatient care. In fact the majority of mental health consumers who are admitted to Morisset Hospital today stay for several months and receive mental health rehabilitation to equip them with the necessary day-to-day skills to return to independent living in the community.

It was at the beginning of last century, in May 1909, when the first patients—78 men—arrived at what was known as the Morisset Asylum for the Insane. By the middle of last century the total number of resident patients in Morisset Hospital reached almost 1,500. Morisset Hospital was in fact a village with its own cricket oval, poultry yards, chapel and gardens. The hospital was a state-of-the-art mental health facility. Over the last four decades, with the availability of new and more effective medication and investment in mental health care in the community, deinstitutionalisation has been possible. Many long-term residents of Morisset Hospital have been able to move into the community, where they are supported by community mental health teams, housing and other support services, as well as a number of non-government organisations.

Today the number of patients with mental illness in the hospital is 130. This is made up of 61 patients who are receiving inpatient rehabilitation, 30 forensic mental health patients, 12 patients who receive very specialised neuropsychiatric services and 27 older people, that is, more than 65 years of age, with mental illness who need various levels of inpatient support. Also, 80 consumers are supported by Ageing, Disability and Home Care services at Morisset Hospital. Many members of staff have provided services at Morisset Hospital for years—even decades.

I acknowledge the skill, expertise and commitment of those mental health staff who do a wonderful job in supporting mental health consumers and their families. I also acknowledge the contribution of the member for Lake Macquarie as an ex member of the Morisset Hospital staff. He has been a passionate supporter of Morisset Hospital and a regular visitor to various local and community functions at Morisset Hospital. I am reliably informed by the Director of Mental Health for the Hunter New England Local Health District that his formal and informal support and participation are appreciated by staff as well as the Morisset community.

Deinstitutionalisation and transition of mental health consumers from an institution into the community has improved the quality of life of a number of mental health consumers. It has also brought considerable pleasure and enjoyment to families whose loved ones have returned home. However, as we all know, this has not been a universal experience for mental health consumers. Many consumers discharged into the community have needed additional support from families, friends and caring services. It is for this reason that in the 2011-12 budget the O'Farrell Government delivered the largest increase in funding for mental health in the State's history. Over the coming year we will deliver more funding to mental health services than any New South Wales Government before us.

Our investment in enhancing mental health care in the community will continue. I note the presence at the table of the Treasurer and commend him on his commitment to improving mental health services. There is no doubt that there will continue to be a need for mental health inpatient beds and we will continue to ensure that the appropriate level of hospital care is available to mental health consumers who need to be in hospital. At the same time we will positively invest in supporting consumers living in the community. Some consumers may only require a few hours of support whereas others may need 24-hour supervision in community accommodation. It is our intention to ensure that appropriate levels of community residential support are available to all mental health consumers.

We will also continue to invest in non-residential community care to promote recovery. In this context I was delighted to hear about the PRISM concept, standing for Promoting Resilience, Independence and Self-Management, of Hunter New England mental health services. Clearly, the model of care that promotes consumers to be resilient and independent and to self-manage their illnesses to achieve recovery is futuristic and appropriate. Such a model has been made possible by positive investment to enhance community mental health teams. The member for Lake Macquarie has asked about the use and management of the Morisset site. Since its heyday, when Morisset Hospital provided care to almost 1,500 patients, both the nature as well as the manner of mental health care delivery have changed. Now that only 130 mental health and 80 Ageing, Disability and Home Care consumers receive inpatient care at Morisset Hospital many buildings have become vacant.

It is not intended that these buildings will be used for rehabilitation of mental health consumers. Indeed, the historical significance of Morisset Hospital should not be underestimated. In this context I pay tribute to members of the Morisset Hospital Historical Society, which has partnered with Hunter New England mental health services to provide the necessary stewardship and support. The Chief Executive of the Hunter

New England Local Health District has informed me that planning for future needs for mental health inpatient beds in the Hunter New England area is currently underway. This plan will include options for the location of future rehabilitation and non-acute inpatient beds.

The member for Lake Macquarie has mentioned some instances, which have been well publicised, of cruelty to the kangaroo population at Morisset Hospital. It is unfortunate that it only takes a small number of individuals to not only wreak havoc on the local kangaroo population but also cause enormous hurt within the community. All members of this House would condemn the incidents of animal cruelty there. The member for Lake Macquarie was very vocal at the time and I commend him for his strong advocacy on the issue. Morisset Hospital has been part of the fabric of the Hunter Valley for more than a century and an institution in which the member for Lake Macquarie has played an important part. I commend him for bringing the motion before the House.

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [10.20 a.m.]: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for moving this motion. In particular, I thank the member for Lake Macquarie and his wife, who are former employees at Morisset Hospital, for their calling to this very important community work. In 2009 Morisset Hospital celebrated 100 years of caring. In fact, many community organisations on the Central Coast and lower Hunter are currently celebrating their centenaries. Morisset Hospital is situated in the electorate of Lake Macquarie just north of the electorate of Wyong. The constituents of many members on the Central Coast and lower Hunter use its services or have friends or relatives who have used it. I note that the member for Charlestown has made a contribution to this debate—unfortunately, the member for Swansea cannot be here today. This facility is widely appreciated by the communities in all our electorates.

In 1900 some 1,300 acres of land east of Morisset was reserved for what became known as the Asylum for the Insane. The grounds of Morisset Hospital were proclaimed as a wildlife refuge in 1972. Hospital patients and visitors enjoy amazing lakeside views and kangaroo mobs at this scenic site. Celebrations such as the Morisset Hospital centenary and regular open days, as well as a welcoming environment for visitors to the hospital, have ensured that this facility is an integral part of the community. The member for Lake Macquarie is a regular attendee at these community events. Morisset Hospital and its staff play a major role in the local community and it continues to be a vital part of our health service. At almost every social event and celebration at the hospital a number of community organisations and businesses make an active contribution. I pay tribute to the current staff for the effort and commitment they continue to make in the provision of excellent care for the patients at this facility.

The intention of this health service has always been to ensure that the hospital facilities, and in particular the grounds of Morisset Hospital, remain accessible and available to the community to enjoy. This openness has also presented some challenges. Unfortunately, there have been incidents of some miscreants harming kangaroos. These unfortunate events have been distressing for all concerned. I am advised that security breaches and incidents have been reported to local police, who have charged individuals for unruly behaviour at the hospital. I commend the local police. Measures have been taken to restrict access to Morisset Hospital. In consultation with police, security at the site has been reviewed and a number of strategies implemented. The local health district has installed gates on the access roads to the hospital, which are now closed, except to staff, from dusk to dawn. I am advised that the number and frequency of incidents has decreased significantly—in fact, there have been none since the gates were installed.

These additional security measures have been necessary and, in my view, appropriate. I assure the member for Lake Macquarie and the House that every effort will be made to ensure that Morisset Hospital provides a safe and nurturing environment to all patients, their families and staff. The Chief Executive of the Hunter New England Local Health District has informed me that planning for future needs for mental health inpatient beds and community resources in the area is currently underway, including options for the location of future rehabilitation and non-acute inpatient beds. I again thank the member for Lake Macquarie for moving this motion. I acknowledge also the hard work of hospital staff and local police. I look forward to joining the member for Lake Macquarie at the next event to be held at the hospital.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.23 a.m.]: Mental health services across the State require the Parliament to be regularly focused on the extent and range of services that could and should be offered to consumers with mental health issues. Clearly a motion about Morisset Hospital is a worthwhile focus and it is timely that we should look at the issues around the hospital. Interestingly, the topic of mental health was for many years ignored in this Parliament. I can recall back in the mid 1990s then Minister for Health, the Hon. Ron Phillips,

raising the issue of a new focus on mental health patients and services that could be offered to them. Appropriately, these days people with mental health challenges are referred to as "consumers", because they are consumers of services provided by this Government and governments of other political persuasions over the years.

Morisset Hospital has a very proud history in the provision of services, dating back to 1908. The member for Lake Macquarie has a profound understanding of the challenges of providing mental health services to those who require them and of the provision of services through Morisset Hospital and its grounds. I understand that the member for Lake Macquarie worked as a psychiatric nurse at this facility for over 25 years. That means this Parliament has a valuable resource in listening to the issues that face mental health care consumers. I congratulate the member for Lake Macquarie on moving this motion, which allows members to reflect on the range and type of services that are necessary to support those who need assistance from mental health facilities. Over time mental health facilities have changed, which is part of the issue with Morisset Hospital. As my colleagues said earlier, Morisset Hospital started as a facility for the insane. They were referred to as asylums in those days, but today we take a far more appropriate approach to the provision of mental health services.

If it is appropriate, services can be offered through the community, but some consumers require a more secure environment. For instance, there are about 30 forensic psychiatric patients at Morisset Hospital who need, for the safety of the community and themselves, a more secure environment. Also the use of community facilities and cottages on the grounds of the Morisset Hospital may not assist in the dignity of those consumers. The Government needs to look at the full array of services at Morisset Hospital to ensure that its consumers are empowered in the process of getting well and that their dignity is never challenged. I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for making sure that the issues around Morisset Hospital and, more broadly, the services offered to mental health consumers are brought to the attention of the House. I support the motion.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [10.27 a.m.]: The Morisset Hospital site is a wonderful asset to the people of the Morisset area. When one first visits the site one is struck by how calm and peaceful it is, and how over 100 years ago the planners for a mental health facility at Morisset got it right. Some things change, others stay the same. Mental health is the greatest challenge of the twenty-first century. The facility at Morisset will and must provide a resource for health care for the people of the electorate of Lake Macquarie. We know from previous motions moved by the member for Lake Macquarie that the population in his electorate is older and sicker than the population in many other New South Wales electorates. That is why the availability of the Morisset facility is so vital and its upkeep so important.

This facility has enormous potential for future use—for instance, outpatient mental health care. The condition of the facility is such that, if upgraded with adequate planning and refurbishment, it could be used for outreach clinics in various specialties requiring multidisciplinary care, including diabetes, respiratory disease or cardiac disease. The area health service will need to look at that because the need over the twenty-first century will be for multidisciplinary health care closer to home. That is why we must safeguard this facility.

The site is also perfect for off-site education. The health workforce needs a convenient and suitable place where they can be educated, and the Morisset site is perfect for this use. So too is the site perfect for the future of health care in the Lake Macquarie area. It can be used for outpatient clinics, mental health services and education. This is simply a matter of preserving the site and being prepared to plan for the future health care of the Lake Macquarie electorate. As the member for Lake Macquarie has said so eloquently in the past, the population of the Lake Macquarie electorate is older, sicker and poorer than the rest of New South Wales. The site is valuable and needs to be protected. It needs to be preserved because we will need the site over the next 100 years. We need to pay tribute to those who had the vision in 1908 to secure such a site for health care over the centuries.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [10.30 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Charlestown, the member for Wyong, the member for Wakehurst and the member for Macquarie Fields for their valuable and insightful contributions. I acknowledge the presence of the Treasurer in the Chamber, particularly in relation to the point raised by the member for Charlestown about the State Government's investment in mental health services. The member for Charlestown gave some salient facts about the long-term mental health care requirements for people in New South Wales generally and the need for rehabilitation services. He referred to the existing facility at Morisset Hospital, which has about 130 clients within the mental health system and 80 within developmental disability through Kananegra, which is under the administration of Stockton Hospital.

Both sites work together in a complementary manner and show that there is still a valuable use for the Morisset site. The member for Charlestown talked about the success of community-based services, and nobody would deny that. Nobody should ever deny the right of a person with a mental illness or somebody with developmental disability to live within the community and maximise their quality of life. However, as the member said, the results of the move to deinstitutionalise clients and move away from large facilities have not been universal. We all know that there have been many failures—and tragic failures—along the way over the years, and we see that in our homeless population in New South Wales, particularly in the major centres, and in our jail system.

The member for Wyong referred to the history of the site, and I thank him for that. He mentioned the wildlife refuge that was established in 1972. Indeed, it was established at the request of the then medical superintendent, Les Darcy, who was progressive and did so much for that hospital over many years. Les Darcy should be remembered and thanked for everything he did for the patients and staff of Morisset Hospital over that time. The member for Wyong rightly said that there are many things happening in our communities, whether it is Swansea, Lake Macquarie, Morisset or Wyong, which were establishing themselves around that period. The member for Wakehurst generously acknowledged my time working in the mental health system. It gave me much insight.

People often say that being in mental health must be a good precursor to being in local government. I say, "Yes, but not for the reasons people might flippantly speak of." People who work in mental health realise that many different things affect a person's daily life, whether it is in the short term or perhaps an illness in a household and a person has not been sleeping. I think we learn to be more tolerant. As a society we must be more tolerant of people who have mental health problems from time to time. I thank the member for Macquarie Fields, who is a great advocate for the ill, whether they are physically ill or mentally ill. He has been a great support with these types of issues. He referred to the opportunities that could be considered to improve general health, such as off-site education. The site has a lot to give to the area and to New South Wales, and I call on the Government to support this motion.

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

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

Question—That the following motions given by the members as indicated pursuant to notice be formally agreed to—proposed.

GERRINGONG LIONS CLUB

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Gerringong Lions Club and President Steve Pottie on the work they do for the local community.
- (2) Notes that a large delegation from Gerringong Lions Club travelled to New South Wales Parliament House for an educational tour and a viewing of Question Time on 7 March 2012.

KANGAROO VALLEY UP A RIVER FESTIVAL

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the organisers of the Up a River Festival and fundraiser held in Kangaroo Valley on 2 to 4 March 2012.
- (2) Notes that the Upper Kangaroo River Progress Association supports the festival.
- (3) Acknowledges the festival organising committee, including Sarah Butler, Katrina Endean, Andy Gordon and Ben Moore, for their time and effort to make the festival a success.

TENNIS COACH SALLY DINGWALL

Mr NICK LALICH—That this House recognises the hard work and dedication of Sally Dingwall, of St Johns Park, who has been coaching at the Marconi Tennis Academy for 25 years.

CLARENCE VALLEY FUNDRAISING AND ROGER GREEN

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the fundraising efforts of Grafton busker, Roger Green, who has been singing and playing the guitar for many years through regional New South Wales.
- (2) Commends Roger on donating more than \$20,000 to help people affected by cancer in the Clarence Valley.

CLARENCE VALLEY DRAGONS ABREAST

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Commends the Clarence Valley Dragons Abreast on its active role in promoting the awareness of breast cancer in the local community.
- (2) Acknowledges the dedication of Cindy Hewitt, Co-ordinator; Gill Goddard, Assistant Co-ordinator; Roz Jones, Publicity Officer, and all the other members.

GRAFTON DRAGON BOAT CLUB

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Grafton Dragon Boat Club on being named the New South Wales Dragon Boat Club of the Year at the state championships in Sydney.
- (2) Notes the Grafton club is the first regional club to receive the award in the 10 years that clubs have been recognised for contributions to dragon boat racing.
- (3) Commends the Grafton club on its willingness to assist and support new clubs.
- (4) Acknowledges the dedication of Martin Thompson, President, and the contribution made by all club members.

WALLSEND TOWN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House notes the work of the Wallsend Town Business Association:

- (1) In connecting local businesses and community groups through educational events, networking and business building opportunities.
- (2) In promoting key local issues that will benefit Wallsend.

WALLSEND AND SPEERS POINT VIEW CLUB

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the VIEW club of Wallsend and Speers Point for its support of disadvantaged children and its learning for life program.
- (2) Recognises the VIEW club group as the oldest women's organisation in Australia.

NORTHERN NEW SOUTH WALES GIRLS IN FOOTBALL WEEK

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House notes:

- (1) 18 to 24 March 2012 is Northern New South Wales Girls in Football Week.
- (2) This inaugural Girls in Football Week is part of a range of activities including: a girls gala day; women's refereeing courses; and a girls come and try day, intended to encourage girls to participate in football.
- (3) Congratulates Northern New South Wales Football on its initiative.

OXIDATIVE STRESS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges both the Australasian Research Institute and the University of New South Wales for its research into oxidative stress and the effects of consumption of high fat and high sugar food.
- (2) Commends the institute and University of New South Wales for researching food types that may cause disease.

WOMEN OF THE WEST AWARD FINALIST BETH GODWIN

Mr NICK LALICH—That this House recognises Ms Beth Godwin, Principal of Cabramatta High School, on being named a finalist in the Women of the West Award for her contribution to the community.

FAIRFIELD HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER ARTHUR BOYD

Mr NICK LALICH—That this House acknowledges Mr Arthur Boyd, who after his own heart bypass surgery, has been a volunteer at the cardiac rehabilitation section of Fairfield Hospital and President of Fairhearts, the Fairfield and District Branch of Heart Support Australia.

HARMONY DAY POSTER COMPETITION AND ALYSSA ALZAMORA

Mr NICK LALICH—That this House congratulates and recognises the achievement of Alyssa Alzamora, aged 11 years, of Wakeley, on her second place in the Harmony Day Poster Competition for artwork promoting multiculturalism.

RISING TENNIS STAR AWARD RECIPIENT MILADIN TEPSIC

Mr NICK LALICH—That this House recognises the achievement of Miladin Tepsic, aged 17 years of Canley Vale, for his achievements in being named the Rising Tennis Star at the Fairfield Junior Sports Star Awards.

TRIBUTE TO DR PHAN GIANG SANG

Mr NICK LALICH—That this House recognises Dr Phan Giang Sang for his hard work in the Cabramatta community and dedication to raise awareness of, and increase, organ donation.

CANTERBURY ELECTORATE YMCA YOUTH PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Notes that two residents will represent the Canterbury electorate at the YMCA Youth Parliament in 2012.
- (2) Congratulates Ms Rachael Li, of North Sydney Girls High School, who will be sitting on the Committee Investigating Education.
- (3) Congratulates Ms Leah Emmanuel, of Burwood Girls High School, who will be sitting on the Committee Investigating Heritage.

EARLWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL KINDERGARTEN CLASS OF 1937

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the students from Earlwood Public School Kindergarten class of 1937 who celebrated 75 years since the beginning of their education.
- (2) Congratulates Audrey Phillips (nee Yule) for coordinating the reunion.
- (3) Notes the group meet at the Earlwood Bardwell Park RSL twice a year.

NATIONAL YEAR OF READING AND CAMPSIE LIBRARY

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Notes that 2012 is the National Year of Reading and is an initiative of the Australian Library and Information Association.
- (2) Acknowledges Campsie Library as it celebrated the official launch with authors Nadia Wheatley, Debra Adelaide and prize winning poet Andy Kissane.
- (3) Congratulates Canterbury's library service on making the National Year of Reading its focus for 2012.

ALBURY CITIZEN OF THE YEAR ERIC TURNER

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the contribution to the Albury community and to the Regional Cancer Centre by Mr Eric Turner.
- (2) Congratulates him on being named 2012 Albury Citizen of the Year.

ALBURY VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR PAULINE HARBICK

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises Pauline Harbick, of Albury, on her community work as a founding member of Brave Hearts on the Murray.
- (2) Congratulates her on being named 2012 Albury Volunteer of the Year.

CULCAIRN LIONS CLUB YOUTH OF THE YEAR IAN ELLIS

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House congratulates Ian Ellis, of St Paul's College, on being named Youth of the Year by the Culcairn Lions Club.

WALLA WALLA CROQUET CLUB TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Walla Walla Croquet Club on its 10th anniversary.
- (2) Recognises the role of Ruth Kotzur, President, and the committee to ensure this sport provides a social activity for members and visitors at the Walla Walla Bowling Club.

ASIA-PACIFIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION YOUTH SCIENCE FESTIVAL AND EDITH PETERS

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Edith Peters, of East Albury, on her selection for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Youth Science Festival held in Thailand.
- (2) Congratulates Edith on her report and achievements.

GREATER HUME CITIZEN OF THE YEAR ELMORE STOLL

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Elmore Stoll on his contribution to the Culcairn community through Anglicare and the Culcairn RSL sub-branch.
- (2) Congratulates him on being named Greater Hume Shire Council 2012 Citizen of the Year.

TUMBARUMBA CITIZEN OF THE YEAR GRAHAM BURGUN

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the building and sporting achievements of Graham Burgun.
- (2) Congratulates him on being named Tumbarumba 2012 Citizen of the Year.

HOWLONG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR ALAN HUTCHINGS

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the achievements of Alan Hutchings through the RSL sub-branch and Kalianna Enterprises, and his community involvement and fundraising activities.
- (2) Congratulates him on being named Howlong 2012 Citizen of the Year.

COROWA AND DISTRICT CO-CITIZENS OF THE YEAR FRANK AND MARJORIE SAINES

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the enthusiastic community service to community groups in Corowa by Frank and Marjorie Saines.
- (2) Congratulates Frank and Marjorie on being named the Corowa and District 2012 Co-Citizens of the Year.

TUMBARUMBA SENIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR MARLENE PERROTT

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates and recognises Mrs Marlene Perrott for her commitment to caring for older people in the Tumbarumba community.
- (2) Congratulates her on being named Tumbarumba Senior Citizen of the Year.

TUMBARUMBA SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR VERONICA KOPECNY

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates and recognises Veronica Kopecny for her commitment and her achievements in judo.
- (2) Congratulates her on being named Tumbarumba 2012 Sports person of the Year.

HOWLONG YOUNG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR JACOB KLEEHAMMER

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House recognises the achievements of Jacob Kleehammer and congratulates him on being named Howlong 2012 Young Citizen of the Year.

MULWALA CITIZEN OF THE YEAR GERAD FLANAGAN

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the achievements of Gerad Flanagan on behalf of community groups.
- (2) Congratulates him on being named Mulwala 2012 Citizen of the Year.

TUMBARUMBA JUNIOR CITIZEN OF THE YEAR ANNA EGGLETON

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the involvement of Anna Eggleton in the Tumbarumba Shire Youth Council and at Tumbarumba High School.
- (2) Congratulates her on being named Tumbarumba 2012 Junior Citizen of the Year.

TRIBUTE TO BRIAN FENN

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the contribution by Mr Brian Fenn, Albury Court Registrar, to the Albury community.
- (2) Congratulates him on his retirement after 41 years of service with the Attorney-General's Department.

BRONZE BRAVERY AWARD RECIPIENTS PETER AND ASTRID PRENDERGAST

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House congratulates Brian and Astrid Prendergast, of Albury, awarded the Bronze Bravery Award from the Royal Humane Society of Australasia, for rescuing five people involved in a ballooning accident in Bendigo, Victoria, in 2009.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT DOREEN WIDDISON

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the contribution made by Doreen Widdison, of Albury, to Woodstock Support Inc and the Albury community for over 20 years.
- (2) Congratulates her on being awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia on Australia Day 2012.

ALBURY AND BORDER RESCUE SQUAD FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House congratulates and recognises the work of the Albury and Border Rescue Squad on its 50th Anniversary in 2012.

TUMBAFEST

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Alison MacGregor and the Tumbafest Committee on its organisation of Tumbarumba's annual celebration of music, food and wine.
- (2) Congratulates the Committee on the success of the 15th Annual Tumbafest.

TUMBARUMBA SHOW

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the 120th year of the Tumbarumba Show in 2012.
- (2) Congratulates the Show Committee on its commitment to present local produce and entertain residents and visitors to the region.

HENTY SHOW SOCIETY LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARD AND DAVID MALE

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates David Male on being awarded life membership of the Henty Show Society for over 25 years of service.
- (2) Recognises the commitment of all the volunteers who ensure the show continues.

ALBURY-WODONGA NATIONAL SERVICEMEN'S ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT JOHN BAUERLE

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House recognises and congratulates Mr John Bauerle on his 15 years of service as President of the Albury-Wodonga branch of the National Servicemen's Association.

EVELYN HALL 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House congratulates Mrs Evelyn Hall, of Culcairn, on her 100th birthday on 11 March 2012.

DOUGLAS AND EVELYN TREBLEY SEVENTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House congratulates Mr Douglas and Mrs Evelyn Trebley, of North Albury, on their 70th wedding anniversary held on 14 March 2012.

SHOOTING CHAMPION STUART FOATE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 16-year-old Stuart Foate, of New Lambton, on winning the New South Wales Light and Heavy Benchrest Memorial Shoot held at Harry Luhr Range in March 2012.
- (2) Notes Stuart will compete at the national titles in Perth and hopes to make the Australian team.

NABIAC SHOW 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Dave Reeve, President; Bev Harris, Secretary; and the Show Committee, on the 100th anniversary of the Nabcac Show.
- (2) Notes that Vivienne Mobbs was awarded the Best Dressed Period Costume.
- (3) Notes the show was a success and was officially opened by television vet and local farmer, Dr Harry Cooper.

ALLAN AND MERLE RICHARDS FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Allan and Merle Richards on their 50th wedding anniversary.
- (2) Notes that Allan, a retired dairy farmer from Singleton, married Merle from Wauchope on 7 April 1962 and they now reside in Taree.

CARMEL FOX

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mrs Carmel Fox on her 90th birthday.
- (2) Notes that Mrs Fox was born in Numeralla, New South Wales, on 28 December 1921, now lives in Tuncurry and is active at the Foster Tuncurry Sports Club and Tuncurry Bowling Club.
- (3) Notes that Mrs Fox has two children, seven grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

MAXINE AND GEORGE IRELAND SEVENTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Maxine and George Ireland on their 70th wedding anniversary.
- (2) Notes that Maxine and George were married in Murwillumbah on 19 February 1942, the first day of the Japanese bombings of Darwin.
- (3) Notes that Maxine is an acclaimed bush poet and author.

TUNCURRY PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Notes the investiture of Tuncurry Public School's Student Representative Council.
- (2) Congratulates Anita Handono and Jordy Duggan, captains; Courtney Wyborn and Sam Hollis, vice captains; and Jake Forest, Rhiannon McBland, Maddi Duri, Jed McGowan, Danielle Rapley and Keaton Murray, councillors, on their election.

MANNING RURAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Manning Rural Referral Hospital on being ranked in the State's top five hospitals for hygiene standards.
- (2) Notes that the hospital is part of Hunter New England Local District Health and that the MyHospital website has reported that Manning Hospital has a 88.3 per cent rate of compliance with standards.

TRIBUTE TO JOY DAVEY, OAM

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Joy Davey OAM on her 40 years of service with Quota International.
- (2) Notes that Joy is well known throughout the Taree community for her many years of involvement in community projects and organisations.

COLIN WATTS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Colin Watts on being dux of Chatham High School for 2011.
- (2) Notes that Colin has taken a gap year before commencing studies at university.

DISTRICT 44 MASONIC CHARITIES

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates members of District 44 Masonic Charities who have raised \$16,000 for the purchase of a jet ski for the Lower North Coast Surf Lifesaving Branch.
- (2) Notes the jet ski will be based in Forster Boat Harbour and used as a rapid response unit to emergencies in the ocean and lakes from Crowdy Head to Pacific Palms.
- (3) Notes that District 44 Masonic Charities is the charitable organisation representing Masonic lodges in Wingham, Laurieton, Gloucester, Taree and Forster-Great Lakes.

JAI RENNER

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 14 year old Jai Renner on saving the life of a man caught in a deep rip at Diamond Beach.
- (2) Notes that Jai heard cries for help and paddled out to a distressed man and brought him to shore before calling an ambulance.

NABIAAC PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENT LEADERS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Notes the induction ceremony of the 2012 school captains at Nabisac Public School.
- (2) Congratulates: McKenzie Walter and Nathan Monk, captains; Jemma Atkins and Luke Vella, vice captains; and Emma Kirk and Danny Nye, prefects.

SOUTH WEST SYDNEY ACADEMY OF SPORT RUGBY LEAGUE TEAM

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the South West Sydney Academy of Sport rugby league team for defeating the North Sydney Bears in the Harold Matthews Cup by a score of 24 to 16.
- (2) Acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the players, coaches, managers and parents who contribute to the success of the team.

AMBARVALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS SPACE ACADEMY TRIP

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ambarvale High School Students Reece Trudgen, Benjamin Gibbons and Malcolm Gerasimou on being selected for the space academy trip to Alabama, United States of America.
- (2) Acknowledges the involvement of the boys in their community and their hard work to be eligible for this program.
- (3) Notes the September trip is an intense six day program organised by Dr Ken Silburn.

CAMPBELLTOWN CITY CHALLENGE WALK

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates everyone involved with the Campbelltown Challenge Walk on 11 March 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the hard work of the organisers and volunteers who helped make it a success.

WORLD PARACHUTING CHAMPIONSHIPS AND MICHAEL VAUGHAN

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Michael Vaughan on being selected to represent Australia in the World Parachuting Championships in Dubai.
- (2) Acknowledges his dedication to the sport over 16 years.
- (3) Notes Vaughan will compete in the canopy piloting event.

SOUTH WEST COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates South West Community Transport for providing transport for the frail, aged, younger people with disabilities, their family and carers.
- (2) Acknowledges that the majority of the drivers are volunteers and dedicate their own time in helping others.

CAMDEN AND CAMPBELLTOWN HOSPITALS NURSING STAFF

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends the 25 nurses who have finished their degree and commenced at Camden and Campbelltown Hospitals.
- (2) Acknowledges the hard work, dedication and commitment that is shown by all medical professionals in our health system.

TRAINWORKS RAILWAY YARNS EXHIBITION

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Trainworks, and its CEO Rob Austin, on the new exhibition of knitting, crocheting and felts called Railway Yarns.
- (2) Acknowledges the Picton Crochet and Knitting Group, on providing a large amount of material to this exhibit, and all the workers and volunteers who contribute their time to Trainworks.
- (3) Notes that Trainworks provides a great tourist attraction for Wollondilly.

DR JOSE RIZAL 150TH BIRTHDAY COMMEMORATION

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the organisers of the Jose Rizal gala night which commemorated the 150th birthday of Dr Jose Rizal.
- (2) Acknowledges Campbelltown City Council on its continued support in raising funds for the construction of a statue of Jose Rizal at Rizal Park in Rosemeadow.
- (3) Notes that the proposed Rizal statue was made by a Filipino sculptor and is a gift from the Philippine government to Campbelltown City Council.

ROBERTSON SHOW

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Rosemary Turner, President, and Leesa Stratford, Secretary, of the Robertson Show Society for organising the Robertson Show on 9 to 10 March 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the official opening of the new pavilion which will become the new dining area at the show.
- (3) Thanks the Robertson Show Society Committee Members, volunteers and exhibitors for their hard work in ensuring the success of the Robertson Show.

GERRINGONG PUBLIC SCHOOL FETE

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Karina Shepherd on organising the Gerringong Public School fete held on 10 March 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges Karina's hard work and fundraising efforts for the school.

BERRY SHOWGIRL JESSICA MONTEITH

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jessica Monteith, the Berry Showgirl, on winning the Royal Showgirl Competition Zone 2 regional finals at the Kiama Pavilion on 10 March 2012.
- (2) Notes that Jessica will travel to the Sydney Royal Easter Show for the Sydney Royal Showgirl competition.

KIAMA JAZZ AND BLUES FESTIVAL

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House congratulates Ross Eggleston, President of Kiama Jazz Club and Festival Director, and the Festival Committee on organising the Kiama Jazz and Blues Festival from 9 to 11 March 2012.

PAUL ROBERT BURTON

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the performances of talented young musician Paul Robert Burton during the Kiama Jazz and Blues Festival held on 9 to 11 March 2012.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE EMPLOYER OF CHOICE FOR WOMEN CITATION

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that women make up 58% of the Newcastle University's workforce.
- (2) Notes the University's innovative programs for women include: a special studies program; Academic Women in Leadership; Leadership Journey for Women; Career Enhancement Fellowship program; Equity Research Fellowship program; and Women@UoN.
- (3) Commends the university on being awarded an Employer of Choice for Women citation for 2012 from the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency.

ROYAL EASTER SHOW CHIEF JUDGE ROLAND MELOSI

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Roland Melosi has been appointed chief judge at the Royal Easter Show in the smallgoods category after 17 years as a judge.
- (2) Notes that Mr Melosi is continuing a family tradition, commenced by his father Mr Wily Melosi over 60 years ago, as a smallgoods producer.

PAINT PENRITH REaD PROGRAM

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates Mission Australia, Penrith City Council Children's Services, and Penrith Rotary on being awarded a Zest award for exceptional partnership in the Paint Penrith REaD program.

HARRISON DRYSDALE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates ten-year-old Harrison Drysdale, of Glenmore Park, on being awarded the Grey Wolf Award by Scouts New South Wales.
- (2) Notes that to achieve this award, Harrison had to complete the Bronze, Silver and Gold Boomerangs and a number of other achievement badges, in recognition of his accomplishments with South Penrith Scouts.

NIKI VUKMIRICA

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Niki Vukmirica, of Luddenham, on her appearance at the Sydney Craft and Sewing Show to display and share her knowledge of the manufacture of beaded scarves, pendants and charms.
- (2) Notes that Niki has had a successful jewellery business and was a finalist in the Telstra Young Business Women Awards in 2007.

PHARMACY OF THE YEAR FINALIST MARTIN COMINOTTO

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Martin Cominotto, of Martin's Chemist in St Marys, on being a finalist for the Pharmacy Guild of Australia Pharmacy of the Year award.
- (2) Recognises the work that Martin and Martin's Chemist do with local schools and other organisations to contribute to the St Marys community.

CANA COMMUNITIES

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the work of Cana Communities at Cana Farm, Orchard Hills, to help vulnerable people in the community get back on their feet.
- (2) Notes that Cana Farm will offer accredited courses, in partnership with TAFE Outreach, to boost the employment chances for unskilled and disadvantaged learners.

SURVEYORS CREEK PUBLIC SCHOOL TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates Surveyors Creek Public School on its tenth anniversary celebrated on 6 March 2012.

TRIBUTE TO WAYNE PRYCE

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the retirement of Mr Wayne Pryce as Principal of Nowra High School at the end of term 2, 2012.
- (2) Notes his 37 years of service to the public education system and his dedication to South Coast and Illawarra students.
- (3) Congratulates Mr Pryce on his achievements including the formation of the Shoalhaven Workplace Learning Program and the Shoalhaven River Learning Community.
- (4) Wishes Mr Pryce and his family the best for their future.

SOUTH COAST RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes that tankers and volunteers from the South Coast Rural Fire Service assisted residents in Wagga Wagga, Lockhart, Lake Albert and surrounding flood affected communities on a five day assignment from 5 March 2012.
- (2) Congratulates South Coast Rural Fire Service volunteers for giving their time to assist communities in need.
- (3) Thanks all emergency service volunteers assisting in flood affected communities across New South Wales.

SHOWGIRL COMPETITION FINALISTS ZONE TWO

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all contestants in the Royal Easter Show Showgirl Zone 2 Regional Final, including: Nowra Showgirl, Natasha Larter; Milton Showgirl, Kate Davies; and Berry Showgirl, Jessica Monteith.
- (2) Congratulates Jessica Monteith on her win and wishes her success at the 2012 Sydney Royal Easter Show competition.

MILTON SHOWGIRL KATE DAVIES

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kate Davies on being named the 2012 Milton Showgirl.
- (2) Congratulates all seven entrants in the showgirl competition.
- (3) Notes all the sponsors of the event including Harvey World Travel, Big 4 Bungalow Park and the Milton Ulladulla Times.

TARSHA BARRETT

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Tarsha Barrett on her advocacy for children raised by their grandparents.
- (2) Notes Miss Barrett spoke at Parliament House on the important role that grandparents play in raising children.
- (3) Notes the efforts of the Council of Ageing and Mission Australia in supporting grandparents raising children.

WRECK BAY LAND RIGHTS TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the 25th anniversary of the return of control of Wreck Bay land to the traditional owners.
- (2) Notes the significant work of the community and Aboriginal elders, past and present, who led the campaign for the return of the land.
- (3) Notes Elder Lynette Whaddy, Chairperson of the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council and Craig Ardler for the significant work they undertake in local the Aboriginal community.
- (4) Notes that land is recognised as significant to the Wreck Bay people.

KEEP AUSTRALIA BEAUTIFUL NSW

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Directors and Chair of Keep Australia Beautiful (NSW) for their various initiatives.
- (2) Notes the unique environmental program incorporating Tidy Towns, Sustainable Communities, Sustainable Cities, EnviroMentors, Clean Beaches and Graffiti Action Day.
- (3) Notes the participation of Veolia, Village Building Company and Publishers National Environment Bureau for their assistance and ongoing support of Keep Australia Beautiful (NSW) initiatives.

COMMONWEALTH DAY

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Commonwealth Day Council (NSW) and President, Janet Stewart, on the organisation of the Commonwealth Day luncheon held on 12 March 2012 at Parliament House.
- (2) Notes Her Excellency Prof Marie Bashir AC CVO, Governor of New South Wales, delivered the Queen's Commonwealth Day message.
- (3) Notes the participation of students from across the state to welcome the Governor to Parliament House.

GRANDPARENTS RELATIVES AND KINSHIP CARERS ASSOCIATION HUNTER INC.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the work of grandparents as carers in our community.
- (2) Commends the work of the Grandparents Relatives and Kinship Carers Association Hunter in the Port Stephens community.

HAWKS NEST MOTORFEST

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the success of the annual community event Motorfest held on 10 March 2012 at Hawks Nest.
- (2) Congratulates the Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Motor Club for its organisation of the event which raises money to support the Tea Gardens Hawks Nest Surf Life Saving Club, the Rural Fire Service and the Clinic Bus.

LEUKAEMIA FOUNDATION SHAVE FOR A CURE

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes that thousands of people will shave or colour their hair in March 2012 to help raise money for the Leukaemia Foundation.
- (2) Congratulates Tracey and Matthew Burke and Scott Gannon, of Raymond Terrace, Chloe Kincaid, of Raymond Terrace, and Steve Withey, of Medowie, for taking part in the World's Greatest Shave.

OUR LADY OF LEBANON PARISH, HARRIS PARK

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution of the Parish of Our Lady of Lebanon, Harris Park, which was established in 1971 and continues to serve over 30,000 people in 50 suburbs around the Granville electorate.
- (2) Thanks the clergy, general community, and every member of the various groups that provide services to the general community.

ALPHACRUCIS COLLEGE

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution of Alphacrucis College Central, which has served as the national training college of the Australian Christian Churches (Assemblies of God) in a number of locations since 1948.
- (2) Congratulates the principal, staff and students on the opening of the new Sydney campus at 30 Cowper Street, Parramatta in the Granville electorate, on 14 March 2012.

PARLIAMENTARY FORUM FOR GRANDCHILDREN

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House acknowledges the contribution the Parliamentary Forum for Grandchildren provided as a unique opportunity to hear the voices of grandchildren raised by their grandparents, and from the grandparents themselves.

HILLS LITTLE ATHLETICS THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Hills Little Athletics on its 30th anniversary.
- (2) Commends Hills Little Athletics for promoting healthy lifestyles in The Hills for the past 30 Years.

BAULKHAM HILLS ELECTORATE YMCA YOUTH PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVE KAREN GAN

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Karen Gan on being selected to represent Baulkham Hills in the YMCA Youth Parliament.
- (2) Commends Karen for her grasp of a range of public issues.
- (3) Acknowledges Winston Hills Rotary, the Mean Fiddler at Rouse Hill and the Baulkham Hills High School P&C for sponsoring Karen for the Youth Parliament.

YOUNG ATHLETE WITH A DISABILITY AWARD RECIPIENT KRISTY POND

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kristy Pond winner of the Young Athlete with a Disability Award, at the New South Wales Sports Federation Annual Sports Awards.
- (2) Congratulates Kristy on winning a gold medal at the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Games.

PURPLE DAY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House:

- (1) Commends Epilepsy Action Australia for its annual awareness day, Purple Day.
- (2) Notes that Purple Day will be on 26 March 2012.
- (3) Congratulates Epilepsy Action Australia for raising epilepsy awareness in the community.

SENIORS WEEK AMBASSADORS

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House congratulates the Central Coast residents, former submariner Tom McCammont and retired police inspector Irene Juergens, appointed as Senior Ambassadors for Seniors Week.

POLICE AWARDS

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Senior Constable John Cowley, of Brisbane Water Local Area Command, on his award of the Commissioner's certificate of merit for exceptional performance of duty.
- (2) Congratulates Constable Ellis Krischer, of Brisbane Water Local Area Command, on being awarded the Northern Region commendation for bravery.

CENTRAL COAST TOURISM AND CON RYAN

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House congratulates Con Ryan for his work initiating the Five Lands Coastal Walkway and for his overall contribution to tourism on the Central Coast.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.**Community recognition notices agreed to.****BALD AND BEAUTIFUL DAY**

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [10.35 a.m.]: I move:

That this House congratulates Bald and Beautiful Foundation President Julie Midson York and all the wonderful volunteers for yet another successful pampering day, Bald and Beautiful Day 2011, for Hunter adults fighting cancer.

With more than 33,000 people in New South Wales diagnosed with cancer each year, it stands to reason that there is a great need to provide wellbeing, rather than just treatment, to adults with cancer across the Australian community. The Bald and Beautiful Foundation was established in 2005, and Bald and Beautiful Day aims not only to provide adults with a brief escape from the effects of their illness but to offer a day of fun, pampering and wellbeing for men and women with cancer. The event is held annually in the Hunter by the Bald and Beautiful Foundation. The foundation is a group of kind, community-spirited people whose objective is to help people with cancer. The event is promoted through local cancer groups, hospitals, oncologists and the local media. Funding for the day is raised by community donation.

I could not give this speech about the Bald and Beautiful Foundation without acknowledging Ms Judith Taylor, who is the founder of the foundation. Judith recognised the need for catering for the wellbeing of cancer

victims in order to assist with rehabilitation and to make people feel happier while undertaking arduous treatments. I also acknowledge local rotary groups, including Newcastle Sunrise, for championing the cause. The group supports Bald and Beautiful Day and regularly holds fundraising events for the foundation. We all know that Rotarians are good at fundraising. John Trzecinski and Julie Midson York also deserve high praise for their efforts to promote and support the cause. The wonderful Bald and Beautiful Day volunteers include professional pamperers and student beauticians. Counsellors also are invited to mingle with guests.

Given that we are almost ready for Bald and Beautiful Day 2012, this year the foundation has budgeted for 160 guests, which is amazing. I know we are all impressed by that. Some 120 lucky people will receive pampering, and we have about 70 wonderful volunteers to help these people, which is great. It has been mentioned that since 2005 the event has grown by approximately 10 per cent each year, which indicates the success of this wonderful program. I shall spend some time quoting some of the volunteers for Bald and Beautiful Day because it is important to get their opinions on how it works. Before I continue, I thank the volunteers for their hard work and for their continued support of Bald and Beautiful Day and of the foundation. Toni, head teacher of the beauty therapy department of Advanced Careers College, which has been involved with Bald and Beautiful Day for five years, stated:

Without exception, the students have a wonderful day and enjoy meeting and treating the guests. I find it difficult to say who gets the most from the day. The clients certainly enjoy and appreciate the care, effort and expertise shown by the students and the students get to appreciate the numbers of people affected by cancer but who remain positive and are living life to the full.

Carolyn from the Complementary and Alternative Medicine College spoke about the many experiences of the students. She said:

The Bald and Beautiful Day experience gives [the students] a chance, not only to enhance their own development as a practitioner but to assist their growth as a person—

She also made this really nice statement—

It puts a human face to their knowledge of cancer and provides them with an understanding and appreciation of the love, commitment and dedication that the carers have to their loved ones who are suffering.

My final quote from the volunteers comes from Jenny of Grace Cosmetics, who stated:

It's a privilege to be pampering these special guests. The pampering makes people feel great and we really enjoy giving them gifts to take home as well. We as pamperers get more for ourselves out of [the] day than we could ever have imagined.

A summary of the comments from the volunteers is that, while they are giving something, it makes them feel good about themselves. That is a special treat that we get as volunteers. I will give some examples of how cancer victims feel about the day. Graeme said:

My name is Graeme ... I have attended the Bald and Beautiful function as a cancer patient and I am in full support of this great concept along with the wonderful people who run this event.

It brings not only comfort and support to those still with cancer, and those who have survived cancer but these gatherings also bring together the community, it gives everyone a first-hand experience to what support and understanding is all about, you don't feel alone anymore.

Sue, a cancer victim from New Lambton, stated:

This Day provided by volunteers was such a wonderful 'feel good' day for us as adults with cancer. To witness the obvious enjoyment being given by so many, for so many fellow journeyers, was really empowering.

Cheryl, who is a friend of a cancer victim, said:

I accompanied my friend who had cancer a couple of years ago. It was truly an amazing experience to see so many smiling faces on the guests. My heart went out to all of them but you could see the joy that one day pampering brought to so many.

Finally, I thank the Bald and Beautiful Foundation, which yet again has provided worthwhile relief to people who have cancer. I congratulate them on their work in the past. We all look forward to them having another very successful Bald and Beautiful Day in May this year.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [10.43 a.m.]: I speak on behalf of the Government in support of the motion. Anyone who hears the words "you have cancer" may think they are suddenly facing a seemingly insurmountable life challenge. When one is focusing on treatment and living each day in the hope and belief that

survival is possible, the ongoing stress and strain can take its toll. In the midst of fighting cancer, when a patient is receiving all the medical care and attention necessary for his or her treatment, it can sometimes be forgotten that the general wellbeing of the patient can suffer also. For example, many cancer patients will lose their hair during treatment, which can have an effect on self-esteem and be a physical reminder of the difficulties they are facing.

Born out of the concepts of both Camp Quality for kids with cancer and CanTeen for youth with cancer, the Bald and Beautiful Foundation will this year hold its eighth annual special day for men and women with cancer. With the support of local businesses and the community, which offer their services, time, products, skills and gifts, Bald and Beautiful Day gives men and women with cancer an opportunity to be truly pampered, to enjoy entertainment and to be waited on for a day. President Julie Midson York describes the Bald and Beautiful Foundation as:

A charitable foundation that gives men and women with cancer a day of fun, pampering and well-being so they can forget their cares and their treatment for a little while and feel that people in the community care about them. It's a joyous day, where the focus is being cared for by others.

Julie works tirelessly to raise awareness of the Bald and Beautiful Foundation and to inspire the community to donate to this worthy cause. The foundation's vision is to see the annual Bald and Beautiful Day become a national event. Anne Frank said:

I don't think of all the misery, but of the beauty that still remains.

The annual Bald and Beautiful Day is about focusing on the beauty that remains, despite the challenges and the physical toll of cancer treatment. Cancer does not discriminate between the young and the old. In my family my grandmother had breast cancer and my grandfather has survived both prostate and bowel cancer. My father has survived prostate cancer. My mum has survived three malignant melanomas. Central Coast local Peter Dent, who runs our Oztag competition, has survived prostate cancer and, to his credit, involved our local teams in the Cancer Council's Call to Arms initiative. One in two men will be diagnosed with cancer by the age of 85, and for that reason all Oztag players in our local competition wear a black armband for one night each year and donate to that worthy cause.

Movember is another cause to which many men, including some in this Chamber, contribute. Although the mo looks somewhat ghastly on some, it is a fabulous cause that raises awareness of cancer, particularly prostate cancer. Another inspirational woman on the Central Coast whom I have met in the past 12 months is Adele Miller. She fought and won her battle with breast cancer. I met her at last year's launch of Relay for Life at Mingara Recreation Club and she is now a board member of the Relay for Life organising committee. Its aim this year is to raise more than \$280,000 for the Cancer Council to go towards cancer research. The next Relay for Life event will be at Mingara on 13 October. I will be supporting it, and I encourage all members of the Central Coast community to do the same.

I met Aaron Walker through Oztag, which recently held its State Cup competition in Tamworth. Aaron signed up to the Leukaemia Foundation World's Greatest Shave. Since 1998 more than one million people have shaved or coloured their hair, raising more than \$120 million for this worthy cause. Aaron joined the cause and raised more than \$800 on his own. At the tournament our entire team chipped in another \$350. However, we did not shave his head entirely but, just for fun, left a small mohawk down the centre, which was somewhat of an embarrassment for him during the tournament. To his credit, he let us do it—which took some bravery. I honour his commitment.

With the indulgence of the House, I place on record a matter of a personal nature. My Auntie Susan is 42 years old. She is not only my auntie; she is also a mother and a daughter. She has been diagnosed with breast cancer. She has had both breasts removed and tumours have now spread to her lungs and her brain. Doctors gave her until Christmas last year to survive and she now fights this battle on a daily basis. Every day that she survives is a blessing to us. She has three beautiful children, who are my cousins. Unfortunately, as she fights this battle the rest of the family and I cannot be with her as she is in New Zealand. However, my thoughts and that of our family and friends are with her. We love her and, no matter what, we will always be with her. I commend the motion to the House and thank the member for Wallsend for bringing it to our attention.

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Treasurer) [10.49 a.m.]: On behalf of the Government, I pass on our best wishes to Susan. The thoughts and best wishes of every member in this House are with her. We thank the member for The Entrance for raising the matter.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [10.49 a.m.]: I acknowledge the member for The Entrance and wish those members of his family all the best in their battle with cancer. It is a disease that grips many members of our community and their families. I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend, which congratulates the Bald and Beautiful Foundation president, Julie Midson York, and all the wonderful volunteers on yet another successful pampering day, Bald and Beautiful Day 2011, for Hunter adults fighting cancer. The Bald and Beautiful Foundation was set up to help bring a smile to the faces of adults with cancer. Its founder, Judith Taylor, witnessed through her mother's own journey with cancer how isolating that journey can be without the love and support of others. Bald and Beautiful does not prescribe medical cures or promise miracles. What it does is allow adults suffering from cancer to have some fun and laughter and maybe for a day, if not for a moment, to forget about the unpredictable journey that lies before them.

In Bald and Beautiful, Judith Taylor filled a gap in the support the community provides for people suffering from cancer. Children who suffer from cancer have Camp Quality and the Make a Wish Foundation to help ease their suffering and feel the love and support of the community. Teens and young adults have the CanTeen foundation. However, as the Bald and Beautiful Foundation website asks: What about the big people? According to Cancer Council NSW, around one in two people in this State will develop cancer in their lifetime. This year alone, more than 39,000 people in New South Wales will be diagnosed with cancer. According to the New South Wales Cancer Institute, 98 per cent of all new cancer cases in 2008 were diagnosed in people 30 years old and over. These statistics highlight the importance of Bald and Beautiful Day.

In May 2005 Judith Taylor, with a small team of pampering therapists and entertainers, held the first Bald and Beautiful Day in Newcastle. For more than six years the event has gone from strength to strength. Now at the dawn of its seventh year, the organisation is ready to grow and spread the concept around Australia and become a regular event on the national calendar. And why not? Bald and Beautiful Day is not a complex concept. It does not require state-of-the-art technology or an extravagant personality to promote the event. It only requires everyday people willing to give up a bit of their time to help put a smile on the face of a person suffering from cancer.

Generosity of time and a willingness to make a difference were all that was required to make the first Bald and Beautiful Day work so well six years ago. They were all that was required to make the most recent Bald and Beautiful Day happen. They are all that will be required for future Bald and Beautiful events to achieve their purpose of putting a smile on the faces of the big people who suffer from cancer. I again offer my congratulations to Julie Midson York and all the wonderful volunteers on yet another successful Bald and Beautiful Day. I wish them every success in their attempt to make their big picture a reality—not only another successful Bald and Beautiful Day in Newcastle but also Bald and Beautiful events in every city and town right across Australia.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [10.53 a.m.]: I am pleased to speak to this motion on behalf of the Government and thank the member for Wallsend for bringing it to the attention of the House. Cancer is a serious and threatening disease that poses considerable challenges to the New South Wales health system and to our society in general. Cancer is an insidious, indiscriminate and evil disease that crosses all boundaries—political, cultural and national. It affects us all. One in two men and one in three women who are privileged to live to the age of 85 will be diagnosed with cancer. Cancer affects children, mothers, fathers and, as we have heard very poignantly from the member for The Entrance, aunts, as well as celebrities and community stalwarts. It affects us all in some way.

Who can forget that image of our great cricketer Glenn McGrath standing out the front of the church holding the hands of his children, Holly and James, as they watched their mother's casket go to the cemetery? Who can forget Kylie Minogue, Delta Goodrem, Belinda Emmett and the singer Anastacia—all so young, so beautiful and so talented, and who were diagnosed with cancer? Who can forget Kristian Anderson, that wonderful father who passed away leaving two boys? Cancer affects us all. Cancer kills more than 13,000 people in New South Wales every year. It is estimated that this year there will be 38,872 new cases of cancer and in 2021 there will be 50,967 new cases.

But there is hope. The miraculous minds of humans come up with amazing discoveries. They design treatments and new diagnoses, and they are working to defeat this horrible disease. A 2012 report says that cancer death rates for men, women and children are steadily decreasing. More specifically, the five-year cancer survival rate in New South Wales is 64 per cent, up from 61 per cent in 2001, which is on par with the best health systems in the world. The decline in the numbers of deaths and new cases of cancer reflects progress against the disease in terms of prevention, diagnosis and treatment, but experts say that rising obesity may present new challenges in the fight against cancer.

I put on record my personal congratulations to the founder of Bald and Beautiful and its current president, Julie Midson York, all the volunteers and the Rotary clubs of Newcastle, Wallsend and Maryland who work to provide support to these men and women. I thank not only all those people but the thousands of other community volunteer groups who are relentless in their continual fight against this disease by working hard to raise money and awareness to support our brilliant researchers and doctors who are pushing the boundaries to find cures for this horrible disease. I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing this motion to the House and for the solidarity all members have in this House, regardless of political persuasion, in our joint fight against cancer.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [10.57 a.m.]: I take great delight in speaking to this motion. Having had previous work experience with the CanTeen organisation, which helps 12- to 24-year-olds living with cancer, I can appreciate the fact that Bald and Beautiful Day started in Newcastle at a time when I was helping the children of some of these cancer patients. One thing that is not so well known about CanTeen is that, while the organisation certainly helps young cancer patients, it also helps their brothers and sisters as well as the children of cancer patients. The CanTeen organisation provided me with the great privilege of working with young people whose parents so desperately need Bald and Beautiful.

As a parent, and like other members here who are parents, I cannot begin to comprehend the scope of the impact of having a child go through cancer. I want to refer to parents who have cancer because, as parents, we give so much of our lives to our children. We do it willingly and with love, and we see it as a blessing and an opportunity. When a parent goes down with cancer and suddenly becomes the focus of their family and their children suddenly start to miss out on the opportunity to attend dance lessons, to go to sport or to spend time with their friends, it burdens the parent with a heavy sense of guilt. While you are lying in bed fighting for your life, seeing your children miss out on opportunities and watching their pain is something that you cannot escape. As a parent, you give every ounce of energy to supporting your children, putting on a brave face and making sure as best you can that they do not miss out. You commit to that journey as part of your journey in the fight against cancer.

Bald and Beautiful Day is a very special day because it gives parents the opportunity and excuse to say "Today needs to be about me. Today it is okay for me to get help, to be vulnerable and to be the recipient of pampering." I cannot emphasise enough the importance of this one day for parents who struggle not only with their own health in their fight against cancer but also to be the parent that they want to be to their children. The Bald and Beautiful Day at New Lambton is beautiful and wonderful. Many of the parents that I had the good grace and fortune to work with while I was at CanTeen were the founding members, board members, committee members and recipients of the Bald and Beautiful campaign. It is an outstanding moment for them to have this Bald and Beautiful Day recognised. I commend this motion to the House without any hesitation.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [11.00 a.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the motion. I know that most families have been affected by cancer. Recently my daughter-in-law was diagnosed with breast cancer, a diagnosis that has had an enormous impact on our family. My two granddaughters are desperately upset about their mother's health. The diagnosis has had a devastating effect on my wife and it has become a very serious problem in our lives. We do not know what tough times are until we experience what people with cancer have to go through. I thank the member for Wallsend for moving this motion. I hope we can eliminate some of the effects of cancer through better cures and treatment. My daughter-in-law has had her first treatment of chemotherapy. She has a great outlook. She is a great woman and a great mother. We must support people who are going through such traumas.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I am sure that the stories we have heard could be echoed by every member of this House. We will continue to provide the support highlighted by the member for Wallsend that is needed in this State and in this country. We all hope and pray that a cure for cancer is found so that members will not have to move such a motion and debate it in this House.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [11.02 a.m.], in reply: I thank the Treasurer for his brief contribution and I thank members representing the electorates of The Entrance, Fairfield, Mulgoa, Cessnock and Murray-Darling, almost all of whom had a frog in their throat when they spoke to the motion. I say to the member for Murray-Darling and his family that we offer our support during this devastating time. I hope the treatment his daughter-in-law is receiving will help her to recover from breast cancer. The member for Cessnock has great experience with cancer victims through his work with CanTeen. I say to him that it is really important to support family members of children or adults who are suffering from cancer. We understand that while a

family member is dealing with the trauma of cancer that person's support network is also dealing with the trauma of how much help and support it can offer. Everyone has busy lives, and sometimes we feel inadequate because we may not be giving that person as much assistance as we would like.

The member for Cessnock also said that the Bald and Beautiful Day was very special, and indeed it is. I can understand the emotion that this motion brought to the member for Mulgoa, especially when we are talking about young men and women who have been diagnosed with cancer. The important point that was made by the member for Mulgoa is that there is hope. She thanked not only all the volunteers for Bald and Beautiful but also the thousands of other community groups that raise money for and awareness of cancer. Importantly, the member for Mulgoa also talked about the solidarity of members in this House in our quest to fight cancer. Whenever I have asked the member for Fairfield to speak on motions he has always read them very carefully before he has spoken to them. I think that might be because he was a schoolteacher.

The approach of the member for Fairfield is very careful, but it is something special to me. I say "cheers" to him. The member for Fairfield said that Bald and Beautiful was set up to bring a smile to the faces of cancer victims. He also mentioned Camp Quality and the Make a Wish Foundation, which cater to children. He talked about the simplicity of Bald and Beautiful: it only requires of everyday people to give up their time generously to volunteer to help. Finally, the member for The Entrance talked about the importance of the general wellbeing of cancer victims. He praised the support of local businesses in their quest to help Bald and Beautiful and said that it is imperative that it is a day of fun, and I believe it is; if it were not people would not keep coming.

I, too, am sorry to hear that one of his family members, his Auntie Susan, has cancer. It must be a real struggle for the family when a family member is overseas because it is hard to offer support and guidance. The member for The Entrance also mentioned inspirational women, but the new principal of Glendale East Public School was brave enough to shave off his lovely locks for the world's greatest shave. I thank all members for their excellent contributions. It was lovely to have solidarity in this House. I truly hope that we can provide the necessary funding for research to cure this insidious disease, which we all hate.

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

Motion agreed to.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.08 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) calls on the Member for Murray-Darling to explain why he has twice postponed his motion regarding water fluoridation which reads: "That this House requests that the Public Water Supplies Act 1957 be amended to give local water authorities the ultimate power to make decisions concerning the addition of fluoride to public water within their locality"; and
- (2) calls on all members of this House to support fluoridation of water supplies.

I have moved this motion to make clear my support for the continued addition of fluoride to our water supply and also to allow members to speak to the motion that was introduced by the member for Murray-Darling, which has since been withdrawn. The member for Murray-Darling gave notice of his motion with the best of intentions and from his speech it is clear that he is in favour of water fluoridation. His aim was to give a voice to some of his constituents about this issue. The motion was withdrawn for the obvious reason that his own side was not able to vote against it. However, water fluoridation must be debated in this place, and I look forward to hearing the views of all members on it. Most importantly, the anti-fluoridation lobby is vocal, well organised and persistent.

When I was Parliamentary Secretary for Health I signed more letters on this issue than on any other. It is time for all members to state publicly that they support water fluoridation. I urge those who are opposed to fluoridation to write to every member of Parliament to get their personal views on it. They should also seek their views on vaccination and find out whether their children are vaccinated. That information would be useful and it should be made public. Fluoridation is important: It is a vital tool in the safe and effective reduction of dental decay. Extensive research over many years supports fluoridation as an effective measure in preventing caries. The "NSW Oral Health Strategic Directions 2011-2020", a paper released recently by the Government, continues to support water fluoridation.

In fact, the number of people in New South Wales that has access to fluoridation increased from 90 per cent in 2004 to approximately 95 per cent today, and another 22 councils will soon complete their

fluoridation systems. That will mean that 98 per cent of New South Wales residents will have access to fluoridated water. From 2011 onwards, the focus has been on implementing fluoridation in unfluoridated Aboriginal communities. One of the great things about water fluoridation is that its effects are most beneficial for those in greatest need. It is vital that small and powerful pressure groups are not given the power to unseat local councillors who support water fluoridation.

That is what happened in Queensland, which has a much lower rate of fluoridation and a much higher rate of dental caries than other States because local councils determine whether water will be fluoridated. That cannot be allowed to happen in New South Wales. Dental caries are caused by bacterial acids that remove calcium and phosphate from the teeth. Fluoride limits the amount of acid produced and repairs damage before it becomes permanent. The best preventative approach is to have a low level of fluoride in the mouth, which acts as a constant teeth repair kit. As I have said previously, fluoridation simply optimises the fluoride level in water and protects against dental caries. It is safe and it has been used in this way for more than 50 years.

No evidence has been produced of any adverse public health outcomes, but despite that many are still opposed to it, including some in the electorate of the member for Murray-Darling. June Spinks, from the Balranald Community Against Fluoridation group, wrote to me on 22 December and included a document strongly opposing fluoridation. She is well and truly welcome to her views and I respect them. However, we will have to agree to disagree. I note that the document she provided is well over 20 years old and was produced by a bunch of health professionals who state that they oppose fluoridation. I would be surprised if any of them are still alive. I recognise the names of some and I know that they are dead. Of those who are not, few are still practicing clinicians.

I look forward to hearing a contribution to this debate from the member for Blue Mountains, who is a dentist. She would have worked in areas before and after fluoridation was introduced and would have extensive experience in this field. As I said, those who are at greatest risk—that is, those from a lower socio-economic background—benefit most from fluoridation, and I am sure the member for Murray-Darling will acknowledge that. The National Health and Medical Research Council continues to support fluoridation. It is estimated that the Government of Victoria and the broader community has saved \$1 billion over 20 years in dental health services and has reduced sick leave and enjoyed increased quality leisure time.

No credible evidence has been presented to support the accusations that have been made about fluoridation, and no study has proved the link between fluoridation and bone fractures and kidney disease. As I said, the benefits of fluoridation are clear in improved health outcomes and decreased public expenditure on dental health care. As a community we must continue to support the widespread use of fluoridation and its expansion into isolated areas. Any motion that allows local councillors to be bullied into opposing fluoridation should be rejected by all members of this House. Fluoridation is cost effective, it has proven public health benefits and it is the core business of any State government. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [11.17 a.m.]: I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for reinvigorating this debate. There is absolutely no doubt that in giving notice of my motion about fluoridation I was fulfilling a promise I made to some constituents in Balranald who approached me about there not having been sufficient debate on the subject in this place. I drew their attention to the debate in the upper House in which members dealt with the issues being debated today. However, when I gave notice of the motion I anticipated that it would be defeated. Unfortunately, as it transpired, that put me in a very precarious situation. My colleagues on this side of the House found it difficult to support my motion and I fully understand that. As a result, my proposed motion created a major wedge that would always have been uncomfortable for the Government.

When we discussed this issue at Balranald I totally supported the Government's move to fluoridate the local water supply. If any credible scientific research is produced establishing that fluoridating water supplies has any detrimental effect, the Government should review the situation. However, as it stands, major health organisations around the world support water fluoridation. One of the problems with the internet is that although people can access a huge amount of information, not all of it is good and valuable or based on credible scientific research. As I said to the member for Macquarie Fields, the internet is very dangerous in the hands of amateurs. One can always find a site that supports a particular point of view and present it as evidence despite the fact that it is not supported by any scientific research. That was evident in the debate on genetically modified crops. Some people will always oppose reforms and will do so using emotional arguments based on little fact.

Fluoride occurs naturally in many water sources around the world. Those opposing fluoridation used the example of Sri Lanka, which has some water sources with up to 10 milligrams of fluoride per litre of water

and that is having a detrimental effect on those who drink it. They are suffering fluorosis, which causes problems with bone formation and deterioration of bone substance. This was an area that was used to highlight the dangers of fluoride, but the fact is that, used in correct applications, fluoride has great benefits. The British Medical Association has done a lot of research into fluoridation.

It has been a hot topic in Great Britain because in some areas of Great Britain fluoride exists naturally in the water supply, so some people are getting benefits from it. Research has shown that in areas in which fluoride exists naturally there is less tooth decay than in areas that do not have that benefit. Toothpaste manufacturers have identified the benefits of fluoride and used it as an ingredient in their toothpaste, which is a clear indication that they see a marketing benefit in producing toothpaste with fluoride. Today's debate will be supported by a dentist who is well qualified to have an opinion on the benefits of fluoride. The Australian Dental Association has been a great supporter of fluoridation.

Unfortunately, when you have a room full of professionals, you will always find someone who has an opposing view—that is the nature of the beast. If you run around, I am sure somewhere you will find a dentist who is opposed to fluoridation, but there would be very few. The vast majority of dentists recognise the direct health benefits of fluoride, and some communities—particularly young people—in areas where there is poor dental support are benefiting from additional fluoridation of the water supply, with fewer cavities and a lot less need to visit dentists. There are benefits and, until the World Health Organization thinks differently, I totally support the fluoridation of water supplies in New South Wales.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.22 a.m.]: I am no dentist; however, I support the motion moved by the member for Macquarie Fields and I support water fluoridation. Our nation has some of the best dental hygiene in the world, but we can always improve. Good community dental hygiene can be attributed in part to fluoride in our water. As a parent, I have encouraged my children to drink water—not just from the trendy pre-packaged PET bottles, but good old-fashioned water straight out of the tap. There is nothing wrong with it. When I was growing I recall seeing the negative impact of non-fluoridated water on some of my relatives, and it has stuck with me.

The relatives I refer to came from the province of Messina in the region of Sicily in Italy, where fluoridated water was not a priority for the government of the day. I also saw other members of the same community with dental issues. Tooth decay was a major issue. As a young child, I recall my mother explaining to me why some family members had brown teeth, some teeth, or no teeth at all. She said that healthy teeth were the result of fluoride in the water and good dental hygiene. I am horrified to think what the situation would be if fluoride were taken out of our drinking water. I am a former teacher and from day to day I would see students having sips of water between lessons, at recess, and before and after school.

It was pleasurable to see kids enjoying the water, but I can only imagine the detrimental impact on those students, and my own children who are school students—one child is in high school and two are in primary school—if fluoride were removed from our drinking water. They would experience an acceleration of tooth decay. This motion is not only about fluoride, it is also about the good education of our children. I note that a dentist is sitting opposite me. I am sure that the member for Blue Mountains will highlight some of the great virtues, techniques and campaigns of dental hygiene. If members cast their minds back to the 1970s—and for some of us that is very easy to do—they might remember a lady on television called Mrs Marsh. Do members remember the commercial? She dipped chalk into blue liquid and then broke the chalk—

Mr Ryan Park: Can you do a demo?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I cannot do a demo right now because I did not prepare for it. As a good teacher, I should have been prepared.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: You are a chalky.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I am a chalky, yes.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members are not permitted to use props in the House.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The commercial highlighted the importance of fluoride in protecting teeth. I support the motion moved by the member for Macquarie Fields.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [11.25 a.m.]: I publicly support fluoride being added to our water supply. I have been a dentist for 31 years and I have seen the difference that fluoride has made to dental health. This is almost a non-motion because the community is entitled to raise their concerns about water fluoridation, and we are entitled to state our opinions. In that sense, I strongly support water fluoridation. The percentage of New South Wales residents who have access to fluoridated water has increased from approximately 90 per cent in 2004 to approximately 95 per cent in 2011. Water fluoridation is the most successful public health measure in decreasing dental decay and it is the most equitable, cost-effective and efficient way of decreasing dental decay.

All Australian capital cities, with the exception of Brisbane, have had fluoridated water for more than 40 years. I grew up on tank water that had no fluoride and I did my training in Brisbane, which did not have water fluoridation. When I came to Sydney with the Air Force I noticed that the difference in the quality of the teeth of the people Brisbane and the people of Sydney could not have been more stark. Brisbane residents had been plagued by tooth decay and all the ills that went with it. I practised dentistry in the community of the Blue Mountains that had pockets where there was no water fluoridation. The area of the upper mountains was not fluoridated for a very long time, and the difference between the dental health of those on reticulated fluoridated water in places like Yellow Rock and the upper mountains and those on town water was very stark.

I know members would have received many emails from people who are anti-fluoride. A lot of what they call research is pseudo-science. Volumes of proper science have shown that fluoride in the right concentration is a wonderful health measure for every stratum of society. Fluoride toxicity is related to the dose of the substance rather than merely exposure to it. Many highly regarded organisations, such as the World Health Organization, the National Kidney Foundation in the United States, the British Medical Association, the Australian Medical Association, the Australian Dental Association, the American Dental Association and the British Dental Association, have confirmed that fluoride is a safe and effective treatment for the prevention of decay. Today we are seeing an increase in decay of young children's teeth as a result of poor diet and the use of bottled bottle, which, unlike tap water, does not contain fluoride. I support the motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.30 a.m.]: In my capacity as the member for Bankstown and the shadow Minister for Healthy Lifestyles I speak in support of the motion of the member for Macquarie Fields. I particularly support paragraph (2) of the motion, which calls on all members to support fluoridation of water supplies. I note the clarification of the member for Murray-Darling that he is personally supportive of fluoride in our water supplies, so the House no longer has to be concerned about the original motion of the member for Murray-Darling. Water fluoridation appears to enjoy bipartisan support. I was particularly interested in the contribution of the member for Blue Mountains because, as a dentist, she obviously has a strong understanding of the value of water fluoridation. The member for Macquarie Fields, as a medical practitioner, also has a strong understanding of the value of water fluoridation.

Water fluoridation has a long history in Australia. In 1956 Yass became the first town to add fluoride to its water and in 2007 the Queensland Government commenced compulsory water fluoridation under the Water Fluoridation Act. The Centre for Disease Control lists water fluoridation as one of the 10 greatest public health achievements of the twentieth century, along with the recognition of tobacco as a harmful substance. I acknowledge the agreement by the member for Wollongong. Evidence for the efficacy of fluoridation suggests that it reduces the chances of cavity development by up to 40 per cent. It is estimated that in Victoria the State Government and the broader community have saved more than \$1 billion over 25 years through water fluoridation. In addition to its effects on dental health, water fluoridation may also reduce the incidence of heart disease and prevent the creation of blood clots.

Such is the importance of fluoride in water that the rise in the consumption of bottled water in the past few years has been directly linked to increases in tooth decay, particularly in young children. Given the increasing cost of dental health care, fluoride helps to prevent otherwise costly visits to the dentist. Interestingly, the dentistry industry is growing in those regions that do not have water fluoridation. Dentistry work is expensive. It is estimated that more than half a million Australians are choosing not to go to the dentist at all or are putting it off or postponing important procedures because of cost. Government preventive health measures are important: they provide equity for health care for all people regardless of socioeconomic circumstances. Both sides of this House recognise the important role that the Government plays in preventive health campaigns. The Government needs to continually review primary health care and focus on prevention. Water fluoridation is one of those issues. I commend the motion.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.34 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Murray-Darling, Fairfield, Blue Mountains and Bankstown for their contributions to this debate.

Hopefully, this debate will send a clear message that this Parliament unanimously supports the fluoridation of water to the small, but highly organised and vocal, community that opposes fluoridation. As I said earlier, the most common single source of letters to the Minister for Health is those who oppose fluoridation. The increasing use of bottled water has resulted in an increase in caries in our vulnerable populations. As the member for Murray-Darling said, the internet has a lot of misinformation put on it by those who oppose fluoridation. Nothing beats the voice of experience: The member for Blue Mountains shared with the House her personal experience of working both in areas with very high rates of decay before fluoridation and others with lower rates of decay because of fluoridation. That should not be forgotten. Historically we now have lower rates of dental decay and those who oppose fluoridation may now be able to get some traction in the wider community.

I also urge those who oppose fluoridation—who I expect will now engage in a very vigorous letter writing campaign—to find out the personal views of every member of this Parliament about fluoridation and to publish those views in every forum possible. The wider community needs to know that every member of this Parliament supports fluoridation. As those who oppose fluoridation regularly oppose other public health measures such as immunisation of children, they should also ask every member of Parliament whether they support the immunisation of children and whether their family members are immunised. A rumour currently exists in the wider community that some members of Parliament do not universally support fluoridation and/or immunisation. Members' views need to be made public because everyone in this State needs to see community leaders supporting such a sensible public health measure.

I repeat that the communities at greatest risk are those that are isolated, as well as smaller communities such as Balranald—a good example of where a small and persistent vocal group can derail public debate and threaten the political future of councillors with a campaign against fluoridation. This has happened also in many areas of Queensland. That is why Queensland is many years behind the rest of the country in the provision of fluoride in its water supplies, and a generation will experience increased dental costs as a result of that delay. I say again that nothing beats the voice of experience. I urge all members to read this debate and to take special note of the comments of the member for Blue Mountains—her experience in this regard should never be repeated.

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. 61 postponed by Ms Sonia Horner.

PUBLIC EDUCATION DAY

Ms CARMEL Tebbutt (Marrickville) [11.39 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that 26 May 2011 is Public Education Day which celebrates the values, traditions and achievements of public education;
- (2) notes the contribution public education makes to our society by providing opportunities for all students to have a quality education irrespective of income or location;
- (3) thanks the many teachers, staff and parents in the New South Wales public education system for their commitment to public education; and
- (4) calls on the Government to adequately fund public education to ensure quality teaching and learning for all students.

I assume that this motion will be supported by all members of this House. As members we all spend time in our local public schools seeing the fantastic work that the teachers, principals, staff and students are doing. No doubt a quality public education is the cornerstone of a fair, civil and just society. Public education is open to all. It provides opportunities for students to reach their full potential, and for many students it is a path out of disadvantage. It is right that this House celebrates the fantastic achievements of our students, teachers, support staff, principals and parents in public schools throughout New South Wales.

From the smallest public school in remote New South Wales to a selective high school which is full of the best and brightest, quality teaching and learning are happening. Young people are developing the positive attributes and values that they will use to make a successful contribution to society. Above all, teachers are fostering a love of learning that will, hopefully, stay with their students throughout their lives. In my electorate of Marrickville I see many examples of the difference that public education is making and of the value of governments investing in education and public schools. For example, a couple of weeks ago I attended a breakfast at Marrickville High School for the launch of the Beacon Program. I know other members have the benefit of the Beacon Program operating in their schools. For Marrickville High School it was a great morning.

The Beacon Program is a partnership between schools and local businesses. Local businesses commit to supporting students to stay connected to education and to move out of their schooling and into employment or further study or training. That was just one example. A few months ago I attended Camdenville Public School for the launch of an art show that had been organised by the parents and the teachers to raise funds. Camdenville Public School is not a wealthy school but it managed to attract a huge range of successful artists—including Reg Mombassa, Mary Gilbert, Peter Thorn, Kerwayne Berry, Clyth Hoult, TANK, Suzanne Nehme and many others—to donate artworks to the school. The school then auctioned the artworks and raised a significant amount of money.

Another public school in my electorate, Wilkins Public School, has a wonderful community garden where students grow all manner of things. The garden ensures that students in a relatively built-up inner-west area have an understanding of where food comes from and the importance of nutrition. I was impressed when I attended the school recently. Instead of receiving the usual box of chocolates or bunch of flowers, I was presented with an edible bouquet that included spinach, parsley, mint, aniseed and a curry plant. It was a good example of what this school is achieving through its community garden.

Recently I attended the opening of a new library at another school in my electorate, the Australia Street Infants School. The library, which was funded under the Building the Education Revolution program, is a fantastic addition to this small infants school in Newtown. The school had been so creative and innovative that it won the New South Wales Master Builders Association award for the best public school building up to \$5 million. I congratulate Mr Bernard Chang and the school parents and citizens association. They put a lot of effort into ensuring that the school's Building the Education Revolution project is State and Australian renowned.

So there are great things happening in our public schools. I have listed some examples from my electorate, but I know that all members could do the same. This motion calls on the House to recognise the important contribution of public education. It also calls on the Government to adequately fund our public schools. Recently in the House the Minister for Education made some disparaging comments about Labor thinking that all problems can be fixed by throwing a bucket of money at them. That is not our approach. We are proud that during our time in government we made a significant investment in education. Indeed, we saw the education budget grow from \$6 billion in 1995 to \$14.4 billion—a 141 per cent increase. We are proud of that, as we are proud of the rest of our legacy in education. We know that the O'Farrell Government and the Coalition take great delight in decrying Labor's record.

Let us look at what we achieved in education: reducing class sizes in the infant years, establishing the best start to give individualised attention to kindergarten students, teachers' standards and accreditation through the Institute of Teachers, significantly expanding vocational education and training in our schools, providing schools with technology for the twenty-first century, raising the school leaving age, making sure that our teachers are amongst the best paid in Australia and expanding programs to support at-risk students. We have built up the public education system in New South Wales, and the Coalition Government has inherited a first-class education system as a result of the reforms and investments we put in place. I hope that we do not see over time the Coalition Government run down our public education system through a lack of support and investment. That is why I hope all members will support this motion.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [11.46 a.m.]: I am pleased to support the motion moved by the member for Marrickville. Public education provides a great service to many students. I am blessed to represent the area of Castle Hill in this place. The people of Castle Hill are blessed to have many great schools, both public and private. Castle Hill is a great place to live if people want their children to have a high-quality education. In my short time in the job I have had the honour of visiting various public schools in my electorate to see the great work they are doing.

Public Education Day was inaugurated in 2001 by the Australian Education Union, and it is held annually on the fourth Thursday of May. In New South Wales it provides an opportunity to focus on the crucial role public education plays in ensuring that every child has equal access to quality teaching and learning. New South Wales public schools use the day to draw attention to the excellent work and commitment of public school teachers and support staff, the wonderful grassroots efforts made by local communities and parents and citizens associations, and the academic, artistic, social and sporting achievements of the students. I take this opportunity to thank teachers, support staff, parents, students and local community members for their commitment and effort in making teaching and learning in this State the best in the country.

In 1880 Sir Henry Parkes introduced in this very Parliament a bill that became the Public Instruction Act, which created a statewide system of public schools offering quality education. His vision, for all students to sit side by side and have equal access to education, remains the bedrock of New South Wales public schools. In 2012 more than 2,200 public schools serve diverse populations in the 10 regions of New South Wales. These schools include preschools, infants, primary, secondary and central community schools, environmental education centres and schools for specific purposes. Many of our secondary schools have a special focus area such as the performing arts, languages, technology and sports. In New South Wales quality teaching and learning are delivered to almost three quarters of a million public school students.

New South Wales public school students are taught by more than 60,000 full-time equivalent qualified teachers. We have had some great results in the New South Wales public education system. The high standards of teaching and learning delivered in our public schools are reflected in the results of national and international assessments. Our performance in the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] is the envy of other States and our participation rate is the highest of any State or Territory. New South Wales students who take part in the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Program for International Student Assessment are rubbing shoulders with the world's best, performing significantly higher in mathematical literacy than students in the United States of America, the United Kingdom and the OECD generally.

One needs to travel to the schools to appreciate the success that the public education system is having in this State. I have been fortunate to visit some of these schools recently. Castle Hill High School, which is a great school in my electorate, holds a breakfast a number of times a year at which a guest speaker attends and where various topics and leadership issues are discussed. Recently I was fortunate enough to attend the school's community breakfast hosted by the school captains where the topic being discussed was violence against women and respect for women. The maturity demonstrated by students participating in the discussions is testament not only to students at the school but also to their teachers, who are making a great contribution to the education of future generations of our community in Castle Hill, New South Wales and Australia.

It would be remiss of me not to pay tribute to Bryan Mullan, who was the principal of Castle Hill Public School for 13 years and who retired last year. The service he provided to that school was known across the community. His contribution was not merely to the school and young children in the area; it was to the wider community. Not only was he involved in charities and events such as running The Hills Relay for Life but he also passed that spirit of service on to his students. When one attends community events where numerous students from Castle Hill Public School are raising funds for the Red Shield Appeal or running around a track at The Hills Relay for Life one realises it is Bryan Mullan's impact that has led those students to follow his wonderful spirit of community service. I am sure in future years they will continue to make a great contribution to our State.

The New South Wales Government has strategically contributed to discussions on the Federal review of school funding. We are working very hard to provide greater funding to all schools to ensure the national partnership funding continues. We are providing for better measures of need to be developed and to ensure disability and rural education are recognised as priority areas. Our education priorities continue to focus on improving literacy and numeracy for every child, particularly in the areas of social disadvantage, boosting early childhood education and development and supporting principals to make more decisions at a local level—I note that Castle Hill High School participated in that program—ensuring additional student welfare support is provided where it is needed most and promoting teaching as a career.

We are supporting students with the highest levels of need through the rollout of our election commitments. In conclusion, I am proud to be part of a government that is a friend of public education and that supports public education. I welcome every opportunity to acknowledge the great work being done in New South Wales public schools, particularly in my electorate of Castle Hill. We are blessed with great schools in my electorate and I look forward to working closely with the schools and teachers in the future.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [11.53 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure as a former health and physical education teacher at Lake Illawarra High School in the beautiful electorate of Shellharbour to speak about the importance of public education. First, I acknowledge the shadow Minister for Education and former Minister in the Labor Government for her work in driving the reforms that are seeing higher literacy levels in New South Wales than anywhere else. We have seen unprecedented reforms in public education, led strongly by leaders and former Ministers such as Carmel Tebbutt and former Premiers—some of whom are still members and others who are not, such as Bob Carr—who made public education as big a priority as the triple-A credit rating, major infrastructure and other major reforms. The community will be permanently indebted to the former Labor Government for that achievement.

The foundations of public education are based on great teachers, supportive parents and an engaged community. The community expects this and the Government must support and deliver on this when it delivers its budget in June this year. We want to ensure that our public education system is the finest in the land and that our public schools are the envy of the world. When we achieve that we will truly become a clever State. The Government talks about making New South Wales number one again. The best way to do that is to continue to drive investment in public education because it will pay enormous dividends. Those dividends will be a reduction in crime, improvement in local economies, and world-class teaching and learning. It will result in a community that is sophisticated, dynamic and tolerant. All members should be committed to our schools and public education system and continue to fight for funding.

Although we agree that funding is not everything, it goes a long way in bridging the gap between the disadvantaged and those with opportunities. Having lived in communities and worked in schools with significant disadvantage, I know first-hand that schools do a tremendous job in bridging that gap. We must all use the next three years to support public education. I thank the member for Marrickville for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House today.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [11.57 a.m.]: I support the motion and commend the member for Marrickville for bringing it to the attention of the House. Paragraph (2) of the motion states:

Notes the contribution public education makes to our society by providing opportunities for all students to have a quality education irrespective of income or location.

This is the core of a wonderful public system and is a pertinent point. Paragraph (3) states:

Thanks the many teachers, staff and parents in the NSW public education system for their commitment to public education.

I am very happy to highlight that paragraph because without those wonderful, hardworking teachers and administrative staff we would not have the system that we enjoy today. Public Education Day allows us to take stock of the importance of access to quality education for all students in New South Wales. Public Education Day provides a time to acknowledge and celebrate the many achievements of public schools in New South Wales. Its intent is to allow us to thank teachers, parents, students, support staff and local community members for the commitment and hard work they contribute each day in making teaching and learning the best in this country. That is echoed by this Government. It is the teachers, parents, students and support staff who maintain our wonderful system.

This year Public Education Day takes place on 24 May, a few days before Aboriginal Reconciliation Week celebrations begin. There are more than 2,200 public schools educating about 745,000 students in New South Wales. Of these students, more than 45,000 are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Indigenous students are among those who can benefit most from the New South Wales Government's election commitments. Those commitments include the literacy and numeracy action plan, which will result in the equivalent of 900 additional teachers working to support our youngest school learners with the greatest need. This represents an investment of \$261 million over the next five years. It also will enable 300 support teachers to be reallocated from kindergarten to year 2 to support students in years 3 to 10.

I draw attention to the wonderful public schools in my area and to their principals: Blairmount Public School, Mr Greg Turnbull; Camden High School, Mr Roger Berry; Camden Public School, Mr Scott Davidson; Camden South Public School, Mr Glen Patterson; Claymore Public School, Mr Reg Corney; Cobbitty Public School, Mr Michael Buckley; Currans Hill Public School, Mr Keith Wray; Eagle Vale High School, Mr Robert Duncan; Elderslie High School, Mrs Meredith Fawcett; Elderslie Public School, Mr Wayne Mason; Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Ms Kylie Hedger; Eschol Park Public School, Mrs Karen Masciocchi; Harrington Park Public School, Mr Andrew Best; Kearns Public School, Mrs Margaret McLeod; Leppington Public School,

Mrs Bronwyn York; Mawarra Public School, Mr Paul Mallia; Mount Annan High School, Mr Phil Recce; Mount Annan Public School, Ms Su Newbery; Narellan Public School, Mr Dale Sessions; Narellan Vale Public School, Mr David Byrne; Robert Townson High School, Mr Warren Parkes; Robert Townson Public School, Ms Linda Green; and Rossmore Public School, Ms Anne Webb. These fantastic people do a fantastic job in fantastic schools.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.01 p.m.]: I support the motion of the member for Marrickville acknowledging Public Education Day. Public education would not be able to deliver quality teaching and learning without three things in particular: first, teachers delivering diverse programs; secondly, parents supporting students and also supporting teachers in the delivery of quality teaching programs; and, thirdly, the wider community providing opportunities for students post schooling. When I think of great public schools I think of all the Fairfield schools, but for the record I also think of great schools across New South Wales. I have had the opportunity to work with many teachers from public schools during my time as a vocational education and training teacher and Higher School Certificate marker. I know full well how hard these teachers have worked for the students in their schools.

I congratulate both primary and secondary teachers. In order for quality education to occur the Government must back all schools wholeheartedly. The Government must not increase class sizes and the Government especially must not take away specialist support teachers from any New South Wales school. In Fairfield I have witnessed first-hand how the values, traditions and achievements of schools are celebrated, whether in awards ceremonies or art or technology exhibitions. I know that the teaching community of this State sincerely puts the needs of the children first. While talking about the notion of commitment by school communities, teachers should be congratulated on integrating technology into teaching programs over the past few years. I know it has been difficult for older teachers.

The technology was not around when they were learning and doing teacher training courses. Many of them have adopted useful strategies in integrating technology with teaching programs so that students are not left behind once they leave school. The opportunities that students have can be highlighted in the example of Fairfield High School. I have spoken about this school on a number of occasions in this Chamber, and especially the principal, Mr Robert Mulas, and his hardworking team of teachers. They have developed a work skills program that encourages students who traditionally would not continue school beyond year 10 or obtain an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank [ATAR] to stay at school and get basic skills so that once they leave Fairfield High School they can find gainful employment.

The program I am referring to looks at skills settings in the areas of beauty and hairdressing, motor mechanics, brick and block laying and floristry. These courses that have been developed at Fairfield High School give students significant skills so that they can achieve post-schooling. I wholeheartedly support the motion moved by the member for Marrickville that notes Public Education Day, acknowledges the great contribution that public education makes to our society, and thanks the many teachers, staff and parents in the New South Wales public education system.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.06 p.m.]: I share the views of my colleagues on this side of the House on this motion. We value public education and we know how important it is that the Government provide quality and accessible public education to all. There is no doubt it is one of the greatest gifts that one generation can give to another. I come from a community in Bankstown that is largely multicultural and a large proportion of who have migrated here in recent years. Often when I have spoken to people who have come to Australia, sometimes in very dire circumstances, I have found their passion and resolve to be part of this great nation partly explained by the fact that we provide quality, free public education.

Free education is something that many of these people never experienced in their country of birth. It is certainly something they value because they know that here there is an opportunity for their children to be educated irrespective of their cultural background and their sex. We know that in many countries girls, in particular, are deprived of the opportunity to have a quality education. However, I am concerned at the way this Coalition Government treats and values education. A prime recent example was the Government's decision to charge parents for their children to attend public preschools. If there is anything the Government should hang its head in shame about, it is charging these parents to send their children to preschool.

In my community I have two public preschools, one at Bankstown South Infants School and the other at Bass Hill Public School. The vast majority of parents who utilise these public preschools are migrants from low socio-economic backgrounds. There is no doubt that having to pay that fee has certainly been a tremendous

burden on them. Together with the shadow Minister for Education, the member for Marrickville, I have had the opportunity to visit some of these schools and speak to parents. They have told us they now have to choose how many days they can send their child to preschool. Instead of sending their children to school for three or five days, they have had to reduce their attendance.

Members opposite may not realise that is the first time that some of these children have been exposed to the English language. It is the first time that somebody in the system can determine whether those children need other special services or assistance, such as speech therapy or treatment for eyesight and hearing problems and other medical issues that may not have come to the attention of the family. The preschools provide those services. I have spoken to principals who raise the concern that children who do not go to a public preschool may have to undertake further studies. Instead of principals focusing their attention on providing quality public education they will become, in effect, debt collectors.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Shame.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: That is right; it is a great shame. They have to monitor whether parents are paying this compulsory contribution and, if not, they must chase it up. It is disgusting to change the role of principals from supporting parents and students to chasing up parents and in effect being debt collectors. I have no doubt that this is a disgraceful policy, like many others from this Government—for example, slashing funding for school infrastructure by a staggering \$266 million. The Government should be ashamed of itself.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.10 p.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Castle Hill, Keira, Camden, Fairfield and Bankstown for their contributions to this debate. It was great to hear them speak about the importance of public education, to acknowledge the strength of our public education system and to highlight some of the fantastic things that are happening in schools around New South Wales. The Australian Education Union was responsible for launching Public Education Day, and I congratulate it on its foresight. Public Education Day gives us all an opportunity to come together and celebrate our public schools and to highlight areas of deficit and where more support is needed.

The member for Keira was correct when he said that the dividends of investing in public schools are well known. This is backed by research that demonstrates that dollars invested in the early years of a child's life pay huge dividends down the track in terms of better outcomes in health, employment, quality of life and lower rates of imprisonment and involvement in the criminal justice system. Investing in the early years of a child's life is critical, and that includes investing in early childhood services and education, and in our public schools. I hope that the Government members who spoke so eloquently about public education and the great achievements of public schools in their electorates will be strong advocates for public education within the Government. I believe we need strong public education advocates on the Government benches because there are worrying signs. For example, the Government has not yet resolved the salaries agreement with teachers or confirmed that their salaries will keep pace with inflation.

I am also concerned that reforms such as Local Schools, Local Decisions, and Every Student, Every School have been announced without any details or the guarantees that parents, teachers and students expect and deserve. These reforms will make a difference to the way that public schools are funded, organised and supported. Parents, teachers and students have a right to expect that detail. The Minister for Education has failed to guarantee that schools will not be worse off, that funds will not be cut and that schools will not lose teacher's aide positions as a result of these reforms. We want to see such guarantees and we need members on the Government benches to be strong advocates for public education to make sure that our public schools are not disadvantaged over time as a result of these reforms.

Since the O'Farrell Government was elected we have heard lots of catchy slogans. It is a great fan of catchy slogans that promise reform but do not have the substance to back it up and will not make the difference that we need in our public schools. If the public education system is to continue to go from strength to strength it needs more than slogans; it needs a Government that is committed to public schools and a Government and a Minister who understand the complexity of the challenges facing public education and are prepared to back the sector with real funding and support.

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

Motion agreed to.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [12.16 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the University of Wollongong on its sixtieth anniversary in 2011;
- (2) notes that the university is now recognised as one of the leading teaching and research institutes in the world; and
- (3) congratulates Professor Gerard Sutton on his leadership and dedication to the university and his contribution to the broader Illawarra region.

It gives me great pleasure to talk about the University of Wollongong's sixtieth anniversary celebrations last year, which are continuing, and about the important role that the university plays not only in the future of our region but that of the State, the country and the world, and how we are positioned moving forward. The University of Wollongong has been going strong for 60 years and has more than 28,000 enrolled students. In the past 60 years it has conferred more than 108,000 degrees and diplomas. I have the great honour to be a member of its alumni, together with many other members on both sides of the Chamber who have experienced the quality education delivered by the university.

In 1996 I commenced my first degree, a Bachelor of Education (Health and Physical Education), at the University of Wollongong. In 1999 I graduated with honours. In 2001 I commenced my masters in educational leadership and management. I had the opportunity to get a first-class tertiary education 10 minutes from my front door. All of us who have had access to the university should be extremely grateful. It is more than a fantastic educational institution; it will become the steelworks of the future. In my view, it will shape the future of our community. As the son of a steelworker, I know there is a very good chance that my son, who is only two years old, will follow a path where education is his commodity—it is what he will trade in and specialise in, rather than working in the traditional manufacturing and steel-based industries. It does not mean that those traditional jobs will disappear; it simply means that, as a community, we need to continue to support the university that will guide us through the next 10, 15, 20 years and beyond.

Together with the member for Kiama, the member for Wollongong and others, I pay tribute to Gerard Sutton, who recently retired from the University of Wollongong, for the credit that he bestowed upon that institution. He took it to where it is today: in the top 2 per cent of universities in the world, which is simply outstanding. That is a great achievement by someone who resides in the electorate of Keira. Gerard Sutton has been the driving force for some years and has made the University of Wollongong the university of choice for thousands upon thousands of students from across New South Wales and beyond. But time moves on, and Gerard's time at the university has now ended. As the member for Kiama outlined recently, his replacement is Professor Wellings, who has made it clear that he has set himself the benchmark of taking the University of Wollongong out of the top 2 per cent and into the top 1 per cent of universities in the world. He should be commended for that. That requires investment, innovation and the collective support of governments, the community and the university to get behind this institution to ensure it reaches those lofty heights.

If we are to be a clever country and compete on the global stage—and all the research shows that education will be a key driving force and commodity in the decades to come—we in the Illawarra must be at the forefront of that change. The university and its facilities, such as the SMART Infrastructure Facility and the Illawarra Health and Medical Research Institute, focus on making research a reality. Professor Wellings is the driving force in that regard. In the meetings I have had with him I have been particularly impressed by his drive to make the university as practical and as outcome-focused as possible. We do not want to undertake research for its own sake; we want to improve people's lives, particularly those in our local community. The Illawarra is undergoing incredible change. The community's traditional focus has been the steel and manufacturing industries, and while they will continue to play a role, the university will be our shining light going forward. It will be the focus and it will deliver prosperity for the people of the Illawarra.

I draw the attention of the House to the university's Faculty of Education and Dean Paul Chandler. The learning laboratories in that faculty are designed to enrich the academic achievements of gifted local students. Paul Chandler, who has driven this process, encourages the best and the brightest students from local schools to participate in enrichment programs at the university not only to accelerate their learning but also to give them a real taste of university life. We need to embrace and encourage local students to stay in the Illawarra and to be educated at our great university. I know that under the leadership of Professor Wellings and individuals like Paul Chandler our university is in great hands. I particularly note the efforts of Josie Castle, a member of the

Thirroul branch of the Australian Labor Party, who put together "University of Wollongong: an illustrated history 1951-1991". It is a fantastic read and I used it in preparing for my contribution to this debate. I commend Josie for her work.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.25 p.m.]: It is a privilege to speak to this motion moved by the member for Keira recognising the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the University of Wollongong. Like many other members, I had the great privilege of attending and graduating from that institution. We recently discussed the anniversary during debate on a matter of public importance and I am delighted that we have this opportunity to reassert the university's academic maturity and the achievements that it continues to deliver for our region, our State, our nation and the world. The University of Wollongong has had strong and sound corporate leadership for many years, from Michael Birt to Vice-Chancellor McKinnon, Gerard Sutton and Paul Wellings. The university council also includes some significant community leaders. In that regard, I acknowledge Noel Cornish, the former chief executive officer of BlueScope; Dr Denis King, the chair of the local health district; and Chris Whittaker, who recently retired as a student representative on the council. Chris will be replaced by Mr James Parrish, who will be an outstanding representative.

Today the University of Wollongong has more than 26,000 students and 2,000 staff, and contributes an estimated \$1 billion annually to the Illawarra economy. Indeed, a number of members in this place have graduated from the university, as have the two daughters of the member for South Coast and Speaker. Many people are now seeing the first generation of their family undertake tertiary education at the university. I was the first member of my family to attend and graduate from university and it is a privilege to return as a member of the university council representing the university alumni. I acknowledge my friend and colleague the member for Keira, who is also a graduate. Our region's manufacturing industries face significant market challenges.

The university's economic contribution is important in increasing the knowledge industries in our region and in providing a doorway to innovation that will assist our region to diversify to meet those challenges. Last year we spoke about some of those challenges in respect of the manufacturing industries in the region that are now winding down. The State has taken the opportunity to grab hold of education as that doorway to the future. I commend all members in this House and our Federal politicians for their continued support of the University of Wollongong. In celebrating the history of this institution, it is important that I record some important milestones. The university had its genesis in 1951 as a small divisional college established in Wollongong to provide engineering and chemistry courses for the steelworks. It was part of the New South Wales University of Technology, later known as the University of New South Wales, and was based at Wollongong Technical College in Gladstone Avenue.

In 1962, following a public appeal that raised close to £200,000 from industry and the community, the Wollongong University College moved to the current campus fronting the Princes Highway and Northfields Avenue. I was delighted to see the break from Kensington Technical College. In 1975, following a long struggle for autonomy from the University of New South Wales, the University of Wollongong became an autonomous, stand-alone university. Professor Michael Birt was the foundation vice-chancellor and Justice Robert Hope the foundation chancellor. In 1981 Professor Birt left to become vice-chancellor at the University of New South Wales and Professor Ken McKinnon took over the role at the University of Wollongong. His arrival signalled the beginning of a major growth phase, as the student population increased from 3,000 to 10,000 over the next decade.

In 1993 the university established a campus in Dubai and one in the Shoalhaven at Berry—the forerunner of a network of satellite campuses in west Nowra, Batemans Bay, Bega, Moss Vale and two in Sydney. I studied a component of my degree at the Shoalhaven campus and can attest firsthand to the fact that the satellite campuses offer the same quality experience in education as that offered at the other campuses. I commend Robbie Collins, the manager of those campuses, for her continued effort in that regard. The benefit of these campuses to regional communities is enormous. If they had not been established I have no doubt that many people in our region would not have been able to obtain a university degree. I acknowledge the late Ray Cleary for his tenacious pursuit of a campus in the Shoalhaven.

I have no doubt that the campus would not have been established if it were not for his considerable efforts. I acknowledge Ken McKinnon and Professor Gerard Sutton who also pursued that goal. As members have stated, Professor Sutton has retired from the university. He was an outstanding vice-chancellor and I have no doubt that Paul Wellings will also do an outstanding job. The University of Wollongong was named Australian University of the Year for 1999-2000, 2008, 2009 and 2011, and in 2006 it was named inaugural Commonwealth University of the Year. In 2007 it expanded the courses it offered, with the Graduate School of Medicine accepting its first students.

In 2009 Reserve Bank board member Jillian Broadbent was appointed chancellor. In 60 years the university has grown from a provincial feeder college with 300 students to an international university with more than 26,000 students spread across three campuses and five access centres. The University of Wollongong now offers a wide range of courses across nine faculties, including arts, education, health and behavioural sciences, law, science, informatics, commerce and creative arts. Since its foundation, the university has conferred more than 52,000 degrees, diplomas and certificates. Its student population, originally drawn predominantly from the local Illawarra region, now comprises students from more than 70 countries, with international students accounting for more than 30 per cent of the total student population.

Today the university offers courses in conjunction with affiliated institutions in a number of offshore locations, including Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. The university has always had a strong research focus and has developed an international reputation for its applied research, which has been aided by partnership with industry and/or government in areas relevant to national economic, technological and social goals. The University of Wollongong is home to eight research institutions and three Australian Research Council Key Centres for Teaching and Research. The university has been a great part of our region and I have no doubt it will continue to ensure our strong economic growth into the future.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.30 p.m.]: I acknowledge and congratulate the University of Wollongong on its sixtieth anniversary. For many years I had the privilege of being the union official of what was then known as the Miscellaneous Workers Union for the general staff of the university. I acknowledge Professor Ken McKinnon and Professor Gerard Sutton. I personally had a long association with Professor Sutton and, believe it or not, to this day we have an excellent relationship. I acknowledge the dedication and hard work of Professor Gerard Sutton in improving the facilities at the University of Wollongong. I also acknowledge Professor Wellings, who I think will do a great job. I am very impressed. In a short time, he has met with all representatives and given us his vision of what he considers a good direction.

Today my colleagues have talked about academic achievements. I congratulate the member for Keira on moving the motion and I have no doubt that we all congratulate the University of Wollongong, which I believe was voted the number one university in Australia two years in a row, on its achievements. I particularly acknowledge the workers at the university, the general staff, and the community for its efforts in the years before 1975 in raising more than £200,000, as well as the union movement and people like Peggy Errey, who is now deceased but at that time was active in the union movement and in migrant hostels, as they were then, which became known as Campus East of the university. Those people went around the streets and to traffic lights with buckets, collecting money to contribute towards the hundreds of thousands of pounds necessary.

I congratulate the university on its overall success, as well as the academics and teaching professions. The Innovation Campus, which is in the electorate of Wollongong, has been another great success story for the university. It is important to place on record that under the leadership and guidance of very capable people, very important general staff have helped the university campus to maintain its ambience. I do not think anyone would argue that the facilities at the university are second to none. The duck pond area, where many students sit to have lunch or perhaps quiet study, is second to none. With 27,000 students from such a diverse range of cultures, the University of Wollongong is internationally famous for teaching and research, and is ranked in the top 2 per cent. Whilst the Innovation Campus has been a great success story and I acknowledge all of those who have played a role in it, I believe we have not seen anything yet in terms of the achievements that will come from research at the Innovation Campus. I commend the motion.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [12.34 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to contribute to this debate. It is very pleasing to see the member for Keira and the member for Kiama coming together so warmly, enthusiastically and energetically to agree on this motion. It is probably a rare occurrence, but it has been great to see. If the member for Keira and the member for Kiama are examples of the kinds of graduates that the University of Wollongong turns out, then we have a lot to look forward to, and I say that most sincerely. Both are energetic members of this place. They often disagree, but they are committed, energetic and articulate members of this House, and we should be very proud of them. Reference was made to my daughters.

I have two daughters and one son. One daughter is a graduate of the Medical Science Faculty of the University of Wollongong, who went on to complete her Bachelor of Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney, and my other daughter achieved first-class honours in Commerce Law at the University of Wollongong. Both of them experienced a wonderful education at that institution. As we consider the sixtieth anniversary of

the University of Wollongong, I pay special tribute to Professor Gerard Sutton and to Professor Ken McKinnon before him—Vice Chancellors have contributed enormously to the success of the University of Wollongong over the years. At the start of his appointment, Professor Sutton said:

We have a growing international reputation but still have a way to go to be acknowledged as one of the world's best. That is the challenge for students and staff.

Professor Sutton said those words 16 years ago. Today the university is recognised as a world-leading research and learning institute, and this has occurred under the vision and stewardship of Professor Gerard Sutton. The university's status is evident from its ranking in the top 2 per cent of research universities worldwide in the United Kingdom Times Higher Education World University Rankings, the QS World University Rankings and China's Shanghai Jiao Tong University index. The university's research profile has grown to be amongst the most competitive internationally. The University of Wollongong was a strong competitor in winning Australian Research Council grants income in 2010, numbering in the top 10 of successful universities for its size. Again I pay tribute to Professor Gerard Sutton. Under his stewardship and leadership the university facilities were expanded, and this is where my electorate comes into it.

The expansion included the establishment of the Batemans Bay campus and a Bega education campus, and I note the member for Bega and Minister for Disability Services in the Chamber. The Shoalhaven campus in Nowra in my electorate has gone from strength to strength over the years under the guidance and leadership of Robbie Collins. Under Professor Sutton's tenure the university has received numerous awards for the quality of its research and its graduates. He has overseen the development of linkages between the university and the Illawarra and South Coast region. Professor Sutton has advocated for this university since 1995 when he became the Vice Chancellor. In fact he was made an officer of the Order of Australia as part of the 2008 Australia Day Honours. I have much to say on this, but time does not permit me. I simply wish to conclude by commending the member for Keira for bringing this very thoughtful motion forward. I know that we all agree with him wholeheartedly and that we will support the motion.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.38 p.m.]: I commend the member for Keira for moving this motion on the sixtieth anniversary of the University of Wollongong. This motion is very close to my heart. My daughter, Sophie, attended this campus and subsequently graduated with a degree in journalism. How humble I feel to stand here today to contribute to this fantastic motion. The University of Wollongong recently celebrated its sixtieth anniversary of its establishment in Wollongong in 1951 as a small divisional college outpost of what was then called the New South Wales University of Technology and later became known as the University of New South Wales. The college moved from Coniston to its current site in 1962. It became a fully autonomous university in 1975.

The anniversary theme is "Share your Story". Its aim is to recognise the role that staff, students and community members have played in making the University of Wollongong the dynamic and successful international university it is today. In recognition of the university's important milestone, and in keeping with the times, the university set about building an interactive digital time capsule. Stories, videos and images that painted a picture of campus life in 2011 were collected and published on the sixtieth anniversary website for future University of Wollongong generations to view. The aim of the time capsule was to celebrate and profile the university's past and present successes. It was certainly not restricted to those who study or work on campus. Members of the community were also encouraged to visit the website and contribute a story or image summing up what the university means to them.

I encourage members to log on to the website and have a look at this interesting time capsule. It gives some insight into why the University of Wollongong is one of the highest-ranking tertiary educational institutes in the world today. In 1993, the University of Wollongong established a campus in Dubai. It has five New South Wales regional campuses and education centres—from Loftus in the north, to Bega in the South, and inland to Moss Vale. In 2010 when I visited Dubai I took the opportunity to visit the University of Wollongong campus. Its learning centre is located just out of Dubai and all the heavy hitters in the university world are found there: Oxford, Yale, Harvard and Cambridge universities. There are more graduates going through the University of Wollongong campus in Dubai than at all those other universities combined. It is a sterling effort and that amazing contribution should not go unnoticed.

Last Year, The University of Wollongong opened a campus in India and it also established the Sydney Business School, based at Circular Quay. The state-of-the-art SMART Infrastructure facility was opened in 2011. The SMART Infrastructure Facility is the national centre for infrastructure solutions. "SMART" is an acronym for simulation, modelling, analysis, research and teaching. SMART provides strategic advice, research and skills training across the whole infrastructure industry. I could continue talking about the University of

Wollongong for hours but time does not permit me. I thank the member for Keira for moving this motion, which allows the House to celebrate the magnificent role played by staff, students and community members at the university. I commend the motion.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [12.42 p.m.]: In supporting this motion I acknowledge the bipartisan support for the University of Wollongong. The motion recognises the achievements of the University of Wollongong over the past 60 years and its world-leading teaching and research capabilities, and congratulates Professor Gerard Sutton. I recognise the enormous effort that the university has committed to the far South Coast. Over the past 10 years the expansion of the access centres at Batemans Bay and Bega has been terrific. The courses offered, the professionalism and the teaching staff at the university are terrific, and the economic and social benefits derived from the expansion of the university access centres throughout the region have been tremendous.

The courses offered by the access centres have expanded over the years to include nursing and diplomas in education, and local communities have benefited directly from that expansion. At the many graduation ceremonies I have attended I have observed that the professional expertise of the staff at these access centres has resulted in some terrific outcomes for students. With the courses the university is providing and no doubt with future expansions, the University of Wollongong demonstrates not only a commitment to Wollongong but also to the region. I also pay tribute to Professor Gerard Sutton, whom I have worked alongside for the nine years that I have been a member of Parliament. I acknowledge his leadership and dedication to the university and his contribution to the broader Illawarra region, the far South Coast and beyond.

In 2011 the University of Wollongong was placed in the top 2 per cent of universities worldwide. It was also in the top 10 universities for Australian Research Council grants. It hosts a range of important research institutes. The University of Wollongong has become one of the best universities in the world. Its history has been outlined today and whilst that history is important, it is also important to reflect on what the future holds for the university. The dedication and leadership shown will not only see it further expand its reach within the Illawarra but also to the far South Coast and globally. Historically its past 60 years have been pleasing but I have no doubt that the university will continue to provide enormous economic and social benefits to people throughout the Illawarra and on the South Coast well into the future. I also thank the member for Keira for moving this motion, and in doing so congratulating the University of Wollongong.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [12.47 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for the electorates of Kiama, Wollongong, South Coast, Shellharbour and Bega for their contributions to this debate. The University of Wollongong is no longer just an Illawarra icon; it is becoming an international icon. The member for Shellharbour spoke about the role it is playing in places such as Dubai. The member for Wollongong has the wonderful Innovation Campus in her electorate—she has been a long-term advocate of that facility. It is important to acknowledge in this place, the oldest Parliament in this country, the work that this fine educational institution plays in our economic prosperity, and social and cultural community growth.

Regional facilities that make a difference on the global stage, such as the University of Wollongong, should be recognised. No doubt over the next 50 years and beyond the University of Wollongong will be the shining light for the Illawarra. From the southern tip of Sutherland, which traditionally wants to be a part of the Illawarra, to the far South Coast, which also wants to be a part of the Illawarra, the University of Wollongong will be an economic beacon upon which we will continue to grow as a community. All members should acknowledge the contribution made by higher education facilities in both the university and TAFE sectors to our regional and global economies.

I would not like to think of the Illawarra without the University of Wollongong. Without the university, the Illawarra would be a very different place. It would not have had the huge growth in students and it would not have attracted some of the leading researchers in the world, who are doing fantastic work to make our communities better places. The University of Wollongong is a great university not only because many of us in this place were lucky enough to be educated there but because it is embedded in a fantastic local community. Members from the Illawarra region are parochial about the Illawarra region; we want to ensure that we are never considered to be simply a satellite suburb of Sydney. We are our own regional community, and it is imperative that all levels of government acknowledge the Illawarra as a regional community. That means that we are not competing against global communities like Sydney for prosperity, and it means that educational institutions such as the University of Wollongong get the support and recognition they deserve in special places like the New South Wales Parliament, as has occurred today.

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. 65 postponed by Mr Richard Amery on behalf of Mr John Robertson.

Business of the House Notice of Motion No. 70 postponed by Ms Sonia Hornery.

Business of the House Notice of Motion No. 72 postponed by Mr Richard Amery on behalf of Mr Michael Daley.

BONNYRIGG MEN'S SHED

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [12.52 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges the extremely worthwhile contribution of more than 25 volunteers who regularly assist with the operation of Bonnyrigg Men's Shed;
- (2) notes that the men's shed has been operating for over four years and the intention is to now launch a new network aimed at assisting migrants and refugees who can be trained and upskilled in assimilating them into the wider community;
- (3) congratulates Brian Waights, Allan Forsyth, Michael Johnston and Matthew Dillon on their valuable work in conducting a highly successful Shed for the benefit of so many;
- (4) notes Bonnyrigg Men's Shed plays a very important community role in the electorate of Cabramatta in relation to men's health and wellbeing; and
- (5) requests funding in the near future for the relocation of the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed to larger and more suitable premises at Fairfield Showground.

I congratulate the Parks Community Network on the great work it is doing with the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed, which is a multicultural meeting place for men where both skilled and unskilled men can exchange ideas and work together on individual and community projects. The Bonnyrigg Men's Shed members are semi-retired or retired men, young men and men recovering from health and mental health issues. The shed has strong a strong relationship with Braeside Hospital, TAFE NSW, Bonnyrigg Management, Fairfield City Council and me. The shed works within the community to encourage reduction of waste material and turns that waste into reusable items such as rocking horses and toys for children. The shed also has several outreach projects throughout the year, including exercise programs, garden projects, and woodworking and education projects that are open to community participation, such as financial and literacy programs.

Men can obtain information regarding topics of interest to them, and programs and services they may need. The shed enables all men in the community who are interested to participate in projects and events. It reduces social isolation as the programs it offers promotes social inclusion. The existence of the men's shed and its programs raise self-esteem and enhance the social wellbeing of male members of the community. A more engaged and healthy male population benefits the community as a whole. Often in society women are seen to be in need of support groups and assistance. I am not ashamed to say that men need support networks as well, and the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed plays an important role in meeting that need. The men's shed encourages the fostering of mateship and gives men in the local community a place where they can go to discuss issues such as men's health or just a place to go to revel in shared camaraderie.

The shed participants are involved in numerous local community barbecues and events, as well as undertaking small projects for other community centres and service providers. They are worthwhile events from worthwhile participants. I had the pleasure of attending the Multicultural Men's and Fatherhood Festival, which was organised by the Parks Community Network and supported by Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. It was a great event for our local community—an event to inform and educate the community about the positive contributions men make to our community, and to educate men about their health and wellbeing. It was a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the positive contributions that men make to society.

The celebration demonstrated Cabramatta's ability to embrace its diversity and gender equity. It was great to see organisations and local families from diverse backgrounds, some of which have very defined and strict roles and expectations of their male and female members. I take this opportunity to encourage all of us to

acknowledge the men in our lives—our husbands, partners, fathers, sons, brothers and grandfathers. The contribution they make to society is for the greater good of us all. The Multicultural Men's and Fatherhood Festival reminded our community of the importance of teaching our future generations that gender has intrinsic worth, importance and usefulness. In this way we as a community can work towards ensuring that women and men experience equality in their responsibilities, careers, family time and opportunities.

I place on record my sincere thanks to the Parks Community Network for organising the Multicultural Men's and Fatherhood Festival for residents in my electorate to enjoy. It truly was a great event. It is important for members of this place to get involved with similar events and organisations in their own electorates, such as the men's shed and festivals highlighting men within our community, and show our support for organisations such as the Parks Community Network in order for their initiatives to continue to grow within our community. I echo the call of my colleague the Independent member for Lake Macquarie, who has called on the Government to provide further financial assistance to men's sheds throughout New South Wales. I also acknowledge the great support from the member for Wollongong and the member for Wallsend, who have spoken on men's sheds in the past.

The NSW Men's Shed Association currently has more than 185 men's sheds registered and a statewide membership of 14,000; and as word spreads of the tremendous work that these sheds do that number is sure to increase. When one takes into account the flow-on effects of these men's sheds one could conservatively say that more than 40,000 people's lives are affected positively by men's sheds in New South Wales. Although individually some sheds receive grant funding from schemes such as the Community Building Program, the State association relies on the dedication of its unpaid volunteers. Government funding of the State association would be of immense help, allowing the employment of appropriate staff to continue the important work of coordinating men's sheds throughout New South Wales. The State association already acts as a resource centre for sheds in our great State, ensuring that good techniques and methods are shared so that there is little duplication or reinvention of the wheel.

The exchange of information by regular newsletters is also an important function for the State association. Once again I acknowledge the important role and excellent work of men's sheds throughout the State and locally in my electorate. I congratulate the Parks Community Network on its outstanding achievements, Mr Matt Dillon and his staff, who assisted with organising the Multicultural Men's and Fatherhood Festival. They have been doing a marvellous job for a number of years. I thank also Brian Waights, Allan Forsyth and Michael Johnston, who help run the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. With their help, the festival was indeed a fabulous event. In particular I thank all the community members who attended the event, which again was a great opportunity to highlight the diversity of my electorate of Cabramatta and its people. I look forward to attending the event again next year. The men's sheds provide a tremendously worthwhile function and we should all ensure that they grow.

By consent, Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) postponed to permit the conclusion of the current debate.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [1.01 p.m.]: I acknowledge the importance of this motion and congratulate the member for Cabramatta on moving it. I congratulate also Brian Waights, Allan Forsyth, Michael Johnston and Matthew Dillon on their work with Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. I note that the shed is now taking on a very worthwhile program aimed at assisting migrants and refugees to integrate and assimilate into the community, a wonderful initiative. Right across Australia men's sheds are flourishing. For too long men have been reluctant to come together to talk about their issues, particularly health and mental health, but through the establishment of men's sheds they are now able to do so.

The motion refers to funding for Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. I would suggest that not many men's sheds have received a great deal of funding. With community support they have been resilient, indeed entrepreneurial, in how they have acquired buildings and equipment, so I understand not many applications have been made for funding. However, avenues are available to local members and I am sure if applications for funding were made under programs such as the Community Building Partnership Grants they would receive a favourable response. I suggest to the member for Cabramatta that because men's sheds are part of a national organisation and established throughout Australia, they require an Australia-wide approach to funding to continue the wonderful work they are undertaking in every community that has established them.

In the Wagga Wagga electorate I have been personally involved in establishing a men's shed in Lockhart and Adelong. Indeed, there are two men's sheds in Wagga Wagga. I had an involvement in obtaining

property and supporting organisations to acquire unused or rundown property. The premises of a men's shed may not necessarily be a shed. It may be an old shop that has been renovated and turned into a men's shed. Adelong Men's Shed was an old scout hall that was renovated and Lockhart is a shopfront. Wagga Wagga east men's shed is in a school. Men's sheds can be established anywhere in any building that can be modified or utilised to allow men to come together. Men's sheds have been very active in their communities. People can access a great website with information about men's sheds, how to start a men's shed, events, conferences and magazines. Indeed, I have signed up to a magazine called *ManSpace*, which talks about sheds and hobbies. As the saying goes, every man should have a shed, because places where men can take part in metalwork or steelwork are very limited.

Men's sheds provide educational programs, including computer programs. Men's sheds also perform a mentoring role, which is a wonderful initiative. This allows older men with considerable skill and life experience to pass on that knowledge to young people. Recently during the floods in north Wagga Wagga people from the men's shed provided food and refreshments for the volunteers cleaning up after the floods. In addition, the men take on community projects. They make toys for the underprivileged and they repair park benches and equipment for preschools, playschools and aged care centres. They are involved right across the community.

Across Australia there are 185 men's sheds with some 140,000 members, and the numbers are growing. Their importance cannot be underestimated. I know that the member for Smithfield is keen to also support the motion. I congratulate the members of the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed on the work they are doing and the initiative they are bringing forward in helping migrants and refugees assimilate into the community. That pilot program should be mirrored elsewhere across Australia. This information sharing and opening the doors to integrate new Australians into our communities are so important and I thoroughly support the initiative.

All members in this place should take the opportunity to visit their local men's sheds. The members are wonderful individuals, often well into their ageing years, making contributions to the community using whatever skills they possess. More importantly, these men are finally beginning to talk about their health issues and about life and sharing their concerns. I encourage them to further share this information. In addition, I urge peak bodies to take their case nationally in an endeavour to obtain decent funding from Federal authorities.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [1.08 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Cabramatta on bringing the motion to the House. I agree with the comments of the member for Wagga Wagga that we should encourage any opportunity for men to come together to discuss issues, particularly health. We often have discussed in this place the number of suicides that occur and that they often arise from the perceived stigma that if men admit they need help or assistance in any way it is a sign of weakness. We must encourage men to come together and give them the opportunity to talk about their health, particularly their mental health.

I acknowledge the work of the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. I also had the pleasure recently of a guided tour of the Coniston Men's Shed in the electorate of Wollongong. Bruce Anderson, the coordinator at the time, was thrilled at the group's purchase of a new shed, which was made possible through funding provided by the New South Wales Labor Government's 2010 Community Building Partnership program. The men's shed is a drop-in type facility that allowed a number of males—and as was said earlier, some young elderly males—the opportunity to contribute and be stakeholders and part of the process, especially those who had mental health issues but also those who were just seeking to be engaged.

The facilities available to the men are quite remarkable. There was a significant amount of mentoring and I witnessed firsthand the great contribution those men were making to the community. On the day I attended there were men present from various cultural backgrounds cooking traditional fare. Some of it looked more tempting than others, shall we say, but they were giving it their all. Other men were making and restoring furniture. I was extremely impressed by the teachers who were assisting the men to restore the furniture and the bond between them and the men undertaking the program. They were clearly united; they were all men with time on their hands who wanted something significant to do and to feel that they were worthwhile and their contribution was recognised. I congratulate them on that.

I am sure the new coordinator, John Broomhall, will provide the group with strong leadership and I look forward to working with him in the future. I also acknowledge that Illawarra ITeC provided the area for the men's shed. As an elected member of State Parliament, I can say that Rome was not built in a day. But if we start by giving men's sheds some State funding, it will be easier to consider taking the program to a national level. I encourage the New South Wales Government to look at giving some kind of financial assistance to these groups and to be part of an approach to the Federal Government to see if funding can be provided at that level as well.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [1.12 p.m.]: I offer my support for the motion moved by the member for Cabramatta and make a brief contribution in relation to Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. The concept of a men's shed in general is excellent and to be commended by members from both sides of this House. Men's sheds provide a number of useful services by utilising the lifetime skills and expertise of their members on a voluntary basis throughout communities in New South Wales. In the past I have lent my support to Bonnyrigg Men's Shed receiving more funding from Fairfield City Council and today I put on record my support for every men's shed across New South Wales to be given more funding. I fully support the work that Bonnyrigg Men's Shed is providing to my community and I support also its intention to expand, as it is experiencing substantial growth.

The members of Bonnyrigg Men's Shed are enthusiastic about the opportunity to provide for their members, the so-called "sheddies", to socialise with each other and to discuss how they can help local communities, especially the migrant and refugee communities. Men's shed programs provide many benefits to their members, such as health benefits, confidence and mateship. At the same time they work like a conduit to enable the men to give something back to the community that otherwise may not be possible. Members of men's sheds support each other by talking, socialising and helping each other through hard times. It is a fact that men suffer five times higher rates of suicide than women and three times the rate of deaths from cancer, yet 10 times fewer services are provided for men, thus making these sheds vital for their members.

For the past few years, Bonnyrigg Men's Shed has been helping the community by building community gardens, running barbecue stalls, painting buildings at local special schools and making plant boxes for children. They also have provided garden boxes for street beautification, helped make wheelchairs for land mine victims and assisted the local clown doctor project, and they are looking at building a sensory garden for autistic children. The membership of Bonnyrigg Men's Shed has been growing steadily over the past few years and currently there are more than 30 members.

Together with a vast array of tools and equipment, the group is rapidly outgrowing its current Bonnyrigg home and desperately needs a bigger place. The group is currently lobbying to secure a space in the Fairfield Showground to call home from where it will continue to complete community projects. I commend Matt Dillon of the Parks Community Network, who runs the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. I also thank Brian Waights, Allan Forsyth and Michael Johnson, who help in the running of the shed, as well as all their members for their fantastic contribution to the community. I support their efforts to secure the appropriate future home.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [1.15 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Cabramatta on his excellent motion, which I certainly support. I too would like to acknowledge the more than 25 volunteers at the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. I am sure there are many more now, as the notice of motion was given in May last year. In particular, I congratulate Brian Waights, Allan Forsyth, Michael Johnson and Matt Dillon for their work. I also congratulate the member for Cabramatta on moving this motion. Last year I had the privilege of moving a motion to debate the launching of the Elmore Vale Men's Shed. Following my motion, the member for Cabramatta had a discussion with me about his keenness to promote a men's shed in his district, his interest in the concept and the benefits it would provide to men, both young and old, in the Bonnyrigg area. He then proposed a notice of motion in relation to Bonnyrigg. I am pleased we could both share in the value and enjoyment of men's sheds in our areas.

I was particularly interested in the reference by the member for Cabramatta to the fact that the shed at Bonnyrigg assists migrants and refugees to assimilate into the community. That is particularly vital for the Cabramatta area. Many problems of local community acceptance occur in the Newcastle area, particularly with the increase in the number of international students from different cultures. However, once locals get to know these people and assimilate with them through initiatives such as men's sheds they begin to like them, understand them and appreciate them. The blue collar, white bread people of the Wallsend area who get to meet people from different cultures through the men's sheds find it is a fantastic way for people to integrate and assimilate in a positive manner. That is important, and I take my hat off to Bonnyrigg Men's Shed for that reason.

We all support men's sheds. When I gave notice of my motion, the Leader of the Opposition asked me if he could contribute to the debate. He did so because he was proud of the men's sheds that were being launched and growing in the Blacktown area. The Leader of the Opposition also mentioned the vital tasks that men's sheds carry out in the community, often doing jobs that people cannot afford to do and helping people on low incomes, such as pensioners and the disabled, by undertaking repair work that would otherwise cost a lot of money. He also mentioned that men's sheds mentor young people. That is a fantastic objective because the Bonnyrigg Men's Shed is not only helping people to assimilate in a positive way, it is also helping the young

men of Bonnyrigg grow to be the kind of man that the member for Cabramatta is. He sets a fine example for the community. I congratulate the member for Cabramatta on moving this fine motion. I also congratulate Bonnyrigg Men's Shed and wish it all the success in the future.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.20 p.m.]: I have great pleasure in supporting the motion moved by the member for Cabramatta about Bonnyrigg Men's Shed. Bonnyrigg Men's Shed serves as sanctuary for semi-retired or retired men, and also for young men with health issues or recovering from mental health issues. It is a place for them to go where they can enjoy male camaraderie. Men in the Fairfield community can go to Bonnyrigg Men's Shed and participate in activities or take part in its worthwhile programs. Bonnyrigg Men's Shed has strong relationships with Braeside Hospital, TAFE NSW, Bonnyrigg Management and Fairfield City Council. The shed promotes recycling and turns waste into reusable items, such as rocking horses and toys for children. The shed has several worthwhile outreach projects throughout the year, including exercise programs, garden projects, woodworking and financial and literacy programs. The shed gives men a chance to undertake computer courses and assists them with activities that we might take for granted, such as learning to pay bills via BPAY and accessing banking programs.

I pay tribute to Brian Waights, Allan Forsyth, Michael Johnston and Mathew Dillon for working with the vulnerable men in Fairfield. All too often it is seen as unmanly for men to speak about health and mental health issues. Bonnyrigg Men's Shed is one of an estimated 185 men's sheds in New South Wales that do their bit to integrate the vulnerable and assist the sick. Nationally there are 400 sheds, representing more than 30,000 members. Men's sheds are filling the gap in supplementary health care and recovery services. For some men, post-operative recovery stages of surgery are difficult periods in their lives. Men's sheds provide men with a place to talk about their issues and share stories, which is a great way to help in the recovery process. I support this motion, and I commend the member for Cabramatta for bringing it forward.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.22 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members of the House who have acknowledged the valuable contributions that men's sheds make in their electorates and throughout New South Wales. I particularly thank the members representing the electorates of Wagga Wagga, Wollongong, Smithfield, Wallsend and Fairfield for their contributions to this debate. As I said earlier, men's sheds play a vital role in supporting local families and communities and, importantly, take pressure off front-line health services. Having a place for males to congregate and become active by working on activities is a positive move for the community.

Learning new skills is always a good way to keep one's body and mind active. I understand that during National Seniors Week the NSW Ambulance Service will train members of Bonnyrigg Men's Shed to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation. Men's sheds make a valuable contribution to our communities. Hopefully, with the support of government funding, they can continue to support men and their families well into the future. The member for Wollongong and the member for Wagga Wagga said that Federal funding is the best way to go. I believe that we should obtain State funding in the first instance and then go to the Federal Government and ask for extra funding to ensure the continued operation of this worthwhile service. I commend the motion to the House and I thank all members for their support.

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

Motion agreed to.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I note the time. However, with the leave of the House members may conclude the take-note debate on committee reports. I remind members that their contributions to the take-note debate on committee reports should be brief and to the point.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

Report: Inquiry into School Zone Safety

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

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [1.24 p.m.]: On 11 August last year the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon Duncan Gay, asked the parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety—Staysafe—to respond to criticisms concerning the current one-size-fits-all approach to school zones and to report on ways to improve the operation and effectiveness of traffic management around schools. The Staysafe inquiry, which was both

bipartisan and joint, comprising members from both Houses—has issued a report containing 19 recommendations for action or further investigation. The unanimous recommendations of the committee are common sense and set a course for improved road safety in school zones.

School zones were selectively introduced to New South Wales roads in 1992, that is, 20 years ago. We are used to them and as a community have assimilated the degree of compromise or inconvenience they cause to drivers. Nevertheless, a key question for the inquiry was: Has this policy been effective in reducing pedestrian casualties? The answer is a resounding "yes". In the past decade pedestrian casualties have decreased 45 per cent across the 10,000 operational school zones in New South Wales. The annual number of injuries in active school zones has declined from 71 in 1996 to 44 in 2010, with two fatalities over the same period.

While acknowledging the success of school zones in making school precincts safer for students and schoolchildren, the committee's report highlights current deficiencies and makes recommendations for improving safety measures and creating a safer environment for pedestrians. One of the major sources of criticism from motorists during the course of the inquiry concerned operating hours of the zones and the seeming lack of standardisation across schools. Differences in term length between public and private schools, variability in commencement and finishing times and lack of common road safety warning systems applying across all schools, create uncertainty for motorists as to when school zones are operational. The increasing use of school facilities for out-of-hour activities also means that students will be accessing school roads outside normal school zone hours. This is a trend that needs careful monitoring.

The use of flashing light technology, which is available in some locations, has received overwhelming support as the most effective means to alert drivers to active school zone times. Research presented to the inquiry shows that approximately one-quarter of crashes in school zones during school zone times occurred at pedestrian crossings. This is an area where something can and should be done to improve the situation. An evaluation of flashing lights in 40 kilometre per hour school zones carried out by the Australian Road Research Board for the then Roads and Traffic Authority in 2006 demonstrated that flashing lights were effective in reducing vehicle speed outside schools during the operation of the 40 kilometre per hour school speed zone. Statistical analysis indicated speed reductions were statistically significant and not due to other factors. As a result of this and other research, the committee has recommended that this technology be installed at all schools across the State that do not yet have flashing school zone signs.

The committee recognises that this technology is expensive to install and maintain, and therefore recommends that additional penalties should apply to speeding in school zones governed by flashing lights. The revenue derived should then be used to install more flashing lights in school precincts that do not already have this technology. Other recommendations in the report include: using revenue raised by school zone cameras to fund specific road safety projects; stricter enforcement of existing 40 kilometre per hour restrictions; improving auditing processes for maintenance of signage and other safety infrastructure; and improving public and school-based education programs for students, carers and parents of schoolchildren.

Sound education is a critical part of the process to improve safety on roads near schools. The committee recommends increasing the availability of road safety education consultants and practitioners to assist schoolteachers to deliver road safety messages. In line with a previous recommendation made by the committee, further recommendations are made to support the work of road safety officers employed by local councils. An awards system should be developed to recognise significant road safety projects in school zones. In order to overcome confusion about the rules applying in and around school precincts, the committee also has recommended that improved safety awareness campaigns and initiatives be undertaken by Roads and Maritime Services and the Department of Education.

These campaigns and initiatives should see that information about school zones is provided to parents and carers. Additionally, motorists should be further targeted for increased awareness as part of driver education licensing requirements. Contrary to recent uninformed media reports, the committee is satisfied with the current hours of operation of school zones and has not recommended that these be extended. Twenty years is a long time and much has changed in our communities. One reason for current discrepancies in the provision of standardised safety infrastructure and pedestrian access to school precincts is that land use around schools has changed. There is scope, when designing and building new schools, for greater planning coordination and management of school zones. For this reason the committee has recommended an improved mechanism for joint planning and management of school zone safety for future schools.

While this report deals specifically with the more than one million school-age pedestrians in New South Wales, we rely on other users of the road network to share responsibility for our collective safety. This

means it is incumbent on vehicle drivers, motorcyclists and all others to recognise the vulnerability of pedestrians, particularly those who are young, and to act accordingly. As part of this inquiry the committee received 27 submissions and conducted two days of public hearings to gather evidence from a range of government and non-government agencies, researchers, road safety practitioners and individuals. I thank all those who shared their knowledge and experiences with the committee and who contributed to the evidence contained in this report.

The Staysafe inquiry and report provide an opportunity to build upon a successful road safety program that has demonstrated it can save lives and reduce suffering, specifically for our children but also for their families and school communities, which are impacted heavily by any road trauma affecting one of their own. We have done well; we can now do better and be safer. I encourage the Minister to lead the school traffic zone program into its next 20 years, seeking greater levels of success through more thorough education about the zones and the installation, over time, of flashing signs to all schools throughout New South Wales.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [1.30 p.m.]: I am pleased to join the chairman of the committee, the member for Albury, in taking note of the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety inquiry into school zone safety. I join the member for Albury in congratulating and thanking the staff of the secretariat for their work on this report and in thanking those people who made submissions to this inquiry. There are more than a million good reasons why we need to focus our attention on improving safety around our schools, and the work of the Staysafe committee will go a considerable distance to improving safety and building on the great work that has been done in the past.

Like the chairman, the member for Albury, I believe that the 19 recommendations of the committee are a good way forward for the Government and I will make sure that they are acted upon. I also believe that educating motorists and the school community are an important way to improve safety around schools, as well as a focus on enforcing speed limits in school zones to let people know that we are serious about reducing speed and reducing the likelihood of accidents. Improving partnerships with local government has strong merit. We understand the role that local government plays in our community and the connections local government has with the local area. However, I would be cautious about putting additional demands on the limited resources of local government to deliver road safety programs around our schools. I join with the chairman in congratulating those who have been involved in producing the report. I commend the report to the House.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [1.32 p.m.]: I support the chairman of the Staysafe committee, the member for Albury, in commending the great outcomes of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety inquiry into school zone safety. Child safety in school zones is probably one of the most important areas that we need to work on. While there is a clear indication that past measures had great effects in reducing casualties, there is no doubt that we can do more. The recommendations that we put forward are a clear indication of where we may go in the future. In the time of this Parliament very few committees have been used for political purposes and it was disappointing that one member of this committee decided during the inquiry to engage with the press and, most recently, to mislead the press about one of the recommendations. The Staysafe committee works in a bipartisan manner with a clear and concise purpose; it is not there for any political reason. It is disappointing that this committee report was tarnished by the political motives of others.

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

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 13/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.34 p.m.]: As Chair of the Legislation Review Committee I take this opportunity to comment on Legislation Review Digest No. 13/55, tabled on 27 March 2012, the thirteenth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. The role of the committee is to identify issues in proposed legislation and regulations as outlined in sections 8A and 9 of the Legislation Review Act. The thirteenth digest examined three bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 13 March 2012, and one regulation. The bills are the Crimes Amendment (Possession or Discharge

of Firearms in Commission of Offences) Bill 2012, the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment (Biosecurity) Bill 2012 and the Road Transport (General) Amendment (Vehicle Sanctions) Bill 2012. I will now speak briefly on these bills.

The Crimes Amendment (Possession or Discharge of Firearms in Commission of Offences) Bill 2012 amends the Crimes Act 1900 to create a separate offence for the possession of a firearm whilst committing a specified primary offence. The bill provides that the punishment for carrying a firearm whilst committing the primary offence must not be less than the term imposed for the primary offence and that the sentences must be served consecutively. The committee referred to Parliament whether such minimum sentencing constitutes mandatory sentencing. The bill also creates a further offence of discharging a firearm whilst committing a prescribed primary offence, which carries a penalty of imprisonment for five years. The committee referred to Parliament whether dictating a minimum sentence to be imposed for such an offence constitutes mandatory sentencing.

The committee has referred to Parliament whether removing the court's discretion to proportionately impose sentences for section 913A offences is compatible with the doctrine of the separation of powers and whether removing the court's discretion may result in excessive punishment. The committee has also referred to Parliament whether the inclusion of offences prescribed by the regulations when defining serious primary offences is an inappropriate delegation of legislative powers. The Primary Industries Legislation Amendment (Biosecurity) Bill 2012 amends various Acts so as to provide mechanisms to deal with biosecurity emergencies, including quarantining, control measures and associated legal issues.

The committee noted that aspects of the bill raised issues relevant to those considered by the committee, including property, compensation, privacy, employment, excessive punishment, self-incrimination and animal rights. However, the committee resolved that such provisions are reasonable in the circumstances. The committee also reviewed the Road Transport (General) Amendment (Vehicle Sanctions) Bill 2012, which amends the Road Transport (General) Act 2005 to repeal provisions relating to wheel clamping and to extend sanctions to include high-range speed and police pursuit offences. The committee noted issues relating to compensation and commencement by proclamation but found such provisions to be warranted. For a detailed consideration of these issues in the bills I invite members to review the digest.

I remind the House that the digest aims to assist members in their consideration of bills and highlights the issues that the committee has considered when reviewing bills that have been tabled in the House. Since being elected last year the Government has introduced more than 100 bills which have addressed a wide range of issues, including crime, education, road safety, firearms, primary industries, public employees, biosecurity and public access to government information. The committee has been impressed by both the scope and the quality of the legislation and wishes to commend those involved in the production and drafting.

I thank those members of the committee staff who have worked on the digest, together with the members of the committee: the member for Kiama, 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 and in ensuring that the digest will continue to be of assistance to all members.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.38 p.m.]: I address Legislation Review Digest number five for 2012 and the thirteenth digest of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. I acknowledge my fellow members of the committee: the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Parramatta, the member for Kiama and the member for Rockdale and our colleagues in the other place the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and Mr David Shoebridge. Once again I acknowledge the hardworking committee staff—Emma Matthews, Emma Wood, Jason Ardit and Todd Buttsworth. Next week the committee staff will have the unenviable task of preparing the digest with even less time than usual, given the Easter weekend. They will have to have the digest ready by Monday. I wish them luck. I am sure they will do a great job as usual. I was pleased to hear that next week the committee will be meeting at 1.30 p.m. I commend all members of the committee for that decision.

This week's digest considered three bills—the Crimes Amendment (Possession or Discharge of Firearms in Commission of Offences) Bill 2012, the Primary Industries Legislation amendment (Biosecurity) Bill 2012 and the Road Transport (General) Amendment (Vehicle Sanctions) Bill 2012. Even more interesting is the legislation the digest did not include. Given the Government's excitement about the Retail Trading Amendment Bill, I would have thought it would have ensured the bill featured in the digest. I would have thought that the Government would have wanted to ensure that the committee had no concerns about this legislation before it is considered by Parliament. It is disappointing that the Government has chosen to ram this bill through Parliament without consultation, scrutiny or proper consideration.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member for Bankstown that we are considering the report before the House and not other business before the House. I draw the member back to the report.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I was only noting what legislation is missing from the digest. This week's digest reviews the Crimes Amendment (Possession or Discharge of Firearms in Commission of Offences) Bill. That private member's bill was introduced by the Shooters and Fishers Party. The committee questioned whether this legislation, which dictates a minimum sentence, constitutes mandatory sentencing. The committee also referred to Parliament issues concerning the separation of powers. In particular, the committee questioned whether Parliament should be involved in removing the court's discretion to proportionally impose punishment on offenders in relation to the particular circumstances of the offence committed, and whether this bill constitutes a breach of the separation of powers. The digest also reviewed the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment (Biosecurity) Bill 2012. I was intrigued by the detailed analysis of the particulars of this bill.

I recommend that members of this House read the conclusions in the digest concerning restrictions on individuals' rights to access their property when it has been declared a disaster area. The committee concluded that there was an overriding public interest in such restrictions and made no adverse comment on the bill. This week we had the opportunity to meet with the Productivity Commission. I thank the chair, the member for Myall Lakes, for organising that briefing. The Productivity Commission is an independent advisory body which assists governments in making better policy decisions. It is currently undertaking a benchmarking study into regulatory impact statement [RIS] processes to identify best practice across the jurisdictions. It was an informative briefing and I was grateful for the opportunity to attend. I reiterate my concerns that the retail bill was not brought into—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member that I have ruled on those comments and I will not accept any further comments in that regard.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: Again I just raise my concerns about the Retailing Trading Amendment Bill; however, I commend the digest to the House.

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

Report noted.

[The Assistant-Speaker (Mr Andrew Fraser) left the Chair at 1.42 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

INSPECTOR OF THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, a report entitled "Report of an Audit into the Exercise by the Independent Commission Against Corruption of its Powers under Sections 21, 22, 23 and 35 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988", dated March 2012.

Ordered to be printed.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I advise members that the Minister for Local Government will answer questions relating to the portfolio of the Minister for the Environment, who will be absent from the Chamber during question time today.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.18 p.m.]

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. I was worried he would not be here to answer, but he has turned up.

[*Interruption*]

Is the Deputy Premier going to have another crack about who has a brain?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has the call and Government benches will come to order.

Mr Andrew Stoner: When you prove it, mate, I'll give you credit for it.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The Deputy Premier has further to go than I have to prove it.

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

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Given that even the New South Wales Secondary Principals Council believes that cost cutting is inevitable as a result of the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms, why will the Minister not publish the costings?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question because it gives me another opportunity to say how wonderful it is to be a member of a reforming government. What a great change for New South Wales after 16 years of Labor administration. Part of the scare campaign being undertaken by the union is that this is all about cost cutting and closing schools. I presume that, as I did, the member for Marrickville did an interview today with Channel 7. Members should stay tuned tonight. Dr John Kaye was also interviewed. The Greens, the Labor Party and the New South Wales Teachers Federation have finally coalesced into that great Communist-Stalinist movement that we knew they were capable of forming. They want every decision made by the commissars in Sussex Street.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will resume his seat and the House will come to order. The member for Shellharbour will be heard in silence. Members will now be placed on calls to order without any warning whatsoever.

Ms Anna Watson: We are now 90 seconds into this answer and—

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

Ms Anna Watson: I refer to Standing Order 129. Madam Speaker, I ask you to bring the Minister back to the leave of the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member should have stated that at the outset of her point of order rather than enter into a debate. There is no point of order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The New South Wales Secondary Principals Council, to which the Leader of the Opposition referred—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: I remind the House of the issue we dealt with yesterday. Ministers are meant to resume their seat when a point of order is being taken. The Minister was standing while—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I thought the Minister had resumed his seat. The Minister can now continue with his answer.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: This is not a cost-cutting measure. The Government—

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I met with the council this morning.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: That is not what they say.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It was yesterday. Members should read the council's position papers about its desire to have greater decision-making power and to be able to merit select at least every second member of staff. If they were to do that, they would understand what the council wants. That is what the Government is doing.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Stalinist troika has now coalesced in opposition to this—The Greens, Labor and the Teachers' Federation.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. This is a serious issue. Every single member opposite can make a joke about this but—

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

Ms Linda Burney: —the primary and the secondary principals associations do not think it is funny. You should start taking it seriously.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The member should ask me about closing schools. But first I will finish the communist theme. We won the Cold War, okay?

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Part of this cost-cutting scare campaign is that we are closing schools. Those opposite say, "They should not be closing schools".

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Those opposite want us not to close a single school. I acknowledge that we have closed a few schools this year.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Yes, we have closed a few schools this year. Three of them had no students.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Deputy Premier to order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Call me old-fashioned, but when a school has no students, the best thing to do is to close it. Those opposite may want to keep such schools open, and I am happy for the Labor Party to fund that.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much noise in the Chamber.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: But taxpayers are not going to fund schools that have no students.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: If this is a request for an extension of time, I am more than happy to take it.

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

Mr Michael Daley: Madam Speaker, you are happy to place members on our side of the House on calls for mere interjections, but you have a Minister here who is turning question time into a joke and flouting your ruling. I ask you to draw him back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister's time for speaking has expired. I remind members that the standing orders allow me to place members on calls to order when they interject. I cautioned members at the beginning of question time that I would call them to order without any warning.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! I caution Opposition members not to try to argue with me. In relation to the member's allegation that the Minister is turning question time into a joke, there is no standing order that prevents me from calling him to order.

Ms Linda Burney: He is a joke.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is an allegation. Some people may think it is a joke—I certainly do not. Members will come to order. I call the member for Wollongong to order.

CARBON TAX

Mr STUART AYRES: My question is directed to the Premier. What is the Government doing to ensure that the people of New South Wales know the impact of Labor's carbon tax?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Penrith for his question, for standing up for people across western Sydney and, frankly, the whole of New South Wales on the issue of carbon tax. This Government is critically aware that cost of living is a massive issue for families, not just in western Sydney but in regions right across the State. That is why we are taking action to keep electricity bill increases to as little as possible.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is why we have frozen electricity dividends at the levels set by those opposite when in government. It is why we are merging the State's three electricity utilities to produce savings that will then be directed to the most vulnerable in our community. In line with our election commitment, the energy Minister—who is doing a fantastic job—announced that a \$75 energy rebate will be introduced from 1 July this year, rising to \$150 by 2014.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We are also increasing the low income household rebate to \$215 from 1 July this year. These rebates will assist 940,000 households across New South Wales—proof positive of this Government's concern, commitment and action to assist such families in the face of increases in electricity prices. While the New South Wales Government is doing everything possible to keep power bills low, the same cannot be said of the Gillard Government.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Labor is imposing a massive new carbon tax.

Mr John Robertson: Why do you stand there and say low income jobs—

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

Mr John Robertson: And now you get up and criticise—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I urge the Leader of the Opposition to make another trivial comment. Labor is imposing a massive new carbon tax and it is going to have a devastating impact upon household power bills. We are, on this side of politics, determined that families should know the truth about the impact of the carbon tax on their bills. They deserve to know the truth about what impact Julia Gillard and The Greens carbon tax—introduced off the back of a lie that said, "There will be no carbon tax under the Government I lead"—will

have on their household incomes. We know that truth is not a strong point for Labor, but here in New South Wales we are determined to give families and the community the truth about the impact of carbon tax on their bills.

That is why, as the Minister announced at lunchtime today, from 1 July all electricity bills will be required to show how much Labor's carbon tax is costing them. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal is currently working on those costs and it will report next month. While our efforts are directed at ensuring that any increases in utility prices are kept as low as possible, Julia Gillard, Federal Labor and The Greens carbon tax, supported by those opposite, is sending those prices through the roof. I can also announce that this billing information will extend to those who rely upon gas, because of the impact of the carbon tax upon gas. I remind members that for families, for low income earners, it is estimated that there will be an increased cost in the order of \$500 a year on their household bills.

For small businesses, the impact will be in the order of \$4,200. They are just the costs for electricity affected by carbon tax, not the cost of carbon tax applying to other issues across the board. If those opposite, who earlier this week put out a remarkable brochure saying that they were concerned about the cost of living, were indeed concerned about the cost of living, they would be standing with members on this side of the Parliament to oppose Labor's carbon tax. Who is the Leader of the Opposition supporting in this debate? Is the Leader of the Opposition supporting his lying mates in Canberra or the families of western Sydney?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Is the Leader of the Opposition supporting his lying mates in Canberra or the families across regional and rural New South Wales?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: For someone who likes to bill himself as the alleged hero of the worker, this is the real litmus test. Will the Leader of the Opposition back families in the face of these extraordinary costs put in place by his colleagues in Canberra, despite promising not to do so? Will the Leader of the Opposition continue to support his colleagues in Canberra and hurt the families not only in western Sydney but also across the board? This again demonstrates that those opposite say one thing and do another. The only people members opposite are interested in are people in the union movement and the occasional visit to that house in Blacktown owned by the Leader of the Opposition.

LOCAL SCHOOLS, LOCAL DECISIONS PROGRAM

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: I direct my question without notice to the Minister for Education. Given that the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms allow permanent teachers to be replaced with temporary teachers, will the Minister guarantee that there will be no reduction in the number of permanent teachers in schools in New South Wales?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am happy to answer another question about one of the most significant reforms in education in one hundred years. I can say that anyone who has a permanent job in the Department of Education will not be affected by these changes. I make it very clear that we had a six-month consultation process in which some 1,800 principals, of the 2,200 principals across New South Wales, were involved. I had extensive discussions with principals. I personally met with over 200 principals. These are the changes that school principals wanted, and I make no apology for them. This is not a reform designed to suit teachers. This is not a reform designed to suit schools. It is not a reform designed to suit the department or bureaucrats.

It is not a reform designed to suit the Government. This is a reform designed to suit students; it is designed to benefit students. I have to keep saying it to get it through the heads of those opposite and the heads of the union. I know that the union is upset about a few changes. Changes cannot be made without upsetting the unions. I would never say for one moment that everybody is thrilled about everything that has been announced, but I do say that all the decisions made by the Government as part of this reform are designed to benefit students. I make no apology for that. I know that the reforms, so-called, that were made during the 16 years of Labor Government were designed to suit the factions, the unions and the media. The media would put a little bit of heat on the previous Government and it would make a change.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The reforms of the previous Government were designed to win elections. This Government makes decisions in education solely to benefit students. Part of the consultation process has been about principals being able to determine the mix of their permanent and temporary staff. If those opposite are trying to suggest somehow that temporary teachers are some new phenomenon in New South Wales, then I have to tell them that that is not true. In New South Wales we have casuals who fill short-term positions—I think up to four months or longer—and there are 22,000 such casuals. We have many temporary teachers already. The rule in the Department of Education is that when a position becomes vacant it must be filled by a permanent position. But not all schools want to do that; it is not in the best interests of their students. They want to have the flexibility of being able to appoint a temporary teacher.

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

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was very specific. The Minister was asked to provide a guarantee. A yes or no answer will suffice.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I have answered the question: no permanent teacher will be affected. But I have said that schools will make the determination. I will not be determining it; the bureaucracy in Bridge Street will not be determining it. The principals will be determining it. I have enormous confidence in the 2,200 principals in New South Wales to make those decisions in the best interests of their students. That is one of the fundamental, philosophical differences between the Liberals and Nationals and the Labor Party. We have confidence in people and in our communities. We have confidence in our leaders, whether they are in local schools or local government. Members opposite have no such confidence. Theirs is the communist approach: only the commissars have full power. The Government has a different approach from that. Principals will make decisions that are in the best interests of the students. I am yet to meet a principal who does not believe that. I have every confidence that they will make the right decisions, and the Government is empowering them to do precisely that.

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

STATE FINANCES

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: I address my question to the Treasurer. What is the latest on efforts to develop an improved Federal-State financial relationship for the people of New South Wales?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Clarence for his question. The member for Clarence is happy to stand up for his community and for the people of New South Wales. I pay tribute to Narelle Clay, who was in the public gallery earlier, for her work in community services in the Illawarra and across the State. Next week I will be heading to Canberra for the Treasurers' meeting with Wayne Swan. As the Minister for Education said earlier, it is great to be part of a reforming government here in New South Wales. I note that another reforming government has come to power—in Queensland. I will be happy to welcome my colleague Tim Nicholls to the table in Canberra next week. He is a good bloke. He puts the interests of Queensland first, not the interests of the Australian Labor Party central command. Tim Nicholls and I will be heading to Canberra to stand up for our respective States. I make no apologies for standing up for the people of New South Wales.

The New South Wales Government will not be bullied by Canberra. It will continue to fight for its fair share of funding. I hope the Opposition will join us in that fight and stand up for New South Wales, but we will wait and see. I have three key questions for Wayne Swan. First: What are the plans for the national partnership agreements? I see today that Mr Swan is making promises to slash spending on government programs. I will be asking whether that is just code for slashing spending on national partnerships, which will have consequences. I will be asking Mr Swan whether he is looking at cutting funding to literacy and numeracy programs, or whether he is looking at cutting funding to mental health. I will be asking also whether he has got his sights set on cutting funding programs for the homeless or whether he is looking at cutting funds for improving our public hospitals or teacher training.

All of those are national partnership agreements considerations. My concern is that he has his eyes on cutting funding to those programs in order to deliver his political promises in the Federal budget. Mr Swan must not punish the people of New South Wales for his inability to control his budget. I will also be asking Mr Swan why he will compensate Victoria for the carbon tax but not New South Wales and Queensland. It is estimated

that more than \$2 billion will go to Victoria. I ask: What will come to New South Wales under the Federal Government's compensation arrangements? Absolutely nothing is planned to come to this State. The Federal Treasurer is yet to answer why he is happy to give \$2 billion to Victoria and nothing to New South Wales. Members opposite should be supporting us on this.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I expect the Queensland Treasurer to ask the same questions of the Federal Treasurer. The third question is: Why does the Federal Treasurer continue to ignore the infrastructure needs of New South Wales? All members of this House know that Canberra, for some reason, wants to ignore their infrastructure needs. It is a problem in Canberra, and the former State Labor Government ignored it. New South Wales has one-third of the country's population. Yet under Federal Labor and the former State Labor Government what did New South Wales receive from Infrastructure Australia's first round of funding? Two per cent—2 per cent of infrastructure funding went to New South Wales. And for some reason Labor continues that trend.

The regional infrastructure fund is underway and will allocate \$6 billion over 11 years. What has that fund provided to New South Wales so far? Out of the first round of spending of \$916 million New South Wales received \$1.4 million or 0.2 per cent. The Federal Treasurer needs to explain why he does not like New South Wales and why members opposite continue to support his actions. It is the only conclusion one can make because there is no press release or commentary from the Leader of the Opposition on standing up for the people of New South Wales. In terms of infrastructure, we saw a Labor finance Minister with some credibility. Often that is an oxymoron, but it happened. I think Lindsay Tanner has broad respect across the political spectrum. In relation to Labor's approach to infrastructure he said:

The way they went about it is that you have to spread the gravy around, irrespective of merit, otherwise you'll suffer politically.

That is what we saw in this State. That is what we are seeing from Canberra, and it is time it changed. I make no apologies for standing up for the people of New South Wales in relation to our fair share of funding. Next week I will present that case to Wayne Swan.

TEACHERS SALARIES

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Given the Minister's claims that teachers' salaries will be based on reaching professional standards as part of the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms, who will determine whether teachers have met the standards?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: What an interesting question from the Opposition, given that the previous Labor Government established the Institute of Teachers in New South Wales. The New South Wales Institute of Teachers formulated the standards that form the basis of some of our reforms.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Marrickville will give the Minister a chance to answer the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: That was something positive from the Labor Government. If I remember correctly, at that time the establishment of the Institute of Teachers was supported by the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals. One good reform was establishing the Institute of Teachers to support the professionalism of the teaching profession. The Institute of Teachers has established teaching standards that apply to new scheme teachers.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Teachers who commenced after the Institute of Teachers began are called new scheme teachers. Up to 55 per cent of the teachers in New South Wales are new scheme teachers. Every five years they must do a certain number of professional development hours in order to retain their accreditation as a teacher. So 55 per cent of teachers in New South Wales must already meet the standards set by the New South Wales Institute of Teachers. The Australian Institute of Teachers and School Leadership [AITSL] has used the standards developed in New South Wales as the basis for teachers' standards nationally.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: This is not answering the question.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: That is supported by the union. The member for Marrickville can ask Angelo Gavrielatos from the Australian Education Union. I understand that the teaching standards developed by the Institute of Teachers are supported by the Australian Education Union and the New South Wales Teachers Federation. Certainly, Angelo supports them. Indeed, last year when the Commonwealth tried to introduce a national partnership to reward teacher quality it proposed to judge teachers on National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy [NAPLAN] results. As we all know, every school is different. A school in a more disadvantaged area of New South Wales will receive poorer NAPLAN results, and in other areas there will be better NAPLAN results. That is a terrible way to judge the performance of a teacher.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance. This is the third question we have asked the Minister. He has avoided every question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard the point of order. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr Michael Daley: This is an opportunity for the Minister to show the House—

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

Mr Michael Daley: —that he knows how it will work.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. I place the member for Maroubra on three calls to order.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! It is entirely predictable as I asked the member for Maroubra several times to resume his seat and he did not do so. Is the member arguing with me?

Mr Michael Daley: Yes.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Maroubra. If the member wants to argue with me he can do so in my office, not in the Chamber.

[The member for Maroubra left the Chamber, accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: This reform is complex. I take this opportunity to inform all members of Parliament about how the system works. I am sorry if I cannot provide the answer in 12 seconds, but it takes a bit longer. New South Wales is leading Australia in terms of this reform and linking salary progression for teachers to meeting the standards set by the Australian Institute of Teachers. New South Wales is the first jurisdiction in Australia to do so. Those standards are set by the Australian Institute of Teachers. Essentially, the Australian Institute of Teachers has taken the New South Wales standards and adopted them nationwide.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance. The Minister's explanation is interesting but it does not answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand the point of order and the previous point of order. The member for Marrickville will resume her seat, and I will rule on all those points of order. I remind all members that I have no power to request a Minister to specifically answer a question, only that the Minister be relevant to the question. That is the only power I have under the standing orders. I have been listening carefully to what he has been saying and he is being relevant. The Minister has the call.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The standards are well established and the process for measuring performance against standards is well developed.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It involves principals and school education directors. It involves the Australian Institute of Teachers and the New South Wales Institute of Teachers and that is the process we will be using. *[Time expired.]*

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr GARETH WARD: My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women. How is the Government giving greater certainty to social housing applicants to make decisions about their living arrangements as a result of greater government transparency?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for Kiama for his interest in social housing in his electorate. Today we announced that the Government would, for the first time, publish social housing waiting lists by electorate as a great boost to transparency by this side of the House. It will put an end to lies and secrets. We already know that Labor hid unreachable tenants when it reported the number of people on the social housing waiting lists, but that is not where the secrecy ended. Labor did not make public how many properties were available in each area, how many people were waiting in each area and how long each applicant could be expected to wait. Labor was so ashamed of how it was managing social housing that it did not think anybody else deserved to know. The problem is that Labor failed to consider the impact this would have—

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: —on the people Labor purported to support. How can people manage their lives when they go into their public housing office every week or every month and ask, "Have I got my house yet?", and somebody looks back at them and says, "I don't know. It's a long wait."? What do people do in that situation?

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: People put their lives on hold, which is what tens of thousands of people in New South Wales have been doing for years. They have been waiting for a house that may or may not arise.

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

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: The idea is to ensure that we can deliver a better service to people seeking public housing and that public housing tenants have the opportunity to look at the waiting list by area and decide whether they would rather move somewhere else or there is the possibility that they might look at the local private rental market. This gives them the opportunity to manage their own lives instead of sitting in the never-never, waiting for the department to reveal the truth—which, of course, it never did. They no longer need to keep contact with the office, waiting for some information.

We have four categories—less than two years, two to five years, five to 10 years and more than 10 years—that will be updated every year. This will give us transparent and honest government that will help people make the sorts of decisions they need to make about their lives and enable government to provide the necessary services. In the last six years of the former Government we had six housing Ministers with 56,000 people on the housing waiting list and a \$300 million social housing maintenance backlog. The former Government hid almost 7,000 applicants and left tens of thousands more in the dark, without relevant information. A decent government would allow people to make decisions about their lives. I do not know how those opposite could sleep at night, knowing that people lived, week in, week out, wanting to know what they could do but nobody would tell them.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: And if you do not sleep at night you are having nightmares.

Ms Kristina Keneally: Come to Redfern tomorrow.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Those opposite let people go on for years with false hope.

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order. The Leader of the House and the member for Heffron will cease their discussion across the Chamber. I call the member for Heffron to order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: This idea is the sort of transparency we need. We have reached agreement on a national regulatory system for community housing providers. We have a National Partnership Agreement on

Homelessness. We have provided an additional \$101 million in round four of the National Rental Affordability Scheme and we have finalised the Housing and Mental Health Agreement, which aims to improve the housing outcomes and general wellbeing of people with mental health problems. By the way, we have split the portfolio—

Ms Kristina Keneally: So that's a no to Redfern tomorrow?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The member for Heffron might do better if she started writing letters to me on behalf of constituents.

Ms Kristina Keneally: Point of order: The Minister asked for letters to be written to her. In fact, I have written to her—

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

Ms Kristina Keneally: The Minister is misleading the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order.

[Extension of time granted.]

Ms PRU GOWARD: After several months of receiving letters from staff of the member for Heffron about her constituents, because it was beneath the member's dignity to actually sign a letter herself, I had to—

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: Government members sign their own letters; it is a work practice for members of Parliament and they expect members on the other side of the House also to sign their own letters. But it was not good enough for the member for Heffron, and after several months I had to say in a reply that in future I would like letters from the member for Heffron or I would be replying to the staff member.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Heffron will come to order and cease interjecting. If she wishes to have a private conversation she should do so outside the Chamber. Government members will come to order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I conclude by assuring the House that we are working on a number of initiatives—the renewal of two new estates, Airds Bradbury and Macquarie Park. We have launched the Affordable Housing Taskforce. Platform 70 in Woolloomooloo is proving to be a great initiative and once again the Government is focused on real reforms to improve services, get rid of secrecy and lies, and undo Labor's waste and mismanagement—and we do sign our own letters.

LOCAL SCHOOLS, LOCAL DECISIONS PROGRAM

Ms SONIA HORNERY: My question is directed to the Minister for Education.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House will resume his seat. I call the Deputy Premier to order for the second time. I call the member for Baulkham Hills to order.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Given that 76 per cent of hard-to-staff schools in New South Wales are not part of the incentive transfer system, how will the Minister guarantee that every class will have a qualified teacher under the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms?

[Interruption]

I taught in Walgett; I do know.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I enjoy today having four questions from the Opposition because, as I said at the beginning of question time, it is always fantastic to have the opportunity to speak in this Chamber about the reforms that the New South Wales Government is introducing. One of the interesting things that I noticed about the campaign that the union has run—the Communist-Stalinist-Trotsky troika that has now coalesced; the

meeting is tomorrow night at four down at Sussex Street, we will put our minarets up specially and paint them red—is that it has not said what we did not do. We kept incentive transfers, as I have always committed to, being from western New South Wales. I know this is particularly significant to the member for Murray-Darling, the member for Barwon, the member for Dubbo and other places around New South Wales such as Burrinjuck and Northern Tablelands where it is very important to have an incentive transfer system.

We have kept that system even though Labor tried to get rid of it a few years ago. It was a great win for The Nationals and the Liberal Party in New South Wales. It is delivering for students in hard-to-staff schools in New South Wales. We have kept the nominated transfers. The union was concerned that that would go as part of these reforms. I have spoken to particularly senior members of the union executive many times during the past 12 months and prior to the election about potential reforms or potential changes, and they expressed concern that nominated transfers were going to go. They are staying. They were concerned that serviced transfers were going to go. They are staying. Incentives are also offered to schools to attract staff.

I admire the member for Wallsend for teaching at Walgett because it is a remote community and we want experienced, well-qualified teachers in those difficult and remote locations. There have been incentives in place other than the incentive transfer system, and those incentives remain in place. But our Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms will give principals greater discretion regarding their budget. A principal in a more difficult-to-staff school, which is perhaps not entitled to any of the other incentives available, has discretion within the school's budget to offer additional incentives. Principals can do that; they can choose how to spend their money. They will have the discretion to offer an additional incentive, perhaps one that the department has never thought of offering. They might offer return flights to somewhere; whatever they might choose to do.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: This is the whole point of giving schools greater decision-making power over how they spend their money. Members need not believe me if they do not want to. The *Sydney Morning Herald* on 13 March noted, "Students reap rewards of greater autonomy for principals". The *Australian Financial Review* on the same day noted, "Fewer rules, more learning". The *Wagga Daily Advertiser* of 13 March noted, "Performance pay would aid education". The *Manly Daily*, which I subscribe to—we all do—noted, "Principal keen on reform. Local support for changing of how schools are run". The *Australian* on 15 March noted, "Schools must meet local needs. NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli is on the right track".

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The *Australian* on 12 March noted, "At last, a career structure worthy of a profession". That goes to the previous question from the member for Marrickville, who canned the idea of linking salary progression to meeting standards. That is not what the *Australian* thinks in its editorial. The *Daily Telegraph* of 12 March said in its editorial, "A revolution puts the student first", and noted in the same paper on the same day, "Red tape cut, not teachers". I am very proud of these reforms and I am happy to answer any more questions about them. [*Time expired.*]

RETIREMENT VILLAGE CONTRACTS

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Fair Trading. Can the Minister provide an update on the development of a standard retirement village contract?

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I thank the member for his question and acknowledge his strong interest in the wellbeing of retirees and the O'Farrell-Stoner reform agenda. Retirement village contracts have been a genuine cause of concern for many years. They are often confusing, extraordinarily complex and written in dense legalese. As a consequence, we have seen many retirees enter into legally binding arrangements that they and their families have not fully understood. This has led to some very stressful and unfortunate circumstances. Consider, for example, the elderly retirement village resident who wanted to move closer to her children due to her deteriorating health but was unable to afford to do so because of restrictive village terms and conditions. Consider the family of a woman who died in a retirement village and were shocked by their liability for exit fees and recurrent charges.

Consider also the elderly lady who wanted to move to a retirement village closer to her family and was unaware she would have to pay recurrent charges for two years after she left her unit. There are far too many similar stories. That is why the Liberals and The Nationals made an election commitment to develop standard

terms for retirement village contracts. This, we promised, would be developed by an expert committee comprising representatives of residents, operators and, unfortunately, lawyers. I am delighted to inform the House that this is yet another commitment on which the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has delivered. I have this week released for consultation a draft set of standard terms for retirement village contracts. This is further evidence that this is a Government of delivery. It is further evidence that this is a Government that does the hard yards and the heavy lifting so that promises become reality.

It is further evidence that this is a Government that listens to the concerns of the 36,000 residents in more than 600 retirement villages across the State, and it is absolute evidence that this is a Government that gets the done job. I take the opportunity to thank the members of the expert committee; in particular, I acknowledge and pay tribute to the chairman, Mr Morris Williams, for his hard work. Each and every one of them has spent many months thrashing out draft standard contract terms that will deliver for residents and the retirement village industry. These standard terms will for the first time in Australia deliver transparency for residents. No other State has progressed so far on this issue, but I have to say that at least they tried, which is more than can be said for those opposite. No other State Government has had the passion for reform and promised delivery that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has.

Mr John Robertson: So much and yet so little.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: I promised the Leader of the Opposition that I would let him know if any of the villages were looking for an idiot.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will return to the leave of the question and not incite the Opposition members.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: For the first time in Australia, prospective residents will see contracts that set out their rights and obligations with clarity, simplicity and certainty—standard terms that will enable residents to more easily make comparisons between villages; standard terms that will provide the clarity, simplicity and certainty needed to encourage even more people to embrace retirement village living; standard terms that will encourage innovative new models; and retirement village options that will suit the lifestyle and financial position of more people. We on this side know this is all great news for those considering entering a retirement village.

As I said, there are 36,000 people in this State who already live in retirement villages—and that magic figure of 36,000 is about the number of votes the Opposition got at the last election. Unfortunately, because the previous Government put this in the very large too-hard basket, many current residents of retirement villages are unaware of the complexities of their arrangements because, over the course of 16 years, the previous Government could not find the time or muster the energy to consider retirement village contracts. Because of this, there are many residents who signed complicated and opaque agreements that are still current.

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

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: In little over a year this Government has shown that we not only care but are prepared to do what we can to protect retirees and grow the retirement village sector. Finally, I look forward to keeping the House informed and up to date with the progress of this commitment.

SEA LEVEL RISE

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. Given that the New South Wales Sea Level Rise Policy Statement includes a disclaimer against relying on the information it contains, and because of apparent confusion within local government and the community on the issue, can the Minister advise whether the current review will provide greater certainty about how the State policy must be applied by coastal councils?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question. There is no question that the issue of sea level rise is greatly concerning to the community, to the councils that represent the community, and indeed to this State Government, which represents the New South Wales community. I understand that there have been some serious attempts to address this issue over recent years and to give the community some sense of certainty. I remind the House and the member for Lake Macquarie that it was a

Coalition Government that introduced the first coastal policy in 1990. Since that time there have been some quite serious concerns. There is a particular member of Parliament who may even have become Leader of the Opposition who made some supreme efforts to confuse the entire New South Wales community—

Mr Bryan Doyle: Name him.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I should name him, but instead I will give members a hint. Who was the Minister for the Environment for just three months and managed to stuff up the coastal rise policy completely?

[Interruption]

That is right; it was John Robertson—excellent. The one thing that communities require is certainty. I have a document headed "NSW Sea Level Rise Policy Statement". I love the first page, which is about certainty on sea level rise. John Robertson made sure the first paragraph stated:

No representation is made about the accuracy, completeness or suitability for any particular purpose of the source material included in this document.

In other words, there are no guarantees on anything. I congratulate Lake Macquarie City Council on the work it is doing and the member for Lake Macquarie on his interest and concern about this issue. Lake Macquarie is an area that is potentially very vulnerable—somewhere in the order of between 5,100 or 5,200 homes and about 6,500 homes have been identified as being at risk of flooding if the predictions turn out to be true.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The situation from the Government's perspective is that it is about not just trying to give certainty but trying to reach an accurate position as to what is going on. I advise the member for Lake Macquarie that members who represent the Ballina-Byron area, the Minister for Local Government, the Treasurer, the member for Pittwater, the member for Gosford and all those who represent electorates along the coast are concerned about this issue. We need to get to the truth in order to give people certainty. In response, the Government has established a ministerial task force.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: As recently as just a few days ago, representatives of the NSW Chief Scientist indicated to the task force that the science was evolving quite rapidly at the moment and they anticipate that it might be another couple of years before they are able to give us some definitive answer. That is a problem because we need to give communities a sense of certainty. Currently, councils take an approach that is often very much to the detriment of local property owners. Property owners are concerned because they cannot get insurance and they are being harried about the possibility of effectively having to abandon their property. The Government is very conscious of all those issues.

The review task force is keen to try to work as quickly as possible to bring forward guidelines that will bring certainty to property owners up and down the coast. I say very clearly that the Government recognises the need to provide a framework, possibly a legislative framework, that will give some certainty to home owners and councils about exactly how we can go on enjoying the magnificent coastline that borders New South Wales. The Government is not happy with the total mess it was left by the former Labor Government, which left everybody worried and in disarray. We want to remove that worry and provide some certainty, and we will do so.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: My question is addressed to the Premier. What progress is the Government making to keep its election commitments?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that many of them are on three calls to order. This is the final question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Castle Hill for his question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will stop waving a document around.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank him for ensuring that one of our key election commitments, the North West Rail Link, has been honoured. It was fantastic to be with him at the Castle Hill Show and to announce that the southern option had been decided as our preferred option. The Government was elected on a platform of rebuilding the economy, restoring infrastructure and putting in place reliable services that people depend upon. And it is doing just that. We have been working hard as a Government, as a Government party, to deliver on our election commitments. For the first time in 16 years there is a Government in this place that is determined to deliver on what it promised to the people at the last election. Last Sunday, together with the Minister for the Environment and local members, we established Dharawal National Park—something promised by those opposite but which we delivered in our first year. The *Macarthur Advertiser* was simply wonderful: "Promises Kept". My favourite paper will be framed and will go on my wall.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The Premier is misleading the House. The headline says "Promise Kept" not "Promises Kept".

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The member for Macquarie Fields has been in this place long enough to know the standing orders.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We appreciate the member's interest in trivia. The upgrades of hospitals in Blacktown, Campbelltown, Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Bega, Albury and Dubbo are important to those communities. and work on the North West Rail Link—in which the member is interested—the M5 West widening and the Erskine Park Link Road are important for members in Sydney's west in linking that employment land. The communities can see for themselves that the Government is making progress. On Monday we celebrated our first year anniversary. How? We celebrated by issuing a workman-like document that sets out in detail what we have done over the past 12 months. What did those opposite do to celebrate it? They put out a glossy brochure; they are determined to keep Kinko's in business on their own. The Leader of the Opposition launched a new website—but make sure you put "au" on the end of the address otherwise it brings up the website of a comedian. The Leader of the Opposition may be many things, but he is certainly no comedian. If you click on "team" on that website, who comes up? Do any of those opposite appear?

Government members: No.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Do any members in the other Chamber come up?

Government members: No.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The only person that comes up is the Leader of the Opposition. I am not quite sure what the state of counting is in caucus at present, but he is clearly pretty sensitive. A couple of times today the Leader of the Opposition has taken some trivial points of order, such as saying the Minister for Education should sit down when a point of order is taken. We know why. The Leader of the Opposition is the trivia master of this place, and he is searching to be the trivia master of New South Wales. Those of you who listen to morning radio would have heard him ring in last week and win Adam Spencer's morning quiz by working out who the voice from the vault was. It was Henri Szeps.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order—

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

Mr Paul Lynch: Two standing orders are being breached: The first is Standing Order 129. Whatever this answer is, it is not relevant to the question that was asked. Secondly, the Premier is clearly in breach of Standing Order 73. If the Premier wants to launch an attack upon the Leader of the Opposition he should do so by way of substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! On the second point of order, there is no point of order. I would take it as a compliment if somebody accused me of being a trivia master. On the first point of order, there is no point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is a tough place when I cannot give someone a pat on the back for knowing so much about trivia. Why does the Leader of the Opposition know Henri Szeps? Could it be from Henri Szeps' roles in a number of series and movies: *The Edge of Power*, *Misleading Cases*, *Say You Want Me*, *The Return of Captain Invincible*—but, personally, I think that is about the member for Toongabbie. For

someone who claims to be the hardest-working Leader of the Opposition in the State's history, perhaps he knows Henri Szeps from his cameo piece in the 2001 television series *Flat Chat*. The Leader of the Opposition is about to take part in a trivia quiz night for Unions NSW. *[Time expired.]*

The SPEAKER: Order! Time for questions has expired.

Question time concluded at 3.19 p.m.

PETITIONS

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

Armidale Rural Referral Hospital Upgrade

Petition requesting support for funding for the major upgrade of Armidale Rural Referral Hospital, received from **Mr Richard Torbay**.

Quaama Heavy Vehicle Rest Area

Petition requesting a review of the selection process for a heavy vehicle rest stop at the junction of Christophers Road and Princes Highway, Quaama, and the consideration of feasible alternative sites, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

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**.

Animals Performing in Circuses

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.

Schedule of the amendments referred to in the Legislative Council's message of 28 March 2012

- No. 1 Page 4, schedule 1 [5] and [6], lines 1–13. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 2 Page 4, schedule 1 [10], lines 29–31. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 3 Page 5, schedule 1 [11] and [12], lines 1–7. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 4 Page 6, schedule 1 [15], line 3. Omit "3 weeks". Insert instead "4 weeks".

No. 5 Pages 6 and 7, schedule 1 [17], line 21 on page 6 to line 20 on page 7. Omit all words on those lines.

No. 6 Page 7, schedule 1 [17], lines 21–33. Omit all words on those lines.

No. 7 Long title. Omit "the status of councils and county councils".

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [3.22 p.m.]: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendments.

I thank the members who participated in the debate on the Local Government Amendment Bill 2011, which contained some key elements. It extended from 21 years to 30 years the maximum period for which a council may grant a lease or licence in respect of community land. I take this opportunity to thank the member for Lake Macquarie and acknowledge his initiative in this regard. The bill also makes it clear that a vacancy in a civic office does not occur due to the holder of the office being absent from three consecutive ordinary meetings of the council if the holder of the office was suspended from the office by the Pecuniary Interests and Disciplinary Tribunal for misbehaviour.

The Government proposed that the caretaker period before a local government election be brought into line with council meeting schedules. That period is now four weeks instead of the originally proposed three weeks. The bill also provides that the voting system in a contested election is to be optional preferential if one councillor is to be elected, and proportional if two or more councillors are to be elected. The current system provides that voting must be proportional if three or more councillors are to be elected and optional preferential if one or two councillors are to be elected. The Liberal-Nationals Government keeps its election promises, and it consults and liaises with the community and local government bodies. It is disappointing that the Opposition blocked a key element of this bill in the other place last night.

Amendment of the legislation relating to the body politic was identified by the Local Government and Shires Associations as an important element of the election priorities that it released last March. The associations wanted councils once again to be bodies corporate, which they were for some 80 years until recently, to enable them to access certain Federal funding programs, and the Government agreed to that request. That provision was rejected in the other place and there is now real concern about councils' status as bodies politic. I table for the information of members a letter from the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council addressing this issue. This is just one example of the correspondence that has been received about this issue. The letter states:

In essence this means all councils in NSW (who are not required to be incorporated under the state legislation) cannot access an important federal grant program to support Aboriginal communities.

It is a disgrace that New South Wales councils will not be able to access these important programs. Their status as bodies politic means that they cannot access vital funding for local community programs, including the \$14 million Federal fund designed to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities dealing with chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and stroke. It is disappointing that this funding will not be available to our councils. I want the community to know that it was the Opposition that prevented that important funding being available to New South Wales. I am sure all members of the Government are as disappointed as I am that the Labor Party has denied these Aboriginal communities access to community-funded programs. I thank all members in this Chamber and the other Chamber for their contributions to the debate.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [3.26 p.m.]: The Opposition has raised a number of concerns about the principal bill, although it supported the amendments moved in the other place last night that we are now considering. From the outset we strongly rejected the Government's proposal to corporatise local councils. I acknowledge the arguments put by the Minister, but I do not accept them. It is not necessary for councils to be corporatised to receive Federal funding. The Minister's statement in that regard is completely incorrect. Numerous examples proving that have been offered since the original bill was amended in 2008 to ensure that councils became bodies politic—some of them were mentioned in the debate in the other place last night.

They include direct funding of \$18,000 provided to Gunnedah Shire Council for two trainee and apprentice positions and \$6 million provided to Canterbury City Council for the rebuilding of Belmore Park. Roads to Recovery funding was also accessed by many councils, including Port Macquarie-Hastings Council. In addition, Penrith City Council received \$50,000 to \$60,000 for trainees and apprentices, Tweed Shire Council

received funding for the Murwillumbah community centre and so on. None of those councils appear to have been disadvantaged by their body politic status. It was vital that the other place supported the amendments dealing with local government employee protection in the event of amalgamation.

The Government was always wrong to attempt to shorten the period of employee protection from three years to one year and it was sensible of members in the other place to protect workers and their conditions. The Opposition has always opposed the provisions in the bill designed to allow councillors to be present for debate on and to vote on council motions dealing with issues in which they have a pecuniary interest if the matter being considered relates to the making or amending of an environmental planning instrument. The Opposition believes that that provision poses unnecessary risks with regard to corruption. We are deeply disappointed that the Government has rejected our concerns and that it is going ahead with that proposal.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [3.28 p.m.], in reply: I reiterate my point that the Government is very disappointed that the upper House amended the legislation to prevent councils being made bodies corporate. As a result of that they will not be able to access a \$14 million Commonwealth program that is designed to assist Aboriginal communities. Members opposite can say whatever they like, but that is the reality. It is in black and white in correspondence from the Federal Government refusing to fund councils because they are not bodies corporate.

Question—That the Legislative Council's amendments be agreed—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendments agreed to.

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

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYMENT AND MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 28 March 2012.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [3.29 p.m.]: I support the Public Sector Employment and Management Bill 2012. Before I go any further I put on the record my support for public servants in New South Wales, and in particular in Smithfield. I stress that public servants are needed and that they do a fantastic job, and in many cases they do so in very difficult circumstances. This bill is not an attack on the public sector or public servants, as the Opposition would delude people into thinking. Rather, this bill is an attack on waste. For far too long the waste was ignored by the Labor Government; thus this bill will make sure that waste is dealt with by making public employment more efficient.

The amendments proposed in this bill will have no effect on essential front-line employees, such as teachers, police officers, firefighters, nurses and paramedics, as they are employed under separate industrial arrangements. This is a much-needed bill that any reasonable public servant would and should support because it brings fairness to employment. The amendments in this bill to section 56 are necessary to reform the existing outdated system into a more reasonable and meaningful one by providing mechanisms to support the ability to transfer a person either to an officer position or to an ongoing position in another public sector agency. This is a sensible and practical change that will help deploy excess employees to a wider range of vacant positions and make public service more efficient.

I believe in the words prescribed in our National Anthem, "with wealth for toil", and I believe in the core Australian value of giving people a fair go. This bill is about a fair go for taxpayers: it will prevent public servants who are excess to a department's needs to remain employed and continue to collect a pay cheque. A public servant should be employed only if there is a need for that employment and should be paid only if he or she is employed to fill that need—a rather simple concept that only the former Government could fail to understand. Amendments to section 56 of the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 are required to support the Government's policy for management of excess employees. This is the policy that abolished the former Government's longstanding practice of no forced redundancies that enabled employees with no permanent position to drift in the system indefinitely.

Section 56 enables department heads to terminate the services of excess employees who no longer have a position. A recent judgement of the New South Wales Industrial Court significantly broadened the test in section 56 that a department head must apply to establish that no useful work is available before terminating the service of an excess employee. Previously the test for "useful work" had been limited to checking the availability of vacant permanent positions for redeployment. The new test proposed by the court requires checking of all work opportunities across the public sector, including temporary and contract employment, before an excess employee's service can be terminated. It is not realistic to expect department heads to search for any type of work, even very short-term work, for excess employees across the public sector.

In practice, this would make it virtually impossible for a department head to demonstrate that his or her obligations under section 56 have been met and to terminate the employment of an excess employee. As I said at the outset, amendments to section 56 are necessary to return the more reasonable requirement to transfer a person either to an officer position—that means a permanent position in a department—or to an ongoing position in another public sector agency. This Government believes that departments must be able to manage their workforces and implement organisational reforms to achieve more responsive and cost-effective service delivery for the people of New South Wales. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.33 p.m.]: I support the Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment Bill 2012. One of the frustrations of the former Labor Government for the community was its lack of preparedness to approach the management of the public sector in a practical sense. There is no question that this Government has already made some major inroads to establishing a different culture within a broad sector of the public service, or what I like to refer to as the civil service. As a community and as a Government we certainly need to respect the civil service—public service—independent advice and we need to respect what it does, because the public servants of this State do an amazing job supporting the Government.

It should never be forgotten that public servants in every area of endeavour are working very hard—and I emphasise "very hard"—to support the taxpayers of New South Wales. They work very hard in a variety of areas, whether it is through the health service, the police service, the teaching service, or various government agencies—planning, water and so on. They are working hard. With the benefit of that viewpoint, it is interesting to note that if one talked to public servants about the activities of the former Government one would find frustration among a large section of the public service or civil servant community because despite their individual efforts at working hard and delivering a productive outcome for the State, there were some individuals—as one would expect in any large organisation—who were not performing for the taxpayers of the State. They were not doing the job that was necessary to produce the best outcomes for the State.

Every one of us who works in this State pays tax. If we are working we pay tax. We pay tax to support various public service activities, public service agencies, and I think there is a general sense that we are happy to see our taxpayer-funded dollars supporting what is generally a magnificent public service. Workers in the public service are taxpayers as well, but there was mutual frustration that some in the public sector were not pulling their weight and not doing the job that taxpayers—and indeed their workmates—would expect of them. With that background, there was frustration that the former Government had a policy of effectively ensuring that some of those who were no longer required, perhaps because they were not doing the job in the first place, were featherbedded. They were being paid taxpayers' money to keep them in a position that really was not necessary or that they were unable to fulfil.

When the Liberal-National Government came to office in March last year I think there was broad acceptance amongst all members of Parliament who make up the Liberal-Nationals team that the public service is much needed, much respected and much valued. But there was also a view that for that respect, that acceptance of the value of the public service, the public sector had to be able to rid itself of those who were no longer productive—for a variety of reasons. Amongst a number of reasons, that is why the Government introduced the Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment Bill 2012. The Government announced its policy to deal with excess employees and, accordingly, the bill contains amendments to section 56 that are required to support the O'Farrell Liberal-Nationals Government's policy for management of excess employees.

This is obviously a policy that abolishes the former Government's longstanding and, I would argue, very unacceptable practice of no forced redundancies that allowed some employees, and it was a relatively small number, with no permanent position to simply drift inside the public service indefinitely—forever. When I heard of the various groups of people being classified as excess employees I wondered how it could be good for their self-esteem to simply sit in a room possibly for years without making a serious effort to try to get an alternative

job. Some would obviously be incapable of getting another job but, given the right encouragement, most would be capable of getting one. In the private sector when people lose their job they go and look for another one, and they usually find one. A balance needs to be struck that reflects the commitment of the public service to the service of the public and to respect the majority of workers in the public service who do an amazing job and who are much valued. The bill genuinely seeks to strike that balance and to provide the opportunity for excess employees to be managed out of the public sector.

I am aware that the Industrial Court of New South Wales has raised some obstacles. Sometimes I wonder about the court's connection with reality in some of its decisions. I refer in particular to the decision handed down last year by the court when the definitions around permanent excess employees and what had to happen to find them alternative work was in effect re-engineered. To move those workers on the department heads had to first make an effort not only to try to find a permanent position for them, but also to look broadly across the public sector to ascertain if there were any possible positions anywhere, including temporary positions. It is ridiculous to impose that requirement on the heads of government agencies, public servants themselves, who are trying to ensure their agencies are productive.

I have yet to meet the head of a public service agency that does not have the interests of his or her employees at heart. No-one rushes out to remove an employee in the public sector. Indeed, I would like to think that these days no-one in the private sector does that either. I accept that old rogues will do it, but from my experience in the public sector it is not something that regularly becomes a priority for any senior manager—it is just not done. Generally the culture of the public sector is one of a caring civil service that tries desperately to look after those who are part of the team. First, they try to retrain them and then to find them alternative jobs. It seems to me that the decision-making process of the Industrial Court was outside the context of reality. It had to be a thought process that started from a cynical view that public service heads, public servants themselves, did not have an interest in the civil servants who worked with them. That is not my experience.

Disappointingly, the Industrial Court put those people under suspicion as to whether they had an interest in looking after their staff. The bill seeks to restrict that approach and to give those who manage our civil servants a better capacity to properly manage them. As Minister for Planning and Infrastructure I would expect any senior civil servant under me to try to find appropriate work for our employees. But if the economy demands it, or if those employees are not performing, then agency heads have to have that capacity. This bill will enable our civil service to become a proud civil service within the context of worldwide expectation for civil services.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.44 p.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contribution to this debate, specifically: the members for the electorates of Port Stephens, Shellharbour, Myall Lakes, Toongabbie, Riverstone, Cabramatta, Camden, Fairfield, Drummoyne, Liverpool, Gosford, Blacktown and Wakehurst. The community rightly has the expectation of a high-performing and customer-focused public service, and properly designed performance management systems will contribute to meeting those expectations. Therefore this bill amends the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 to require the Public Service Commissioner to develop and issue guidelines to public sector agencies on the essential elements of performance management systems.

The bill seeks to amend sections 56 and 57 of the Act. As members know, the Government introduced a new policy for the management of excess employees from 1 August 2011, ending Labor's no forced redundancy policy. The new policy makes it easier for agencies to adapt to changing priorities and to implement much-needed organisational reforms. Make no mistake, the Government wants to help public servants who lose their jobs as a result of changing priorities or structural reforms, but employees who cannot be redeployed cannot be kept on the books indefinitely. If an excess employee declines voluntary redundancy and cannot find a new job within three months that employee will be made redundant—as is the case in States governed by Labor governments. Unions challenged the new arrangements in the Industrial Court.

While the new policy was unaffected by the court's judgement, the Industrial Court proposed an impractical and onerous interpretation of section 56 of the Act—namely, that an excess employee cannot be made redundant as long as "useful work" of any kind exists anywhere across the entire public sector, including work undertaken on a temporary, casual and contractual basis. If this interpretation of section 56 were to stand it would be almost impossible to satisfy the requirements and terminate the service of an excess employee. The Government is retaining the requirement that before terminating the service of an excess employee a department head must be satisfied there is no vacant permanent position for that person, not only in their own department but also in all other departments and all other agencies of the public sector.

However, my Government and the community will not tolerate people being on the public payroll when there is no position for them. The Act will also be amended by new section 103A to exclude the application of the unfair contracts provisions in division 2 of part 9 of chapter 2 of the Industrial Relations Act to arrangements for dispensing with the service of excess employees. The amendments are necessary to avoid lengthy and ongoing court proceedings that seek to prevent agencies from implementing reasonable changes to their excess employee policies. The amendments will clarify that the Industrial Court will no longer have the power to unilaterally determine the provisions that apply to excess employees in the public sector. That is rightly a matter of detail for the Government to determine through policy decisions from time to time, as was determined when Bob Carr introduced the original policy in his period of premiership.

However, it is important to note that redundancy arrangements in industrial instruments will not be displaced, and individual excess employee disputes and unfair dismissal matters will still be able to be heard and determined by the Industrial Relations Commission. The bill also makes it clear that the amendments do not affect any orders of the Industrial Court that were made prior to the commencement of the legislation. The proposed changes will support the Government's fair and reasonable policy for managing excess employees and improve the ability of agencies to deliver flexible, quality and better targeted public services in line with community expectations. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 65

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

Noes, 20

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

Question 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.

RETAIL TRADING AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Agreement in Principle

Debate resumed from 28 March 2012.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.55 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Retail Trading Amendment Bill 2012, and indicate at the outset that the Opposition opposes the bill. Without doubt this is one of the most despicable pieces of legislation the Government has introduced in its 12 months in office. I know that is a big call, but the bill rips away public holidays from mums and dads in the retail sector who deserve, like most others, to spend quality time with their family and friends. This bill has been rushed into the Parliament to be rushed through by Easter by a Government that is feeling sensitive about the criticisms of the *Daily Telegraph*. All this week we have had announcement after announcement, which have been more like thought bubbles than well thought through policies, from a Government that has no idea and no vision.

The Government is led by a Premier who has had the year of living lazy. In the past year the Government has done nothing other than set up committees, reviews and inquiries. That is all we see from the Government. It has no plans to make the life of people in New South Wales better. The Government has no vision to solve the problems that it alleges exist, and it has no ability to provide policies or legislation that will make life better for the people of New South Wales. What we see in this bill is yet another thought bubble because the Government is feeling sensitive. The Premier of New South Wales, who has the largest glass jaw in the country, is feeling sensitive because the *Daily Telegraph* said he has done nothing.

We have read editorials stating that the Premier is doing nothing to meet the promises he made to the people of New South Wales in the March 2011 election. We see a Premier who reverts to form—the form that we expect from Coalition governments, whether it is at Federal or State level. It is a well-worn track that Labor members always knew would occur because the Coalition wasted its last four years in opposition and it has wasted its 12 months in government. To clear the record, that is four years with the member for Ku-ring-gai as leader when in Opposition.

Mr Paul Lynch: They wasted the 12 years before that.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The 12 years before that were well and truly wasted, as confirmed by the people of New South Wales. The Government is prepared to continue to attack workers and the rights of working people as a thought bubble because it must look like it is doing something to make it better in New South Wales. I am intrigued to know about the debate in Cabinet. The Ministers who have nominated themselves as members of the conservative forum—the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast; the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice; the Minister for Fair Trading; and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for the Hunter, and Vice-President of the Executive Council—hold themselves up as great pillars of conservative forces, argue that they believe in Christian values and say they believe in the rights of families. I wonder what they had to say when this debate was taking place in Cabinet. I wonder what the conveners of the conservative forum think of this particular bill: Dominic Perrottet, Chris Spence—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: I tried to whisper that the Leader of the Opposition should return to the leave of the bill and I thought he was headed that way. I ask that he be drawn back to the leave of the bill. We look forward to hearing his substantive arguments for opposing this bill.

Mr Richard Amery: To the point of order: I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the fact that this is an agreement in principle debate. The motives of the Government and the general background to the bill are relevant and appropriate for this debate. The Leader of the House knows that. We are not debating the bill in detail. It is general debate.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Further to the point of order: The member should be debating the bill. He is not permitted to talk about whatever he likes. The next minute we will hear what time he woke up this morning and his breakfast details.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The Leader of the Opposition will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I will be interested to listen to the contributions of members of the conservative forum, such as Dominic Perrottet, Chris Spence, Scot MacDonald, Greg Aplin, Kevin Conolly, Tanya Davies—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: There is no way that reference to individual members of the Coalition, the flying flea circus or anything else is within the leave of the bill. I ask that the Leader of the Opposition be directed to return to the leave of the bill. We have given him an opportunity to speak this afternoon and he is not even talking about the bill. Does he care so little about workers that he cannot talk about the issues in the bill? He should talk about it and get it right.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I have directed the Leader of the Opposition to return to the leave of the bill.

Mr Paul Lynch: To the point of order: The Leader of the House has been here long enough to know that the person who leads for the Opposition in these debates can raise a much wider range of issues than would be the case with any other member. That is a longstanding principle in this place. There are a series of rulings from the Chair in this regard, and half of the rulings are mine. If there is doubt about that I suggest, Madam Acting-Speaker, that you seek some advice from the Clerks.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition to return to the leave of the bill and I give him the opportunity to speak.

Mr Paul Lynch: And I would suggest, Madam Acting-Speaker, that when this is over you get some advice because you clearly don't know.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I am looking forward to hearing what the Leader of the Opposition has to say about the bill.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I am also looking forward to the contributions of the others who have aligned themselves with the so-called conservative forum—I see a few of them on the Government benches—or the contribution of the communications spokesperson in the other place, Charlie Lynn. I know that this so-called organisation of the conservative forum—

Mr Darren Webber: It has more members than you.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I remind the member for Wyong that he is on three calls to order.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The member for Wyong is offended because I did not read his name as a member of the conservative forum. Its members probably have a secret handshake and they wear a little flag so that they can all wink at each other as they walk down the corridor.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: It is going to be a long three years if this is the level of debate on substantive bills. There are boundaries and the Leader of the Opposition is stepping outside those boundaries.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! For the third time I ask the Leader of the Opposition to return to the leave of the bill.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: This bill goes to the very heart of what these members allege they represent—these people who are going to vote for the bill in this Chamber. These people purport to represent family values and the interests of families. This bill rips away the rights of every family member in the retail sector and in the warehousing and distribution sector to refuse work on Boxing Day, Christmas Day, Easter Sunday and Good Friday. As much as Government members would like to deny it, this bill will hang around their necks like a lead weight. When the bill was introduced, the Treasurer—and I know he is not on the list of the conservative forum members, they have not been able to recruit him yet; I am happy to hand out the list — said that for employers to open on restricted trading days they "must use only staff who have freely elected to work without coercion, harassment, threat or intimidation".

That reminds me of the words that rang in my ears from 2005 to 2007 from the bloke who lost his seat and lost an election. His name was John Winston Howard and he introduced this sort of legislation, which ripped away the rights of working people. These members know it, as much as they may try to cover it up. The problem is that we have a Premier who has never had a real job and so we end up with this sort of rubbish being introduced into this place. The Premier swanned out of university and became a staffer. He swanned into the head office of the Liberal Party headquarters, swanned into Bruce Baird's office and then swanned into this Parliament. He has never had a real job so he does not understand the implications for those people. He does not understand how hard it is for casual workers to say that they are not going to come in to work on any particular day. Anyone who has had a casual job knows that refusing or being unavailable for shifts means that suddenly those shifts just evaporate. The phone suddenly stops ringing and the person no longer has a job.

As a result of this bill, families in New South Wales will not get to spend Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Easter Sunday together. If people in the retail sector do not turn up or say they are not available they are suddenly disciplined. I heard John Howard talk about individual contracts. He said that people were free to choose and say that they are not available. Over three years I travelled around the State talking to people who work in retail outlets. I remember being in Coffs Harbour when a woman told me that she worked in a shop that employed four people. I will return to the significance of this bill to those four people.

Her employer told her that if she did not sign an individual contract that gave away her penalty rates she would be looking for a new job. The myth was that she could not be sacked. She worked in a small business in a small country town. She knew that if she exercised her rights, stood up to her employer and enforced those rights her boss would find another reason to lay her off. She knew that once she got the sack in that town she would never again get a job in a business in that town. That is the reality of this bill for those workers, even though under this bill workers who find themselves suddenly unemployed because they said they were unavailable can enforce their rights—

Mr Darren Webber: Because the union is paying for Craig Thomson instead.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I call the member for Wyong to order. Opposition members may be here to support their leader, but I would like to be able to hear what he is saying.

[Interruption]

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I had already called the member for Wyong to order and then turned to Opposition members and asked them to listen to their leader. I call the member for Liverpool to order.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The existing legislation currently provides that all shops except those that are otherwise exempt must be closed 4½ days during the year—Good Friday, Easter Sunday, before 1.00 p.m. on Anzac Day, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. This bill basically destroys that provision for a majority of workers in the retail industry. This bill simply amends the Act by inserting a new section 8A, which provides that shop occupiers can undertake preparatory tasks provided they do not trade. This reverses the provision that was specifically put into the legislation by the former Government to add protections to make clear the circumstances in which shops are closed.

It gave protection to workers in the major retail outlets from being compelled to come in on Christmas Day to prepare the shop for the Boxing Day trade. It provided protection so that the workers, the mums and dads who work in the retail industry, would not be forced to come in on Christmas Day. That protection is ripped away by this legislation. This legislation means those workers now have no protection at all when they are told, "You will be at work on Christmas Day to prepare the store for trading on Boxing Day." New section 8 allows for a new medium-size shop exemption. This is an important part of these changes and it is significant. It will permit any shop to trade on any day where there are no more than 20 employees working on the day and no more than 100 full-time equivalent employees within a seven-day period.

This means that on any day—Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday—if a shop has fewer than 20 staff working in a shop, staff can be compelled to work and the shop can open on any of those days that were previously protected. The current Act provides an exemption for shops with four or fewer employees. This change means we are getting to the point where Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday mean absolutely nothing. It shows the O'Farrell Government has no regard at all for people being able to spend quality time together.

Yesterday the Treasurer also revealed that small shops with fewer than five employees will not have to comply with the freely-elect-to-work conditions. That means staff who work in a shop with fewer than five employees can be compelled to work because there is no requirement for those people to be given any respect or for that business to have any regard whatsoever to the requirements of that particular mother, father, son or daughter to spend time with their families on Christmas Day or Boxing Day. There is no requirement, absolutely nothing.

Finally, the bill provides for bank branches to open on the August bank holiday without the need to first apply to the Director General of the Department of Finance and Services. This means that hundreds of bank workers will lose their industry's public holiday under this bill. We have always thought, and this bill confirms, that the O'Farrell Government hates workers. This bill confirms that the Government has no regard for family time for people who work in the retail sector in this State. The bill confirms that they do not care about people spending time with their families. It becomes absolutely farcical because yesterday the Minister for Small Business said, and I quote from *Hansard*:

The lifting of retail trading restrictions on Boxing Day will deliver a significant injection of income to local economies.

It shows how much the Minister knows about her area of responsibility and her portfolio. The current Act allows for tourist zones to be exempt. Designated tourist zone areas are allowed to trade on those restricted days including Boxing Day. The Minister for Small Business also said the member for Coffs Harbour would welcome these changes because the bill allows shops to open in Coffs Harbour on Boxing Day. Coffs Harbour is in one of the designated tourist zones. This Minister, who alleges she represents rural New South Wales, does not even know that Coffs Harbour is one of the designated tourist zones. Maybe she should take the advice of the member for Coffs Harbour and drive up the Pacific Highway to Coffs Harbour on Boxing Day and spend some time there. She would see that on Boxing Day, as has been the case over the past 24 years in Coffs Harbour, the retail shops are open because it is in a designated tourist zone.

The introduction of this type of legislation is not required. Many families will suffer the consequences of this Government's poor judgement and disregard for family time and family values. As a previous industrial relations Minister I looked after shop trading. I spoke to small business retailers who came to my office. They told me they valued the close-down time on these special holidays because it meant they were free from pressure from the retail landlords to remain open. It is obvious that those opposite do not understand how the leases work in Westfield, Stockland, Centro and GPT shopping centres. If they did, they would know the value of these designated days to small business operators. For the benefit of the ignoramuses on the other side I will tell them how it works.

Mr Troy Grant: Point of order: The Leader of the Opposition does not need to lower himself any more than he already has in his comments.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! That is a choice for the Leader of the Opposition. There is no point of order. I remind members that five of them are on three calls to order. The Leader of the Opposition should be heard in silence.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Small business operators know the value of these designated days. These are the days when they are not forced to open if they lease a shop in a Westfield, Centro, Stockland or GPT shopping centre or any other shopping centre where their lease requires them to open on specific days, to open and close at specific times and to pay for outgoings on a particular day. They sat in my office when I was Minister for Industrial Relations and said how much they valued that. These were small business operators, people who are told, "Under your lease if the centre is open you are required to open." This was confirmed yesterday when the National Retailers Association said in response to the announcement of this bill:

We don't want to see landlords force retailers to open on Boxing Day.

This legislation confirms that this Government not only does not care about families and their need to spend time together, it also does not understand what it is like to run a small retail operation in a big shopping centre. If it did, it would understand the consequences for those small business owners who work very hard 360½ days a year. They get 4½ days a year to spend time with their family because they are not compelled by their landlord to open, but this Government is about to rip that away from those small business operators as well.

Public holidays are one of the things that are valued most by people in this country. They are the very few times in this much busier day and age when people get time to spend with each other. For many families

Christmas Day and Boxing Day are the only times they get together during the year. Family members may be in various parts of the nation or perhaps overseas, but they join their families at Christmas because Christmas Day and Boxing Day are recognised as family time. They are universally recognised as an opportunity for families to come together, have a meal, catch up and spend quality time together. This bill will ensure that that becomes a thing of the past in New South Wales. This bill will ensure that those who work in a retail outlet with five or fewer employees they will be compelled to come to work. This bill will ensure that those who work in one of the major retail outlets which now will be able to open for Boxing Day sales can be compelled to come to work on Christmas Day to prepare the store for the Boxing Day sales.

One matter that has not been touched on in this debate is that this legislation reaches much wider than the people who work in the retail industry, the mums and dads. This legislation means that people who work in warehouses will be dragged in and forced to work on Christmas Day to pick up a load in a warehouse, put it onto a pallet and load it onto a truck that will be driven by a truck driver, who will be forced to be at a warehouse to pick up goods to deliver to retail outlets on Christmas Day. There is no protection in this bill for those people either. This bill makes a mockery of the Government arguing at any point now and in the future that it stands for family values. This Government, which is feeling sensitive, is prepared to sacrifice quality family time to protect its glass jaw, so it appears to be doing something. It has no idea about looking after working families in this State.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [4.20 p.m.]: I support the Retail Trading Amendment Bill which, if passed, will provide retailers across all regions of New South Wales with an option to open on restricted trading days. I know that Opposition members are excited about this bill because that is what their union bosses have told them to be. They are good union hacks and puppets of the union movement.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: Madam Acting-Speaker, the member should be brought back to the leave of the bill. Union officials are not hacks. It is unparliamentary to call union leaders hacks.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! There is no point of order. The member will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr BART BASSETT: Those opposite regularly act on behalf of their union bosses; that is nothing new. This Government is pointing out that retailers across New South Wales will now have an option to open on restricted trading days. It might shock those opposite but on restricted trading days a great many people in our communities have to work—for example, emergency service workers and people providing services who are paid penalty rates. It might surprise those opposite to hear that some people want to work on restricted trading days in order to pay for their increased electricity and other bills, thanks to the Federal Labor Government and its carbon tax. Many people want to make extra money and they will put up their hands to work on restricted trading days so that they can be paid additional penalty rates. I said that businesses and retailers in New South Wales will now have an option to open because it is not mandated in the bill. This bill will provide them with a choice to open if they wish to do so.

It has become a novelty for me to watch the six o'clock news on Boxing Day and see hordes of anxious shoppers bursting through the doors of major department stores in the Sydney central business district to take advantage of goods sales. The reality of this comic scene belies the five minutes of theatre that we see on our screens. Those opposite might be shocked but some Government members, and not just those from the union movement, have experience of the business community. This Government understands what goes on in the real world. Having owned, worked and run businesses in the retail sector, I know of the sacrifices made and the hard work that mum and dad operators put into their businesses. I know how seriously they take their responsibilities to those who work for them and who become part of their larger family. When workers in those small businesses need time off they get time off; they are not forced to work. As small business operators, we work with the people who work for us because they are as much a part of the business as we are. Our employees make those businesses work and without them we would fail. Those workers, who are appreciated, are an enormous asset to small businesses.

The changes proposed by this bill will give retailers—most often small businesses—the option to operate on Boxing Day and restricted trading days, and an opportunity to increase their cash flow to help to pay their bills, improve the viability of their businesses, employ more workers and contribute to the local economy. For far too long the New South Wales economy has lagged behind the economies of other major competitive States. This is no different in the retail sector. According to the latest figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, retail sales nationally grew in December 2011 by 0.1 per cent following a 0.2 per cent rise in

November 2011. That growth came from Western Australia, Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. The figures for New South Wales fell by 0.3 per cent, along with Tasmania and South Australia which also had a drop in retail sales. New South Wales is in the same boat as Tasmania and South Australia.

The retail sector is complex and a number of variables are at work. The regulatory framework that the former Labor Government constructed for the retail sector places a number of unnecessary burdens on the retail sector that restrict free trade and competitive practices. New South Wales is one State, alongside South Australia and Western Australia, in which trading on restricted trading days is not allowed in most areas apart from the central business district and tourist areas. This is ridiculous and, for the most part, it is impractical and it is a contributing factor to the drop in retail sales in New South Wales in December and January. It has been argued by those opposite and by the unions that these changes are unfair to workers who will not be able to enjoy a Christmas break or a break on other restricted trading days. That shallow and baseless argument is bordering on arrogance.

In framing these changes the Government has undertaken extensive consultation with the sector and received submissions from industry bodies such as the Australian Retailers Federation, churches and faith-based groups, small business owners and workers. Workers are small business operators and those who work for them. In my electorate I have enjoyed a long and productive working relationship with the local retail sector and respective groups, as well as retail workers. Unlike a number of members, I bring to this debate firsthand experience as a small business owner and operator. I have put my house on the line, spent sleepless nights worrying about the cash flow and how the bills would be paid every day and worked every week to ensure that employees were paid. That is what happens in the real world. Those opposite like to pretend that it does not exist.

People in small business go without pay for a week to ensure that those who work for them are paid. I know it might come as a shock, but that is the real world. Small business operators go without pay to ensure that their workers are paid. That is how it is and that is how it should be. Employees who rely on those jobs for a livelihood and on viable businesses to keep their jobs work with the owners of small businesses because it benefits everybody. My involvement with Child Flight as a helicopter pilot working in specialised medical retrieval and then as a small business owner spurred me towards becoming involved with public policy. I could see the effect that governments had on people's everyday lives.

As a small business operator I experienced firsthand the decisions made to rezone areas for retail and commercial activities in zones where that activity was not permissible when I established my business. The decision to establish a business was not taken lightly. With my home on the line I took every precaution to ensure that the future of the business was secure. Obviously when the decision was made to rezone areas that were in direct competition with my business, it favoured the big boys in town. Those opposite say that they are the ones the Government is looking after. When that happened to me it had a negative impact on my small business and I was determined to ensure that the little guy got a fair hearing.

I joined the chamber of commerce and later was elected to Hawkesbury City Council where I had the privilege, as mayor and as a councillor, to work alongside owners of businesses and retail workers. I understand the frustration of people in the retail sector. I have received feedback on this bill from people in the local chambers of commerce in Penrith, the Nepean Valley and Hawkesbury. These changes will be welcomed by the general public who vote with their feet and flock to those city stores. Why can consumers in regions like the Hawkesbury, Penrith and the Nepean Valley not be afforded the same retail choices as those that are afforded to people who live in the city? Why can some of the wealth that is generated not be distributed across New South Wales to help stimulate local economic activity and create employment and local jobs? It may be a spectacle on Boxing Day to see shoppers flocking into department stores, but people in other areas are unable to find the stores to buy the products that they might need for a barbeque with friends and family, to watch the Boxing Day test, or to watch the start of the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.

As someone who is in a position to be able to make changes to the ridiculous laws forced on the retail sector by the former Labor Government, I will ensure that we move forward. The bill, if passed, is a win for choice. It is a win for competition. It is a win for tourism and for economic growth across all the regions of New South Wales. We must ensure that things move on and benefit the whole community. This bill will ensure that businesses are protected. Section 22A of the Act maintains that on restricted trading days people will not be forced to open shops in large retail centres such as Westfield. I commend the bill to the House. I suggest that we look at the facts rather than listen to the rhetoric from those opposite.

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

GOSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOL RELOCATION

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.31 p.m.]: I refer to the 10,000-signature petition that opposes the relocation of Gosford Public School to the grounds of Henry Kendall High School and requests that an alternative site be provided that meets a range of criteria. I start by thanking those people who signed the petition and all those who worked to collect the 10,000 signatures. I acknowledge this initiative of the new Government; it is something that the community has taken to with great fervour. I acknowledge the work of the Gosford Public Action Group. In particular, I thank Deb Westacott, teachers, parents, students, members of the parents and citizens association and the wider community. I have a particular interest in this matter because the former member for Balmain was the Minister for Education and Training and I have been involved in this process for many years, and have been aware of its progress. I acknowledge the work of Dr John Kaye, The Greens education spokesman, who has worked tirelessly in the Legislative Council advocating for public education.

Gosford Public School was established in 1865, and is situated in the central business district of Gosford, close to Brisbane Water. The future of the site has been discussed at length in recent years, particularly as negotiations over the redevelopment of the Gosford waterfront proceeded. Last year the former Labor Government engaged in a consultation process about the future of the school, including a survey that presented four possible sites for the relocation: the joint high schools' agricultural farm, Gosford High School, the Victoria Oval site, the North Gosford education site and Henry Kendall High School. The results of the survey indicated opposition to each of these sites but the proposal to relocate to Henry Kendall High School had the most significant opposition, with 17 per cent disagreeing and 60 per cent strongly disagreeing.

Nevertheless, on 17 December 2010 former education Minister Verity Firth announced that Gosford Public School would be relocated to a site within the present grounds of Henry Kendall High School. In May 2011 a motion was moved by The Greens in the New South Wales Legislative Council recognising the concerns raised by parents about this issue. It received unanimous support, including from Coalition members. On 17 June 2011 the Minister's representative in the upper House told Parliament that the Minister for Education had been working closely with the member for Gosford, Mr Chris Holstein, to review the information relating to the decision. A week later the Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, announced the conclusion of the review and confirmed the relocation.

Parents, teachers and many other people in the community see this as a grab for cash by the State Government, and are opposed to the collocation. The Government claims that there has been a review of this matter. If that is the case—I acknowledge that the issue was reviewed by the member for Gosford and the Minister—let us make the results of the review public. All relevant documents used by the former Government should be made public and any documents relating to the most recent review should also be on the public record so that we can review the methodology, the assumptions, details of other sites and consider the outcomes of the review. In my view that is an important part of the transparency process under this new Government. I acknowledge the work of the member for Gosford, which has met with members of the school community. Yet it is my understanding that neither the Gosford Public Action Group nor the Teachers Federation was consulted in detail throughout this process.

Opposition to the proposal centres around several key issues. First, the special needs unit at the high school must be moved to make way for the new primary school buildings. Rather than the promised state-of-the-art building with the latest equipment, the unit is now to be situated in the refurbished technology rooms with less than satisfactory access for students with mobility issues. Secondly, students will be forced to learn in cramped and noisy conditions. The playground areas will be inadequate. Thirdly, it is inappropriate and unacceptable to collocate primary and high school students on the same site. Two separate schools deserve two distinct sites. Fourthly, the collocation will forever block any potential expansion of either school, despite predictions of 10,000 additional dwellings in the catchment area. Fifthly, the building works at the high school to accommodate the primary school are being funded in part by Building the Education Revolution money that was slated for Gosford Public School. Sixthly, the review of alternative locations was cut short without adequate consultation. Lastly, the community remains in the dark as to what other possibilities were considered and what the results were.

There is keen demand for this school, with 10,000 new residents. The agricultural plot of Henry Kendall High School is slated for an agricultural facility. We also understand from a meeting at Gosford Public

School that projections for school enrolments are estimated to be 850 by 2014. There may well be more than 1,200 students on site if the relocation goes ahead. Since the decision was announced in June there have been a number of protests. It has statewide implications. We know that the Boston Consulting Group report commissioned by the previous Government found more than \$700 million in potential savings from school closures and forced mergers. The Greens fear that the Government, in the current mood of budget cuts, will be tempted to take that advice on board and repeat this action across the State. We call on the Government to recognise that the Save Gosford Public School Bill 2011 that was introduced in the Legislative Council deserves support. It will prohibit the relocation, ensure consultation and require the Minister to attend meetings, which he has not done so far. I commend the people who have generated this petition. I encourage them to continue their campaign and encourage the Government to reconsider this decision. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [4.36 p.m.]: This Government believes relocating Gosford Public School to the Henry Kendall High School site will be of great benefit to students and the community for many years to come. I assure the House that the Minister for Education carefully reviewed the former Government's plans to move the primary school to the Henry Kendall site. The review was one of the first election promises that this Government fulfilled. The Minister reviewed information from the department about the other sites it considered, why it did not choose a greenfield site, and why it saw the Henry Kendall High School site as the best place for the primary school. Some of the reasons that other sites were deemed unsuitable included ecologically endangered communities, bushfire buffer zone limitations, displacement of recreational facilities, historic heritage impacts and incompatibility with adjoining usage.

The Henry Kendall site proposal offered the best opportunity for students and teachers, but the proposed design was found lacking in some aspects and the Government enacted changes after community input. I will expand on that shortly. In reviewing the decision, the Minister consulted with me on a number of occasions, as I had consulted widely with my constituents about the issues, and passed on their views to the Minister. The review and the meetings convinced the Minister that the department's decision to co locate the schools would serve the best interests of the children, and I concur with that decision. I am pleased to inform the House that construction began at Henry Kendall High School in September last year. This work will see the first floor of block A at Henry Kendall High School refurbished and new classrooms built for the relocated primary school.

The department has also installed demountable classrooms at Henry Kendall High School so that its students can move out of block A while it is being refurbished. The demountables are there only while construction takes place. The department is also upgrading several classrooms for the high school. It has already finished modifying other buildings so that it can move the printing room and a computer room. The Government expects that the works, which the Federal Government funded through its Building the Education Revolution program, will be finished by May this year. The department is currently undertaking concept planning and documentation for the new primary school buildings and grounds, and undertaking site studies. The department will build three new buildings for the primary school, refurbish others for the high school and relocate the high school's special education unit.

Tenders for the building work to move the high school's special education unit have closed and the department plans to award the contract shortly. It will begin construction in April. The Government expects this work to be completed in October this year. The Government expects the department to finish all the works by December 2013. The Government and the department have consulted broadly and often with the Gosford Public School community. As I referred to earlier, the original design proposal was reviewed, ensuring that the primary school will be a fully separate entity with its own library, canteen and hall as well as additional space for the out-of-school-hours care services and enhanced noise abatement treatment for block A. It also included negotiations with Gosford City Council to improve footpath access, and road and parking on Faunce Street West.

In fact, the department has acted on other matters raised by the community, agreeing to build a larger communal hall and two more special program rooms for the primary school, and upgrading four science laboratories and building a new covered outdoor learning area for the high school. On the current Gosford Primary School site classrooms average 49 square metres. At the new site, classrooms will be built according to the code, at 92 square metres—nearly double their existing size. They were 49 square metres when I was at school in the 1960s, and they have been that way for the past 50 years. It should be noted also that for the past 20 years the Gosford Primary School library was in a demountable. These are issues that will be addressed under the new plan.

There has been extensive consultation on a number of matters. They include draft plans being shown to the parents and citizens associations at both schools; at both schools staff meetings have been addressed; community stakeholder working parties have been formed; information has gone out in newsletters; the latest plans have been available at the regional office; and the Project Control Group minutes appear on the Gosford Public School website, along with the new plans for the school. The New South Wales Teachers Federation—I correct the member for Balmain—has had numerous conversations with me about the matter. Gosford council has been spoken to. In wrapping up, I thank the department for its wide consultation. I assure the House that it has tailored the plans to the needs of the students and the school communities. Rebuilding Gosford Public School on the high school site, with the latest facilities, will give students an outstanding learning opportunity. *[Time expired.]*

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [4.41 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak today about the relocation of Gosford Public School. I congratulate the parents and all others involved in collecting the signatures for this petition. I know the effort involved in this, and I know how passionate the Gosford Public School parents and citizens and the broader community are about the relocation of the school. In particular, people like Jacki Draper and Stephen Thomas and others have been tireless advocates on behalf of the students and their community. I think the history and background to this issue have been well canvassed, but it is worth stating that at the moment the Gosford Public School is on a very small site and it has significant capital and maintenance needs. I think everyone accepts that.

It is worth noting also that the revitalisation of the Gosford city centre under the Gosford Challenge means that playing fields frequently used by the school will no longer be accessible. That is a real challenge for the education department and the school community. Traffic changes that are also planned are incompatible with the ongoing use of the current site. It is expected that the opening of the Kariong Mountains High School—again, something that the Central Coast community advocated for long and hard over many years—will mean that the student population at the Henry Kendall High School is likely to decline over the next few years. So some spare capacity is expected at the Henry Kendall High School site.

But it is also well known that the parents and citizens association and parents are very unhappy with the decision to relocate the school, and the Coalition agreed to review that decision. When I met with representatives of the parents and citizens association, they raised many issues and concerns with me. These include that the Henry Kendall site is too small and will be overcrowded; students at two schools will be forced to share a building and one playground; the management of shared facilities and playground space on one site while maintaining two separate schools is yet to be determined; future enrolments will outpace available vacancies at the schools by 2015; the special education unit at Henry Kendall High School will need to be relocated to a less suitable site at the school; and surrounding streets will require upgrades that are yet to be determined by council to account for new traffic and parking needs. The school community has raised all those concerns with me, and I know it has raised them with others.

But, above all, the greatest concern that community representatives raised when they met with me was that the review promised by the Minister was, they felt, a Clayton's review; it was not community consultation. The reviewers did not talk to the parents and the students, and they did not give proper consideration to the alternative sites. The parents had had their expectations raised by the O'Farrell Government that there would be a genuine review, only to find that the Minister has used this rather underwhelming process to confirm the relocation of Gosford Public School. I know that issues about school locations are difficult and complex, but I believe the O'Farrell Government and the Minister need to sit down with parents and find a solution.

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyong) [4.44 p.m.]: The Gosford Public School community is being consulted in a number of ways about the school's relocation. Thanks to that community consultation and the Government review, the department will now build a larger communal hall and two more special program rooms for Gosford Public School, upgrade four science laboratories and build a new covered outdoor learning area for Henry Kendall High School. In response to claims that there has not been a genuine review of this decision under the new government policy, I do not see how those two or three new building projects would have been decided without consultation; they certainly have not come out of thin air. The department added those projects to the scope of works after discussing the plans with the local community. This is all part of the review that was Liberal Party policy. The school will get the latest facilities that will provide a pre-eminent learning environment for the students of Gosford.

This Government is committed to giving schools and their communities more say in what happens at a local level. In line with that commitment, the Government has given more decision-making power to New South

Wales schools for maintenance and capital works projects generally. Now, over \$55 million of maintenance money each year is spent directly by schools on the maintenance they consider necessary. In addition, this Government spends \$185 million annually on school maintenance contracts and related services. School principals also have a much greater say in maintenance work that is undertaken in their schools as part of these contracts. Considering that there are more than 745,000 students in public schools in metropolitan, regional and remote locations, this Government is working hard to ensure that there is a balance between students' individual needs and the needs of local school communities. In line with that, in 2011-12 the Government announced funding for a new school for special purposes at Bass Hill and a new school at Oran Park, both of which are needed to meet the specific needs of New South Wales school communities.

The Government provided funding of almost \$14.2 billion in the last budget for education and training. This amount includes \$640 million for capital projects in schools and \$289 million for school maintenance. This reflects an increase of around 11 per cent in the maintenance budget from last year. That shows this Government's commitment to providing school facilities that are in good condition and meet the needs of New South Wales students and teachers. Also, one of this Government's key achievements is the Local Schools, Local Decisions action plan. The Government's Local Schools, Local Decisions action plan includes the \$40 million Public School Upgrade Program and the \$20-million Extra Minor Maintenance Budget. This Government, the education Minister and the member for Gosford have listened to the people of New South Wales and to the Gosford Public School community. The project has been modified to provide additional facilities requested by the school community.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FAIRFIELD CHRISTMAS TROLLEY DRIVE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.47 p.m.]: I would like to highlight the Christmas Trolley Drive, which has become an annual event in Fairfield. I acknowledge in particular the efforts of some very special Fairfield individuals. The Christmas Trolley Drive had its origins in 2004. The idea was to provide the Uniting Church Diner at Harris Street, Fairfield, with some much-needed food to feed the underprivileged in the area. The first trolley drive rolled away with 54 loads of unperishable groceries to replenish the pantries of the Uniting Church Diner. Over the years the trolley drive has grown from strength to strength. Last year a record 159 trolleys filled with groceries were donated by the Fairfield community to the Uniting Church.

One of the most interesting aspects of the trolley drive—and probably its biggest crowd pleaser—is the parade from Station Street to Harris Street via Ware Street, to deliver the trolleys loaded with goods to the Uniting Church. The 2011 drive commenced with the marshalling of trolleys at Station Street, Fairfield. The who's who of Fairfield were there, from local primary and secondary student representatives, local business men and women, State Emergency Service volunteers and Fairfield police. Leading the drive was the local Police Marching Band, which played the old-favourite Christmas carols along the way down Ware Street and into Harris Street.

I note also that 2011 was the first time that the local Police Marching Band participated in the trolley drive. It was also fitting to have Margaret Thurston, better known as "Cookie", following the band at the head of the trolley procession. Cookie was the original driving force behind the trolley drive. It was by chance that Cookie walked past Mr Tom Murphy's office in Station Street and he asked her where she was going. Tom Murphy is a well-known community advocate in the Fairfield district. Cookie replied that she was off to the soup kitchen. Tom had no idea what she was talking about and eight years later that brief chat has resulted in many underprivileged people being given the chance to survive in life.

As members can imagine, wheeling 159 trolley loads of groceries is a big task. I extend special thanks to Fairfield City Council, Fairfield Local Area Command and the State Emergency Service for providing support to ensure the safe passage of trolleys and participants down Ware Street. So good was the generosity of the community on the day that people placed bags of extra groceries and gifts as the trolleys were being wheeled down the street. The spirit of the occasion is difficult to describe, but I can say that the community was uplifted by the event. As the trolleys were being wheeled down Ware Street, the parade was met by applause from people on the footpath.

Interestingly, those 159 trolleys of donated non-perishable food will keep the diner shelves filled for almost 12 months. It has been noted by the community that the drive gives participants a sense of sharing and caring, especially during the Christmas season when there is much joy for many but also much pain and sorrow for others. Many of the underprivileged people in the area are provided with meals by the tireless volunteers from the Uniting Church community. More than 10,000 meals a year are provided to the community by a dynamic and dedicated team. I extend special thanks to the chairman of the Uniting Church, Mr David Tweed, the secretary of the church and diner, Patricia Pathcia, and team leader, Noi Lertsinpakdee. I thank them on behalf of the community for their generosity and tireless work. The care provided to the hungry and the lonely is paramount in ensuring the wellbeing of the vulnerable in the community.

I also convey my special thanks to Phil, Vic, Chris, Peter and the crew from local radio station 2GLF for spruiking on the day and doing a wonderful outside broadcast promoting the event. I congratulate Governor Phillip King Public School, Fairfield West Public School, Smithfield West Public School, Mary MacKillop School and William Stimpson Public School for supporting the event. I am extremely proud to be the member for Fairfield. Fairfield has many unsung heroes and I know that a large number of them were present during the trolley drive. I also extend my thanks to the major department stores in Fairfield for the wonderful contribution they made to this fantastic event. For about two to three weeks before the trolley drive there were very few trolleys on their premises.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [4.52 p.m.]: As members know, this week we celebrated the anniversary of the Coalition's landslide election win to secure government in New South Wales. This State has experienced a dramatic turnaround as this Government has started rebuilding the economy, delivering quality services, renovating our infrastructure, strengthening our local environments and communities, and restoring accountability to the people, who so richly deserve the best possible State Government—which is what they now have. For me and for the great people whom I represent in the electorate of Port Macquarie, the past 12 months has seen some significant results for our local communities and across the State.

Locally, the dedication of Westport Park as public open space and the announcement that a school will finally be built at Lake Cathie are just two major successes I have been able to achieve in my first year as the local member. The future of Westport Park is now secure and it will never be developed, which is something the local community has been campaigning to achieve for years. After many years of fighting to convince former education Ministers and Premiers that we needed a new school at Lake Cathie, the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, agreed with me and a new public school will be opened in time to take students in the first term of 2015. Both those issues, the commencement of planning for the upgraded Port Macquarie Base Hospital, the opening of the new Oxley Highway, securing more than \$100 million in the State budget for the electorate and hosting the Premier and Ministers for a community cabinet meeting in Port Macquarie last year, are significant achievements.

I am pleased to be joining the member for Oxley and Deputy Premier, the Hon. Andrew Stoner, and the Federal member for Lyne, Robert Oakeshott, for a sod turning ceremony tomorrow for the commencement of construction of the \$110 million upgrade of the Port Macquarie Base Hospital. That project has been a long time coming and is a major step forward in the delivery of improved health services for the people of the Hastings. Having worked in that hospital only 18 months ago, I know how desperately the upgrade is needed by health professionals, patients and the community. I congratulate the New South Wales Government and the Federal Government on their collaboration and I look forward to keeping the community updated on this exciting project for our region.

At a state level, the Coalition Government has delivered an extra \$468 million to fast track the Pacific Highway upgrade; it has employed 1,011 new nurses in our health system—more than 200 of them on the mid North Coast; it has opened 565 more hospital beds; and soon we will see 550 new police officers protecting our communities. These are all important achievements that mean a great deal to many people in our community, and I am very pleased that they have been delivered. I am also extremely pleased with the many smaller projects my officers and I have worked on during the past year.

Being a local member is not only about delivering big dollar projects; it is also about representing the wishes of the community, being the conduit between the people and Parliament, and achieving outcomes for the community, no matter how big or small. There is still much work to be done across the Port Macquarie electorate, from improving services for our youth and the mentally ill, to addressing the challenges associated

with our increasing ageing population and tackling the infrastructure and maintenance backlogs at our local schools. However, I believe that my staff and I have made a strong start and we will continue to work hard for the fantastic community that I am so privileged to represent.

CASTLE HILL SHOW

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [4.57 p.m.]: In Castle Hill we are fortunate to have community groups and events that are run and organised by committed volunteers. A spirit of service—the hallmark of the Castle Hill community—was on display last week at the 126th Castle Hill Show. Not even the inclement weather could dampen the spirits of all who attended the three-day agricultural exhibition. With the reputation of being second only to the Sydney Royal Easter Show, the Castle Hill Show has become a reflection of the cultural development of The Hills district.

The Castle Hill Show began in the 1880s as a sports and ploughing contest and exhibition, and a distinct agricultural theme dominated by the 1890s. Horses, poultry and dogs were judged with an expert eye and events were held for draught horses, trotters, and buggies and carthorses. The show was an important social occasion on the annual calendar with an emphasis on families coming together and sharing stories and renewing friendships in the community. Nothing has changed in that regard, with the 126th Castle Hill Show espousing the same sense of community and friendship that began with the show's inception so many years ago.

However, some things have changed. The 1891 show was held at the present site for the first time, with around £300 spent on amenities such as a timber pavilion, stables and a track. These days the showground is a true community resource, with various groups and organisations making use of the facilities for worthwhile and productive pursuits. There is never a lack of attractions at the show. Crowds attending the 1905 show were dressed in their Sunday best and marvelled at the appearance of Micky the Indian with his live lizard and a snake tied to his whip. This year's show did not have as many snakes and lizards, but it certainly had other weird and wonderful exhibits. The home brewed beers displayed by brewers and brewsters was a hit, as was the show jumping. My daughter, Charlotte, was particularly entranced by the skill and power of the woodchoppers. She was clearly unable to understand the importance of cutting wood at such speed—just like me.

The show is important for so many reasons, not the least of which is that our younger generation, including my daughter, Charlotte, are exposed to facets of our agricultural past and future that they would not otherwise witness. I visited the show with my friends on many occasions when I was a youngster. It was great to revisit this year and to see many of my old school friends with their young families and to observe their excitement. It demonstrates that the show is still a special event in the community and that the pleasure it gives is being handed down from generation to generation. As members know, 2012 is the Year of The Farmer, and I can see why. Without our agricultural industry and the dedicated and hardworking farmers our great nation and this State would grind to a halt.

The Castle Hill Show is as much a part of The Hills story as those who have created the story. Whilst there may not be sheep and cows wandering down Showground Road these days, the Castle Hill Show provides a distinct reminder for our community of our agricultural and rural heritage. From its humble beginnings, the show has been run and organised by dedicated and equally humble volunteers. I commend the work of Peter Gooch, the President of the Castle Hill and Hills District Agricultural Society, and all the dedicated volunteers in the society who made the 126th Castle Hill Show a great event. With the coming of the North West Rail Link there has been much speculation as to the show's future. I thank the Premier for his attendance and support at this year's show.

While it is widely agreed that the train line is a long overdue necessity for the people of The Hills district, the New South Wales Government's commitment to this infrastructure project has led to questions being asked about the continued existence of the showground and, by default, the show itself. The Premier's presence was welcome, as was his announcement that the southern option for the rail line had been chosen, meaning that there will be minimal impact on the showground and the show during the construction stage and beyond. As the Premier said, "The show must go on." I am happy to have played a part in ensuring that that will be the case and that the Castle Hill Show will be held for generations to come so people can enjoy what the show has to offer.

NSW 2021 REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FORUMS

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.00 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the NSW 2021 Regional Action Plan forums that have been held recently and forums that are being

held currently across the State. The forums are an important initiative of the State Government, which is looking for feedback from communities as to what they consider should be priority actions of the New South Wales Government and the ways in which they can be delivered. I am pleased to speak about a recent forum that was held in my electorate of Bathurst. Representatives from Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo, Parkes, Forbes and Blayney gave their input into this focus meeting.

A Central West Regional Action Plan is being developed to identify the immediate actions that can be undertaken by the New South Wales Government to deliver on community priorities, to increase opportunities and to improve the quality of life of people living in the Central West. The Central West Regional Action Plan will be aligned to the NSW 2021 State goals, guiding both policy and budget decision-making by the Government, and it will give us a long-term plan for the future of this State. The Government recognises that regional New South Wales is an important part of making this State the Premier State that it once was.

NSW 2021 is the Government's 10-year strategic business plan to rebuild the economy, return quality services, renovate infrastructure, strengthen our local environment and communities, and restore accountability to government. The regional action plans will complement longer-term strategies that may already be underway in the regions by identifying actions that can be delivered in a shorter time frame. The Central West Regional Action Plan forum was held at Mount Panorama in Bathurst. About 90 people attended the forum to develop the action plan. Participants were asked to respond to the community discussion papers prepared for the event, which asked what their priorities were for the Central West and what action the New South Wales Government should take to deliver those priorities to the Central West.

The top six priorities that were identified on the evening were driving economic growth; investing in affordable, efficient transport, including rail and road; investing in infrastructure; improving access to education, including a focus on trades and universities; improving health care services; and improving water storage to maintain water security. I thank the Minister for Western New South Wales, who also attended the forum. This Government has recognised that western New South Wales is important because this is the very first time that we have seen a Minister appointed to represent the needs of those living west of the Blue Mountains and in western New South Wales. I thank my parliamentary colleagues the member for Dubbo and the member for Orange who were also in attendance.

During the next few months the regional action plans will be finalised, identifying priority actions that the New South Wales Government will deliver for regional New South Wales. The people of New South Wales have demanded real change, and work is well underway to deliver those changes. These forums are about encouraging the community, government departments, stakeholders and local government to be engaged and to play a part, and to start what the Government envisages will be a measure of lasting benefits to regional communities throughout the State. I commend the Premier and Cabinet for the ongoing acknowledgement of regional New South Wales with government planning. Plans that have simply collected dust on bookshelves for more than 16 years have real relevance, application and meaning for our communities. They are real action plans for our regions. I thank the Government for giving this opportunity to the people of Bathurst and to the people of the Central West.

LIVERPOOL SCHOOL OF ARTS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.05 p.m.]: Tonight I draw to the attention of the House significant community concerns held by constituents of mine about the future of Liverpool's School of Arts. The School of Arts building is located in Liverpool's central business district in Macquarie Street, near the corner of Scott Street. It is one of the most significant older buildings in Liverpool. It was constructed in 1924 as a memorial for soldiers who fought in World War I. The foundation stones were laid by Major General C. F. Fox and the then Mayor of Liverpool, Alderman L. J. Ashcroft. Several years ago the Liverpool Art Society wrote to me and said in words that I quoted in this place at the time:

The building itself, including a later major extension was again financed largely through the fundraising efforts of the School of Arts Committee, the local Soldiers Club, the Merrymakers Club and public subscription.

It was a highly functional, multipurpose building erected for public use and education, and housing the local library until the 1960s. The building was also established as a memorial for those who served in World War I. The Soldier's Memorial School of Arts was not built as a disposable asset for council to sell off indiscriminately to developers. Rather, it was established by the working class for the working class.

After the building ceased to be used as a library it became prey to commercial interests and was used, in part, by a real estate agency. That resulted in a public campaign in which I was involved, together with other then

members of the Liverpool branch of the Australian Labor Party, and other community organisations in the 1980s. That led to the building being used for community uses. When I last spoke in this place about the building in 2005 there was a proposal by the then council to sell the site. That led to a public outcry and the plan was dropped. Once more, there are now fears that Liverpool council is surrendering the site to commercial interests.

In 1986 ownership of the site was transferred from trustees to the Liverpool council. That was useful at the time because it was that mechanism that allowed the building to be used by community groups rather than real estate agents. That was the point of the transfer of ownership at that time. On the face of it, the transfer to the council seems to allow the council to treat the building as it would any other operational land. However, regardless of the technical legal position, there were considerable discussions and apparently undertakings—albeit perhaps strictly legally unenforceable—from the council about future use of the buildings. I quote from a letter from the then Minister for Local Government, Minister Hickey:

It seems that when the council resolved to accept the offer of the trustees for the transfer of the School of Arts, there was an understanding in writing that the land would remain as a council asset to be used in a manner appropriate for the community's benefit.

It is that understanding which I now think is under threat from the majority non-Labor Liverpool councillors, hell-bent as they are on flogging off or leasing out every council-owned asset they can lay their hands on. A portion of a council report to a meeting in 2005 reads as follows:

In a letter dated 4 February 1985 the trustees made an offer to relinquish the trusteeship of the School of Arts building in order that assets could be transferred to council. In that letter it states *"this offer does not carry with it any special condition requested by us as trustees on the understanding that the council ensure that the School of Arts remains an asset of council and is used in a manner which council feels the most appropriate for the community's benefit."*

I understand that the council's general manager denied any reference at all to those issues on the council files. I am particularly concerned by the recent antics of some of the development-at-any-cost councillors in removing a need for a plan of management for the building. At the 19 December council meeting a motion moved by Councillor Anne Stanley was adopted by council. Amongst other things the motion required the completion of a plan of management for the School of Arts building. This would come into effect upon the completion of current renovations. I must say I find it hard to see how anyone could be opposed to that, but some were. In addition, Councillor Stanley indicated that among other things the plan should address the possible community groups which could be offered space in the building. That all seems sensible and reasonable. However, lo and behold, a rescission motion was then lodged by councillors Lucas, Mannoun and Harle. In heritage terms they are probably the Three Horsemen of the Apocalypse. I will leave it up to other people to work out who the fourth is. Apart from this rescission motion they gave notice of the following:

That council not proceed with a plan of management for the memorial School of Arts site and note that a plan of management is not required for council operational land.

The rescission motion and subsequent motion were passed. Recorded as voting against them were Councillors Waller, Stanley, Karbin and Guillani. It seems to me that people are intent on giving over to commercial interests the School of Arts, reversing the historic victory of the 1980s and obviously breaching completely the undertakings made at that time by council. This is an example of the manic determination of some councillors to flog off and lease out everything that is not nailed down, and even some of that. The other aspect that residents have raised with me is: How does this surrender to commercial interests interact with the council's other activities in this location? How does it fit in, for example, with whatever other plans have been developed but not revealed about that location? The council recently purchased what I would regard as the dud deal of the century at a nearby building in Scott Street that never in living memory has been fully tenanted. Liverpool's heritage is far too valuable to be left to the whims of such escapades.

MIRACLE BABIES FOUNDATION

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [5.10 p.m.]: On Monday I had the pleasure of visiting a local charity called Miracle Babies Foundation. Some members may have heard of it before. The foundation looks after families who have a premature or sick baby and offers them a number of services in times of need. I came across the foundation after Liverpool Councillor Ned Mannoun and his wife had a premature baby, the gorgeous little Solomon Mannoun, and they suggested that I get to know the organisation better. The Miracle Babies Foundation was started by local mum Melinda Cruz after her own experiences as a new mum. Melinda has three

healthy, happy children today, but each one of them was born prematurely. It was after her second child, Dillon, was born at just 27 weeks gestation that she realised how little support there was for mothers of premature babies and their families.

Many people do not realise the real impact a premature birth can have on a family. For a new mum it often means the daunting prospect of leaving the hospital without her newborn child for an unknown period of time. For the immediate family it means ongoing doctors' appointments, extensive tests, and lots and lots of waiting to get the green light to take the baby home. For friends and loved ones it is often an awkward time: they do not know whether to celebrate or to worry; they are not sure if they should visit; and they are not really aware of the seriousness of the situation. Melinda knew that more support was needed, particularly for mums, and more education was needed for medical staff dealing with families of a premature baby. The other thing that gets largely overlooked is what happens when the baby gets to go home. It is not always over once that green light is given. For many it means worrying about compromised immune systems and related ongoing medical issues. The Miracle Babies Foundation was born out of a need to provide support to mothers and families, and to help them throughout their experiences.

In 2005 Melinda teamed up with Liverpool Hospital's newborn intensive care unit [NICU] and started the Miracle Babies Foundation with eight mothers of premature and sick newborns. They were all connected by their own newborn intensive care unit experiences and united in a common desire to support other families of miracle babies and give back to the wonderful hospitals that care for them. Together, the Miracle Babies Foundation and Liverpool Hospital worked on an in-hospital parent support program, allowing current intensive care unit families the opportunity to speak to past parents. Today Melinda and her team have grown and expanded their services to reach newborn intensive care units Australia-wide. This is an amazing achievement for a grassroots organisation that began only a few years ago. Melinda is now an accomplished speaker and is invited to speak at various nursing conferences and training courses offering a parent's perspective of the newborn intensive care unit experience.

The Miracle Babies Foundation offers a number of services dedicated to positively supporting those experiencing premature and high-risk pregnancies. The Nurture Program is a free support program available to families of premature and sick newborns at any stage of a high-risk pregnancy, their newborn intensive care unit or special care nursery journey, their transition to home and onwards. The foundation provides a 24-hour help hotline, in-hospital support, and out-of-hospital play and support groups. The Miracle Babies Foundation also offers an online resource centre via its website www.miraclebabies.org.au. The Miracle Babies Foundation website is the only place to access Australian-based information and a listing of all newborn intensive care units around the country. It also offers support for hospitals, including services for families, lectures, training tools, scholarships for health professionals and funding for equipment and services.

Each year in Australia around 44,000 newborn babies require the help of a newborn intensive care unit or special care nursery. This is almost twice the number of those diagnosed with breast cancer or prostate cancer. The Miracle Babies Foundation strives to raise community awareness and knowledge of this prevalent national issue, and the ongoing challenges faced by babies and their families. The birth of a premature or sick newborn can be an overwhelming and traumatic experience for families. Their lives can be changed permanently and influenced significantly by their newborn intensive care unit experience.

Meeting Melinda in person was more than inspiring. She is an impressive woman whose own experiences have completely changed her life and that of many others. She even said she feels as though her experiences were meant to be because she believes that starting the Miracle Babies Foundation was her true calling. Last year she was named Ernst and Young's Social Entrepreneur of the Year. I seriously doubt there is anything this woman cannot achieve. I am extremely proud to have the Miracle Babies Foundation based in Chipping Norton, right in Menai's backyard, and I look forward to supporting the foundation in the future. Its ball coming is up soon and I would be happy to offer details of it to any members who would like to attend.

WINDSOR BRIDGE

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [5.15 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Menai on bringing the Miracle Babies Foundation to the attention of the House. I have flown with Child Flight and brought plenty of critically ill babies to newborn intensive care units in Sydney, and it is wonderful to see that a charity has been established to look after families at what is certainly a stressful and trying time. That is a very positive thing. Unfortunately, I will be venting my frustration and anger about something that is not so positive. I know I will also be voicing the concerns of my fellow colleagues the member for Hawkesbury and the member for

Riverstone about the actions of unelected and unaccountable statutory bodies in what amounts to a campaign to undermine the ability of the elected Government and its members to deliver on promises made to their communities.

Prior to the last election the Liberal-Nationals Coalition made a clear undertaking to build a replacement bridge across the Hawkesbury River at Windsor to replace the existing structure, which is old and in such poor condition that it could disintegrate if major flooding were to occur. The bridge is a major piece of infrastructure that serves the communities of Hawkesbury, Riverstone and Londonderry. Like most capital works projects, the former Labor Government made grand announcements, but it did not put up the cash. It sat on its hands and did nothing. To honour our commitment, the Treasurer allocated \$2 million in the 2011-12 financial year to begin detailed planning works and get the ball rolling on the project. For the past five years, the Roads and Traffic Authority, now Roads and Maritime Services, undertook extensive consultation with stakeholders, including Hawkesbury City Council where I was the mayor at the time and heritage, cultural, environmental and business groups.

The general consensus reached was for option No. 1, which would result in a new bridge built a little further downstream from the existing structure but at a higher level to cope with moderate floods. That option would result in some remodelling of the roads to follow the original alignment of old Bridge Street, which currently leads to the wharf and historically has led to a number of wharves and crossings in the vicinity. The existing road cutting will then be filled in to increase the public space and footprint of the historic Thompson Square in Windsor to replicate as best as possible the original footprint that was in place when Macquarie proclaimed the five Macquarie towns. There had been, and continues to be, ongoing consultation and detailed works around the heritage aspects of this project; yet the New South Wales Heritage Office, an unelected body, continues to engage in what amounts to a campaign against the construction of the new bridge.

The New South Wales Heritage Office is demanding—yes, demanding—that the Government consider another option that would—surprise, surprise—add an additional \$60 million to the price tag. After five years of lying dormant, with their heads in the sand, suddenly since March 2011 local groups aligned with the Labor Party and The Greens have sprung to life to attack the Liberal Party for failing to listen to the community. The groups are being led by the Australian Labor Party and The Greens, and aligned independent councillors who, after saying nothing for five years while Labor was in power, are now demanding that we keep the existing bridge as a heritage item, which would cost millions of dollars in future upkeep.

All credible reports advise that maintaining the existing bridge is a major safety concern. Without providing a bit of evidence to prove the veracity of their claims, a motion was presented to Hawkesbury City Council by The Greens-Labor Party alliance of councillors with claims that Roads and Maritime Services officers had made statements at a meeting of the Windsor Business Group that the existing bridge was safe and could be retained, and the only reason that the Roads and Maritime Services pushed for its removal was ministerial pressure. This is a complete and utter misrepresentation by a group of councillors aligned with the Labor Party.

This is the same Labor Party that was in Government for 16 years and received record revenues from the receipt of property tax, stamp duty and the goods and services tax, yet wasted billions of dollars that could and should have been spent on building new bridges like the Windsor bridge, roads, rail lines and other essential bread-and-butter services that people rely on. These plans were never realised. In today's *Daily Telegraph* we read of former Premier Morris Iemma lamenting that his vision was never adopted.

The reason for that is simple: the complete pandering by the Labor Party to The Greens and noisy aligned minority groups that are opposed to everything. Billions of dollars of taxpayers' money was wasted on investigations into fanciful reasons dressed up as real concerns. In reality they were just looking for another excuse or delaying tactic from figments of their imagination. We need to adopt a can-do approach to manage the delivery of services and capital works in New South Wales and to cut unnecessary red tape that is costing billions of dollars and holding back the delivery of essential infrastructure. Let us get on with the job.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.20 p.m.]: I endorse the comments of the member for Londonderry and thank him and the member for Riverstone for their determination to have the Windsor bridge completed. The three of us, as representatives of the area, have placed this item firmly on the agenda because the Windsor bridge affects our electorates. I also place on record my utter disgust at the suggestion by the Heritage Office that the heritage of Bridge Street leading down to the current bridge should be the determining factor of a heritage aspect of Thompson Square. Two hundred years ago when Thompson

Square was proclaimed by Governor Lachlan Macquarie my forefather Charles Whalan sat at his side. That site was chosen and left aside for the recreational purposes of the people of Windsor. I can say firmly that the site was not dissected by Bridge Street at that time. From a historical and heritage perspective, that park should be used in the same way that Governor Macquarie proclaimed it to be almost 200 years ago.

RYDE COMMUNITY

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [5.21 p.m.]: I will speak about the wonderful work conducted in the Ryde community by volunteers and community leaders, as well as some of the Government's initiatives in the area. I was recently welcomed to Ryde Hospital by the Director of Nursing, Linda Davidson, who kindly introduced me to the new doctors and nurses starting at the hospital. I listened to their stories about how they came to be in that line of work and it was encouraging to hear that their number one reason was to help people. All of them displayed a high level of enthusiasm and, most importantly, a passion for caring. It was clear that those nurses and doctors were there because they loved to help others.

We all try to make a difference in this Chamber, which often takes much time and resources, but it is the doctors and nurses in our communities who have the rare gift of making someone feel better every day they go to work. Many people care for our community, and teachers and parents are definitely included in this group. Recently, I visited the great North Ryde Public School where the Principal, Erika Southam, and parents Penelope Joseph, Nicole Starling and Katherine Israel and their enthusiastic children had time to show me their concerns about pedestrian safety in the area. I am working with the Minister for Roads in an effort to increase pedestrian safety for everyone in this area.

Ryde is a diverse place to live in and it is heartwarming to see the culturally diverse events develop and become accepted in our community. One of these increasingly popular events is the Eastwood Lunar New Year Festival. Part of this festival includes a multicultural cooking competition that has grown to become a much-loved event in which local community leaders compete in front of residents to see who will reign as champion for another year. This year the winner of the cooking competition was Sydney Korean Women's Association President Agnes Shim. She, together with other contestants such as the President of the Chinese Australian Forum, Tony Pang, the Indonesian Welfare Association's Carla Indriarto, Eastwood Chamber of Commerce's Catherine Sullivan, Chinese Australian Services Society's Tao Bai, and the Federal member for Bennelong, John Alexander, tested my culinary skills in the cook-off.

Big thanks must go to the organisers and sponsors, including City of Ryde Council, the Eastwood Chamber of Commerce, the Eastwood Chinese Senior Citizens Club, as well as the local businesses that gave generously to make the event possible. I also thank the residents of Ryde who attended. On that note, one of our community leaders, Albert Yun, has shown great work and commitment. Albert was recently promoted within the ranks of Westpac and is moving from Eastwood, but he leaves a lasting legacy in our community of service and giving. Albert has been a key driver of many of the events in Eastwood and has given his time generously to organising committees in our area. Albert's work was recognised by a community farewell dinner organised in his honour. I wish Albert all the best in his new position. His efforts will be remembered for a long time, and he will always be welcomed back.

Events for Seniors Week in Ryde included North Ryde Community Aid's "Come Ride Ryde with Us", which involved seniors in the area gathering to take a ride on a traditional double-decker bus. Passengers enjoyed the trip down memory lane. I thank North Ryde Community Aid for organising the trip. I also thank the passengers. From the double-decker bus the Seniors Week events rolled on to Christian Community Aid's High Tea where seniors were entertained by a variety of groups including the Chinese Leisure Group's Tai Chi, ladies cultural dancing and the Leisure Group Choir. I congratulate Seniors Week Achievement Award nominees in our area, including Jim Moulds-Gardiner, Judy Desmarchelier and, of course, Janet Goodsell who was presented with her Seniors Week Achievement Award by Minister Constance for her volunteer work with dementia patients. The community members that make up the Ryde electorate, be it in public events, nursing, aged care, schooling or multicultural relations, continue to work to keep the community brimming with energy and culture. I am continually proud and honoured to represent such a community.

CAMDEN SHOW

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.25 p.m.]: Last weekend the 126th Camden Show took place. Once again it was a roaring success with more than 35,000 people attending. The show was opened by

Australian cricketing legend and Farmer of the Year patron Glenn McGrath. Glenn, Sarah and their children were warmly welcomed by our community. As part of the show there was a promotion for the Australian Year of the Farmer, which seeks to educate people about the contribution farmers make and the opportunities that exist in agribusiness. The local Farmer of the Year award winners were: Farmer of the Year, Michael Perich; Innovative Farmer of the Year, John Fairley; and Young Farmer of the Year, Patrick Buckley. I congratulate these farmers on their contribution to the industry.

It was wonderful to welcome our fair trading Minister, Anthony Roberts, his wife, Alicia, and his sons John and Samuel to the show. The Minister and his family visited many of our wonderful exhibits and stalls, including the cattle exhibits of St Gregory's College and Macarthur Anglican School. These exhibits are organised entirely by the students of these local schools and showcase their abilities. I congratulate all involved. As part of the show festivities I attended an afternoon tea hosted by the owners of Camden Park, John and Edwina Macarthur-Stanham, who are direct descendants of the Macarthur family and still reside in the original house, which has become one of the great homes of Australia and a major part of Camden's history. I thank John and Edwina for the wonderful generosity and hospitality that they and Camden are renowned for. Camden Park House is thought to be one of the oldest residences in the country still occupied by descendants of its founder.

Construction of Camden Park House began in 1832 and was completed in 1835, a year after John Macarthur's death. This wonderful home is still a working farm. Camden Park House is open to the public on the third weekend in September. I encourage everyone to take the opportunity to look at a great part of our history. For more than 150 years farming has been at the heart of Camden and the town still has that country feel that a lot of city people come to enjoy once a year at our show. The show would not be possible without the contributions of its wonderful sponsors. I thank Hennings Jewellers, who put on an amazing fireworks display on the Saturday night of the show and have done so for more than 40 years. I also thank Macarthur Stockfeeds, CPE Tree Services, Macarthur Lady Funerals, William Inglis and Son Ltd, Camden Hire, Funnells Electrical Contracting, Coulcher's Accounting, Southwell Irrigation, Eagles Automotive, Ingham Enterprises and Dairy Farmers.

I also acknowledge the Camden Show Society Committee members who work tirelessly year round to bring the wonderful show to life each year. I thank President David Head, Immediate Past President Matt Collins, Vice Presidents A. Biffin, B. Hayter, J. Sharpe, Hugh Southwell and G. Wall, honorary Vice Presidents Paul Bowring, Jim Davies, Edgar Downes, J. Eagles, John Hodge, C. Inglis, Reg Inglis, D. McDonald, R. McIntosh, A. Moore, Rowan Moore, P. Oxford, L. Papi, K. Sharpe, John Southwell and Mark Stanham, honorary veterinary surgeon R. Venkatsan, honorary historian John Wrigley and Secretary Lyndy Cornwell. I must single Lyndy out as being an outstanding worker who pulls all this together.

I also thank treasurer John Stannon and committee members C. Alexander, S. Allingham, A. Anderson, G. Ashton, T. Baumer, B. Bell, A. Biffin, F. Boardman, R. Boardman, V. Boardman, C. Buckley, P. Buckley, A. Cameron, Bruno Carmagnola, R. Clifton, N. Clissold, M. Collins, L. Davies, W. Davies, W. Death, M. Dounan, H. Downes, L. Elkins, B. Hayter, Simon Hennings, G. Hilt, T. Hinde, M. Honor, W. Inglis, I. Lane, N. Lowry, R. Mulley, K. Palmer, D. Purtle, P. Rayner, W. Reece, W. Satara, R. Scott, J. Sharpe, S. Sherwood, D. Sidman, L. Smith, H. Southwell, S. Strachan, G. Wall, F. Warren, N. Westerhof, C. Williams, J. Williams, H. Wilson and N. Wilson. Finally, I thank honorary committee members C. Dengate, I. B. McKenzie and D. W. Southwell. As an extremely proud patron of the Camden Show, I commend the wonderful efforts of all and the far too many wonderful volunteers to mention by name for bringing Camden's premier event together each year.

WALLSEND ACCOMMODATION AND TOURISM AUDIT

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [5.30 p.m.]: Mr Tim Owen, member for Newcastle—who made the welcomed announcement of the British and Irish Lions tour to Newcastle in 2013—was recently reported in the *Newcastle Herald* to have said that he was concerned about the lack of accommodation in the Newcastle central district. Mr Owen said that if we are not opportunistic in the provision of affordable accommodation, the lower Hunter will risk missing out on a big economic boost. In the western suburbs of Newcastle we have been prescient in addressing the vexed question of adequate accommodation, with a view to the future of our wonderful region.

Immediately after the June 2007 storm and tempest, which had devastating effects on many of the businesses in Wallsend and surrounding suburbs, the Wallsend town committee, local businesses and community representatives, together with representatives from Newcastle and Lake Macquarie councils, got together in my

office to formulate initiatives to attract investment and jobs to the area. The question posed was: Does our community meet the requirements to attract investments? I then approached the former Government for assistance. The response was that the former Government would match any funds we raised for research of the issues. I went cap in hand and asked the University of Newcastle, John Hunter Hospital, Calvary Mater hospital, Wallsend Diggers, Newcastle City Council, Lake Macquarie City Council and others if they would be prepared to put money towards a tourism and accommodation audit, which would be matched by the State Government. I raised \$30,000 from local groups—for which I thank them—which the former Government matched.

That \$60,000 funding culminated in the Wallsend accommodation and tourism audit, which was conducted by local firm S. G. Consultants and Property Strategies Australia. The firm was commissioned to determine accommodation provision and tourism opportunities in the inner western suburbs of Newcastle. The audit report was interesting. In March last year the audit was launched at Wallsend Diggers. Wallsend Diggers was a major donor to this research as it is interested in accommodation requirements. Good on them for that. The focus of the study was Wallsend town but it extended to the Wallsend electorate boundaries. The objectives of the report were: to determine existing accommodation in Wallsend; to identify key tourism and accommodation demand opportunities for Wallsend; to identify suitable land for accommodation development in Wallsend; and to investigate the adequacy of existing road signage to attract travellers on the F3 freeway, in particular to Wallsend.

There is a great diversity of attractions in the area, including the Blackbutt Nature Reserve, the Hunter wetlands, the Wallsend historic town centre walk, Wallsend Winter Carnivale, Blue Gum Hills Regional Park, the University of Newcastle, many existing and planned cycleways and walkways, as well as future one-off sporting and cultural events, such as the tour identified by Mr Owens. Visitors have plenty of reasons to stay in the area, while still enjoying the beaches and inner-city nightlife of the Newcastle central district. The western suburbs are also the focus of important education and health services. The report concluded that high-quality, flexible accommodation such as hotels, motels and serviced apartments, close to transport, food and services and at low- to mid-price range are the preferred accommodation models.

I congratulate all those involved in the Wallsend accommodation and tourism audit and I encourage stakeholders, having taken the first step of identifying accommodation needs, to study the report and maximise the potential of this splendid gateway to the west. In November 2010 the *Lonely Planet* named Newcastle as one of the top 10 cities in the world to visit. Over 120,000 people visit the region annually, and the Hunter is the number one region in the State outside Sydney for international overnight visitors. We should ensure that we provide the best accommodation so that visitors maximise their stay and will come back for more.

VAUCLUSE SENIORS WEEK CELEBRATIONS

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.35 p.m.]: On Thursday 22 March 2012 I had the pleasure of hosting a seniors' morning tea in my electorate to coincide with Seniors Week 2012. It was a wonderful opportunity for me to meet local seniors in my electorate and to celebrate the vitally important role they play within our community. I was delighted also to have the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, Mr Andrew Constance, take time out of his busy schedule to join me at that event and, importantly, to directly hear the views and concerns of seniors. Minister Constance also took the opportunity to discuss with local seniors the Government's soon-to-be-released Whole of Government Ageing Strategy and its plans to implement services and planning measures to support our seniors into the future. We had a productive question and answer session during which Minister Constance and I were able to respond to important issues raised by the seniors.

The morning tea was also a welcome opportunity for me to acknowledge the significant contributions made by seniors in the development of my local community and to thank them for their leadership and service. Five residents in my electorate were recognised in the 2012 Seniors Week Achievement Awards. I will briefly share with the House the stories of those five special people I am proud to have live and work in my electorate. Mr Alan Joffe of Vaucluse was honoured with a State award for his years of dedication to community service. Mr Joffe is the treasurer of the Shalom Institute and the Shalom Gamarada Indigenous Scholarship Program. He volunteers for the B'Nai Brith organisation and oversees the annual schools poster competition, which receives hundreds of entries. Mr Joffe also volunteers on a weekly basis for Meals on Wheels, and runs a monthly walking group.

Mrs Edith Ryba of Point Piper was honoured as a nominee for a community service award by Jewish Care in recognition of her fantastic volunteer work as president of the Welfare Ladies Auxiliary, one of the

friendship clubs auspiced under Jewish Care. Mrs Ryba has been involved as a volunteer for over 20 years. Each week she ensures that members are provided with entertainment or activities. She works tirelessly to extend a warm welcome to all and makes sure that anyone in need is referred through to Jewish Care Community Aged Services for support. Mrs Kathy Miller of Rose Bay was honoured as a nominee for a business award. For the past 15 years, Mrs Miller has been volunteering at the Centre for Ageing, a community group delivering services to help Jewish seniors to stay in their own homes for as long as practicable.

Through the help of the Centre for Ageing, Mrs Miller helped her mother settle into life in Australia. As she became more involved with the organisation, she offered to host a Shabbat candle lighting ceremony for Jewish residents at various secular nursing homes in the eastern suburbs. Mrs Miller soon had a group of volunteers, rabbis and musicians scheduled to visit nursing homes every Friday afternoon to bring some "Yiddishkeit"—a Jewish ceremony with "heart"—to the nursing home residents. She continues her work with the Centre for Ageing to this day. Mr Reuben Aaron of North Bondi was honoured as a nominee for a business award. Mr Aaron arrived in Australia in 1947. For the past 50 years he has dedicated his life to his local community.

In the 1960s, Mr Aaron was instrumental in building the Sephardi Synagogue in Fletcher Street, Woollahra, the only synagogue in Australia purpose-built for the Jewish congregation of Spanish origin. For the past 10 years he has volunteered at the Centre for Ageing as well, and he assisted in building an extension to the community hall that provides daily activities for the elderly and a new kitchen that provides Meals on Wheels to the local community. Finally, but not lastly, Mr Marcus Joffe, also of North Bondi, was honoured as a nominee for a life-long learning award. Since 1999 Mr Joffe has played a vital role in the administration of Computer Pals for Seniors in the eastern suburbs, a group entirely run by volunteers.

Mr Joffe was also the company secretary and director of the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association for nine years, and for the past three years he has been treasurer of the Waverley Community and Seniors Centre. These five worthy recipients work tirelessly for my community. I sincerely thank them for their dedication, leadership and service. Together with the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, I was proud to honour them publicly and pay tribute to their work last week. I was also delighted to meet their families, who attended the morning tea. The support and understanding that the families of such workers bring to the community makes their work possible. I commend my statement to the House.

TRIBUTE TO MARGARET ELAINE WHITLAM, AO

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.40 p.m.]: Tonight on behalf of the Cabramatta electorate and community, I express my condolences to the Whitlam family at the passing of Margaret Elaine Whitlam, AO. Gough Whitlam represented Cabramatta in the Federal Parliament when he was the Federal member for Werriwa, and the Whitlam family lived in Cabramatta, where they raised their four children. Margaret Whitlam was an inspirational woman, a true leader in her own right. She was always supportive of Gough's career but broke the stereotype; she dared to have her own opinions and had no fear of expressing those opinions. Margaret was a feminist, strong on women's rights and equality, and she fought for social justice and the inclusion of all. Above all, she was adored by the Cabramatta community and the Australian public.

No other first lady of Australian politics has come close to receiving such overwhelming affection and respect. All Australians were proud of her. I turn to my personal memories of the Whitlams. As a young fellow in the 1950s I remember seeing both Gough and Margaret in the local area. Indeed, I saw them many times at the Serbian functions to which my father would take us. They were tall people, tall in stature and impressive to see. When I was a child I did not understand that they were politicians; they were simply two people who attended our functions. As I grew older and learned what they were all about, I was inspired to join the Australian Labor Party. Gough was the reason I joined the Labor Party, to fight for social justice, to help people and to make a positive contribution to the society in which I lived.

I joined the Australian Labor Party in 1971. The first campaign I worked on—and I have worked on every campaign since—was Gough Whitlam's 1972 "It's Time" campaign. Those were the heady days of the Labor Party. Gough's seat of Werriwa took in Cabramatta and the surrounding areas at the time. In 1957 the Whitlams moved from Cronulla to Cabramatta, where they bought a block of land in Albert Street. They lived there, raising their family, until the late 1970s. Margaret was well loved in our local area and adored by the local community, as was Gough. Cabramatta library was named the Whitlam Library after the Whitlams, in respect of both these great Australians.

Margaret was granted the first life membership of the Australian Labor Party alongside Gough. Cabravale Leisure Centre was the result of a \$13.5 million project undertaken by council to rebuild the Cabramatta pool. As the local mayor I had the honour of being assisted by Gough to open the Cabravale Leisure Centre in 2008; Margaret was also in attendance. We were joined by a large crowd of local residents and community leaders, but the highlight of the day was having Margaret and Gough inspect the leisure centre, which services daily the community of which they were so fond. The significance is that the new Cabravale Leisure Centre was built on the site of the old Cabramatta pool. I am certain that Gough opened Cabramatta pool in the late 1950s or early 1960s, with the help of the then mayor. During the 1960s Margaret spent a lot of time at the pool as a coach and as a member of the Cabramatta swimming club. She also ensured that the youth of the area were looked after. Margaret represented Australia at the Empire Games in 1938, which was a great achievement in itself.

I offer my sincere condolences to Gough and their children, Tony, Nick, Stephen and Catherine, on this sad occasion. The Cabramatta community, along with the rest of Australia, woke up to the sad news on 17 March 2012 that our community had lost one of its own and a National Treasure. Australia has lost a giant, a true and gracious lady, a leader, someone whom we all looked up to but absolutely adored. When in the presence of Gough and Margaret I often ended my speeches with the words, "We love you, Gough." Today, on behalf of Cabramatta and my colleagues in this Parliament, with sadness I say, "We love you, Margaret. May you rest in peace."

HOPEPOINT CHURCH, GEORGES HALL

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [5.45 p.m.]: Since August 1961 Calvary Chapel has been serving the people in the East Hills community, as well as the communities within several adjoining electorates. From its humble beginnings, when services were held in a one-car garage in Greenacre, Calvary Chapel has grown into an inspiring organisation operating out of several impressive buildings located at Georges Hall. After I took office in March 2011 Senior Pastor Warren Mortomore was one of the first people to contact my office seeking help. Notwithstanding the eventual outcome of the issue, Reverend Mortomore was always a gracious and polite constituent who understood that sometimes things do not turn out the way we would like.

Knowing the excellent work undertaken by Calvary Chapel, I was more than pleased to accept an invitation to attend a special service held on Sunday 11 March to launch the chapel's new name. Also attending that service with me was Bankstown City Councillor Glen Waud and the member for Bankstown. The new name of Calvary Chapel was a closely guarded secret, known to a select few and hidden from everyone else. Not until that special moment during that special Sunday service were we finally told what that new name would be. To the joyful cheers and applause of the congregation, the new name of the church was flashed up onto the screen.

HopePoint Church now takes pride of place within our community to carry on the work of Calvary Chapel, building on its solid foundation and rich heritage. HopePoint Church will continue to touch many lives and will keep on reaching out to many communities, with a passion to make a difference through the love for God and the desire to serve the people within the community. But like all churches, we would not have HopePoint Church without the dedicated service of many people. With that in mind, I honour and acknowledge not just the leadership team but the numerous individuals who contribute to the daily life of HopePoint Church. I congratulate HopePoint Church and wish its members all the very best as they continue their journey of community service for many decades to come.

CRONULLA ELECTORATE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [5.47 p.m.]: It is 12 months since my election as the member for Cronulla. In those 12 months I have spent a lot of time listening to my constituents, hearing their concerns and discussing issues with them. Many of their most important concerns and issues are common throughout New South Wales, such as quality schools, quality hospitals and safe streets. In the five minutes available to me I will outline some of the special issues facing Cronulla—issues that I will be pursuing vigorously. Some involve upgrading transport infrastructure, which was neglected for 16 years under Labor, some are long-term projects, and some I will be expanding on in the House in the near future.

The first is the F6 extension. There are many reasons why it should be built. Its construction would benefit not just Cronulla but southern Sydney more generally as well as the Illawarra and the whole of the South Coast of New South Wales. Second, there are other more local road issues. The Gannons Road underpass in

Caringbah is a prime example. Gannons Road joins the two main east-west roads that lead directly from the Cronulla Peninsula. It is a bottleneck. Solving the problem will require the cooperation of both the State Government and Sutherland Shire Council.

Third is the train service, and there are three things in particular that I will be pursuing: better parking facilities at stations on the Cronulla train line, more express trains from Sutherland to the city, and the use of the rail corridor for a dedicated Sutherland-Cronulla cycleway. They are matters that currently I am pursuing with the Minister for Transport. The fourth general issue I will be pursuing is giving local small businesses the opportunities they need to thrive and to provide employment for local people in the area. In particular, with its spectacular beaches and waterways, its historic Kurnell site and its access to the Royal National Park, Cronulla has enormous tourism potential—tourism potential that is yet to be fully tapped.

Fifth is sensible, balanced and sustainable development. Cronulla has contentious development issues involving, or potentially involving, the State's planning powers. Sydney needs more housing, but we also need to preserve the amenity and liveability of local areas. We need to strike the right balance, and that is what I will be fighting for. Sixth is maintaining the Sutherland Hospital as a world-class facility in its own right. Seventh is planning for appropriate protection and commemoration of Kurnell's heritage and the natural environment as we move towards 2020—the 250th anniversary of the meeting there in 1770 of two cultures. Above all, I have been elected to put Cronulla first. That is what I have done, and that is what I will continue to do.

PUBLIC HOUSING MAINTENANCE

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [5.52 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House an important issue in my electorate—one that impacts significantly on the lives of my constituents, of those who are most vulnerable. My electorate office has compiled a dossier of public housing residents who have contacted my office in exasperation after waiting months and often years for repairs to be carried out to their homes. The issues include rat infestations, flooding, mould and even holes in ceilings. These people are the human face of a shameful problem left by the Labor Government—a \$300 million backlog in public housing maintenance work.

The huge maintenance backlog means that miserable conditions are being endured by some of the most vulnerable people in our community—those who live in appalling conditions while the assets owned by the people of New South Wales are facing demolition by neglect. It is a disgrace that people are forced to live in such conditions without adequate support from the Government. Underfunding basic maintenance leads only to greater future costs as smaller problems grow into significant structural faults. This backlog is financially irresponsible and places huge pressure on tenants as well as the New South Wales budget.

The O'Farrell Government needs to protect these important assets and invest in basic maintenance to prevent escalation of costs and to support tenants. We know that this new Government has abolished the role of the Minister for Housing and we now have a complex and disorganised division between different departments. I am sure many members will agree that the lack of communication between different departments makes matters difficult. The maintenance program is underfunded. In my view it is not well organised and splitting of the Housing portfolio has not delivered the type of reform that is needed.

The mismanagement and underinvestment in these important assets needs a full and open investigation. The estimated maintenance backlog to which I have referred previously is approximately \$300 million, but that is in fact a 2008 figure—in other words, the \$300 million estimate is four years old—so it is likely that the current backlog is therefore much greater than that. The need for it to be urgently addressed is even more pressing than we may have imagined. I now draw attention to the human face of this neglect, particularly the impact it has on the lives of a number of constituents in Glebe. I will not mention all the names of the constituents involved but I have provided them to the Minister and we are working with the Department of Housing.

A family in Broughton Street in Glebe is dealing with water running down the laundry walls every time it rains, and it is short circuiting the lights. The leaks have already ruined a washing machine and caused a dryer to become unusable. This tenant has been reporting problems to Housing NSW for two years. However, the holes in the roof and the cracks in the ceiling remain. Another resident in Broughton Street has rat infestations in her garden, a broken fence and mould over the walls inside her house. This resident had even tried to repaint her walls in an attempt to alleviate the mould. Just around the corner in Cowper Street in Glebe an 84-year-old lady, Mary Johnson, and her neighbour, 82-year-old Pat Turner—who were featured in the *Daily Telegraph* on

Monday 19 March 2012—also live in deteriorating Housing NSW properties. Their story was supported by an editorial in the *Daily Telegraph* that rightly called for investment in these assets to prevent costs from escalating.

Another lady nearby in St Johns Road has a leaking roof, walls covered in mould and guttering that is falling off on one side of the building. Again, exasperated with waiting for a response from Housing NSW, this tenant also has attempted to clean and paint over the mould herself. She has an asthmatic son and is greatly concerned that his health is suffering as a result of the mould and terrible living conditions inside her building. Another resident, who lives in Glebe Street, also is dealing regularly with flooding, a great deal of rising damp and mould, and a garbage area that quite frankly is Dickensian. This resident has health problems including bronchial asthma. She desperately wants to be relocated to somewhere else. She is awaiting a transfer, like so many others. The examples I have cited are the experiences of just a few of the many public housing residents in my community and across New South Wales who are suffering as a result of chronic underfunding and disorganisation. The member for Dubbo appeared on *Today Tonight* in connection with public housing problems in his electorate.

In response to a question I asked in Parliament, the Minister for Family and Community Services stated that \$398 million is planned to be spent on maintenance and upgrading this financial year. Of that total allocation, \$95 million is for responsive maintenance, with approximately \$303 million for maintenance and upgrading. This is a significant commitment, and I acknowledge in this House the role of the Minister communicating with me and my electorate office in relation to this matter. However, the question is: Will this be enough? I call on the Government to introduce and explain in full detail the future costs of maintenance, the ability of the Government to catch up on this backlog, the investment that will be required and the time line that is involved. I understand that this Government is carrying the weight of neglect by the former, Labor Government but it is up to this Government to take steps to make sure that these assets are protected and that public investments are secure but, most importantly, that tenants in public housing residences are treated in a just and humane manner.

PARRAMATTA CIVIC PLACE REDEVELOPMENT

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [5.57 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a matter that is of great importance and concern to the people of Toongabbie, who share with others the local government area of the Parramatta City Council. This week it was revealed that the \$1.5 billion agreement for a proposal between Grocon and the Parramatta City Council had fallen over. The proposal was to redevelop Civic Place in Parramatta and provide the Parramatta City Council with new council chambers, new administration quarters, childcare facilities and libraries together with commercial, residential and retail space. The redevelopment was the subject of a preliminary memorandum of understanding or its equivalent in 2006 between Grocon and the Parramatta City Council. Subsequently, if my memory serves correctly, enabling legislation was passed with bipartisan support by the Parliament that allowed the council to compulsorily acquire a number of properties in the precinct.

Ultimately this \$1.5 billion proposal was of huge significance to the economy of western Sydney, which is worth approximately \$80 billion, and potentially would have been a shot in the arm to the economy of western Sydney and its surrounds. However, the deal fell over this week. The issue is pretty straightforward. When Mr O'Farrell won government he appointed himself as the Minister for Western Sydney. The council is embarking upon another round of eliciting expressions of interest, so the opportunity now exists for the Premier, as the Minister for Western Sydney, to nominate a government agency that could become an anchor tenant for any new proposal for Civic Place. In other words, some of the larger agencies that currently are based in the shadow of the Sydney Harbour Bridge or the Sydney Town Hall could be relocated to Parramatta, bringing with them potentially thousands of employees, collateral boosts and bonuses to local businesses and, of course, an ongoing revenue stream for whoever the next developer might be in that part of Sydney.

Opposition members recognise that these things take time. We understand that it has been six years since the initial memorandum of understanding but between now and finalising the detail for the next memorandum of understanding with whoever the potential developer may be, and then the developer being ready to proceed, probably dozens of large leases of office space in Sydney city will expire. This proposal has been on the drawing board for some six years and has been the subject of goodwill from both sides of politics. It has now fallen over for a range of reasons that are yet to be adequately explained by either the developer or council.

I expect that council will explain in due course what its role has been throughout. I had a discussion briefly with the mayor yesterday and I am persuaded that her bona fides on this are rock solid. What I would like to see, though, is for the Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney, to step in and guarantee an anchor tenant for the next proponent of this place so that the people in my electorate of Toongabbie have a cultural and entertainment precinct and thousands of new jobs close to where they live rather than having to travel into the city or beyond each day, contributing to congestion and so on, because we have not been able to get a visionary project like this up and off the ground.

The member for Hawkesbury is shaking his head with some scepticism. This is commonsense. It is a straightforward exercise for the Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney. He could call for a report on a number of large-scale leases held by government agencies that exist in the city that are to expire over the next decade or so and then simply nominate some of the bodies concerned as potential lessees of a new development in Parramatta. This would change the economic profile of Parramatta. We have long talked about Parramatta as being the second central business district. If we want to ease congestion we have to relocate business out there and encourage new businesses into the area. This is a classic example. It now rests with Premier O'Farrell to make this a reality rather than paying lip-service to the notion of Parramatta as Sydney's second central business district. This matters in Toongabbie—

Dr Geoff Lee: Parramatta is the capital of western Sydney.

Mr NATHAN REES: I think it is far better than that. This is an opportunity for the cradle city of Australia to be recognised as such, to be supported by a new Government, with the Minister for Western Sydney as the Premier. This is an extraordinary opportunity for Premier O'Farrell to put his money where his mouth is.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.02 p.m.]: I place firmly on the record that the member for Parramatta, Geoff Lee, is quite aware of the complex problems surrounding that development in Parramatta. He also recognises the huge economic benefits that the development would bring to the area and bring to the capital of western Sydney, as he often refers to it, Parramatta. He is working diligently to get outcomes on behalf of Parramatta, as he always does and as the New South Wales Government would expect a good Government member to do.

WESTERN SYDNEY CARPOOL

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.03 p.m.]: Tonight I place on the record a fabulous new initiative that I have been very privileged to be associated with and that I launched on 15 March, only a couple of weeks ago—the western Sydney carpool. This carpool provides an enormous opportunity to reduce the burden on family budgets by saving people money, reducing vehicle emissions and providing another option to people who may be feeling the strain of rising costs of living. The initiative will allow people to travel in a car with someone else living or working in western Sydney. I pay tribute to the Western Sydney Community Forum, which comprises a great group of people who work in government departments and who formed this group to achieve better public transport initiatives across western Sydney.

Two of the drivers are none other than Mary Waterford and Hugh Worrall and I am very proud of their achievements. They have set up a website, supported by the New South Wales Government—www.wscarpool.org. People can log on to the website and find someone who lives in the local street, area or the workplace. The project has a host of sponsors, such as the Rouse Hill Town Centre and organisations that have offered to be involved in the carpooling, including Blacktown, Penrith and Parramatta councils, which have been strong supporters of the initiative. The mayor of Parramatta, Lorraine Wearne, who has been an ardent advocate for carpooling, held the launch of the car pooling in her backyard in Parramatta on 15 March.

People can log on to the website and find friends or people in the local area who are travelling to the same destination or people who work in the same government department or organisation. For example, Blacktown City Council has over 1,000 employees so one would assume that there would be people living in the same area. People from as far away as Katoomba, Gosford and Woy Woy have already logged on to the website. They are seeking to buddy up with people to travel in cars to work. An interesting aspect of research undertaken is that people will catch a bus or train and sit next to a stranger but they will not necessarily get into a car with a stranger. However, if they find out that someone works in the same building or they live in the same area they are much more inclined to feel safe, and therefore buddy up with that person and travel in a car with them. As I have often said, this is like having a street party in the car every day.

It is similar to when I first started work back in 1976. Three other young blokes who lived in my local area and I all shared a car. I utilised my car only one week a month. It was a huge saving. It was a reduction of 75 per cent in the transport costs each and every day. This initiative should be popular among the many western Sydney families that are under a bit of stress at the moment due to rising costs. I place on record my great appreciation not only of the local press, the *Parramatta Advocate*, which supported the launch, but also the major media. I speak of none other than Channel 7 and the good journalist there, Lee Jeloscek, who came out and gave this wonderful initiative prime national viewing and recognition. We will get further press along the way. I thank also my great friend and supporter of that wonderful radio station 2GB, the legend of radio, Alan Jones, who was prepared to place firmly on the record his support for the western Sydney carpool. I encourage all families across western Sydney to become involved and log on to the website, which already has 500 people logged on and registered. It is like having a street party in the car every day.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.08 p.m. until
Monday 2 April 2012 at 12 noon.**
