

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 10 May 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.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT (INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATIONS) BILL 2012

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.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

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

TRIBUTE TO FATHER GERALD IVERSON

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Expresses its condolences to the parishioners at Our Lady Queen of Peace Church at Greystanes for the sad loss of Father Gerald Iverson.
- (2) Recognise Father Iverson's devotion to bringing the community together and his 16 years of service to the Our Lady Queen of Peace Church.

WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT AWARD RECIPIENT COUNCILLOR VICKI SCOTT

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House congratulates Councillor Vicki Scott, of Gosford City Council, on being presented with a Women in Local Government Award for her contribution to local government.

GOSFORD CITY COUNCIL EARTH HOUR OBSERVANCE

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the contribution by the Gosford City Council to Earth Hour in turning off all non-essential lighting in the council's main administration building.
- (2) Notes that Earth Hour takes place each year at 8.30 p.m. on the last Saturday in March and is a World Wide Fund for Nature initiative to reduce our impact upon earth.

SHOWJUMPING CHAMPION MARTIN GOSTELOW

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Martin Gostelow, of Somersby Equestrian Park, on being named Jumping NSW Amateur Rider of the Year.
- (2) Acknowledges that following a major back injury in 2005 he won the New South Wales Country and State Showjumping Championships in 2011 and finished fourth at the National Championships.

AUSTRALIAN YOUTH DANCE FESTIVAL

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the organisers of the Australian Youth Dance Festival at Mount Penang Parklands on the Central Coast.
- (2) Recognises that the festival features Indigenous youth groups and dancers with disabilities, and included special public performances on 11 April at Laycock Street Theatre and another at Mount Penang Gardens on 14 April 2012.

BRISBANE WATER SECONDARY COLLEGE

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN— That this House congratulates the 17 students from the Special Education Unit at Brisbane Water Secondary College, in Gosford, who cleared waste off the foreshores of Brisbane Water during Clean Up Australia week.

WESTERN SYDNEY PARKLANDS TRUST TREE-PLANTING INITIATIVE

Mr ANDREW ROHAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Western Sydney Parklands Trust on its initiative to plant 20,000 trees by September 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the program will involve 100 schools and 4,000 pupils from across western Sydney to encourage pupils to develop a love of the Australian bush and the natural environment.
- (3) Commends the involvement in the program of 30 pupils from years 3 and 4 at Bossley Park Public School and Principal Graeme Brims.
- (4) Notes that the pupils will help to plant different types of trees such as the Cumberland and River Flat Eucalyptus.

TEKIA BREE CHEYNE GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the performance of Tekia Bree Cheyne of Oak Flats Albion Park Kiama Gymnastics & Acrobatics Club at the Acrobatic Gymnastics Australian Championships held on 6 to 10 October 2011.

EMILY NOAKES GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the performance of Emily Noakes of Oak Flats Albion Park Kiama Gymnastics & Acrobatics Club at the Acrobatic Gymnastics Australian Championships held on 6 to 10 October 2011.

MIKAYLA STEPHENS GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the brilliant performance of Mikayla Stephens of Oak Flats Albion Park Kiama Gymnastics & Acrobatics Club at the Acrobatic Gymnastics Australian Championships held on 6 to 10 October 2011.

CAITLIN BLUNDEN GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the performance of Caitlin Blunden of Oak Flats Albion Park Kiama Gymnastics & Acrobatics Club at the Acrobatic Gymnastics Australian Championships held on 6 to 10 October 2011.

KAYLA MCCOSKERY GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the performance of Kayla McCoskery of Oak Flats Albion Park Kiama Gymnastics & Acrobatics Club at the Acrobatic Gymnastics Australian Championships held on 6 to 10 October 2011.

ELISE CALLAGHAN GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the performance of Elise Callaghan of Oak Flats Albion Park Kiama Gymnastics & Acrobatics Club at the Acrobatic Gymnastics Australian Championships held on 6 to 10 October 2011.

AMBER MARSAY GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the performance of Amber Marsay of Oak Flats Albion Park Kiama Gymnastics & Acrobatics Club at the Acrobatic Gymnastics Australian Championships held on 6 to 10 October 2011.

KRISTIANNE HAY GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the performance of Kristianne Hay of Oak Flats Albion Park Kiama Gymnastics & Acrobatics Club at the Acrobatic Gymnastics Australian Championships held on 6 to 10 October 2011.

OLIVIA WILSON GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House acknowledges the performance of Olivia Wilson of Oak Flats Albion Park Kiama Gymnastics & Acrobatics Club at the Acrobatic Gymnastics Australian Championships held on 6 to 10 October 2011.

BEROWRA RSL CLUB LIFE MEMBER ROSS FOSTER

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Ross Foster, of Berowra, on being awarded Life Membership of Berowra RSL Club in recognition of over 40 years service to the club.
- (2) Recognises the contribution Ross has made to the community through sport and community organisations.
- (3) Wishes Ross the very best in his retirement.

WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE AND GAVIN HUNTER

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Gavin Hunter, of Hornsby, for shaving his head to raise funds for the Leukaemia Foundation's World's Greatest Shave.
- (2) Notes that Gavin is the Parents and Citizens Association Vice President at Hornsby North Public School and is an example of the supportive and enthusiastic Hornsby community.

RON AND DOREEN WATTS SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Ron and Mrs Doreen Watts on the celebration of their 60th wedding anniversary.
- (2) Wishes Ron and Doreen all the best for many more years together.

FRANCESCO AND TERESA MELISSARI SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Francesco and Mrs Teresa Melissari on the celebration of their 60th wedding anniversary.
- (2) Wishes Francesco and Teresa and their family all the best for many more years together.

NEW SOUTH WALES AMBULANCE OFFICER GARY SCOTT

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates NSW Ambulance Officer Gary Scott on his retirement after 34 years of service as a paramedic.
- (2) Notes that Gary joined the service in Sydney in 1978 and has been promoted through the ranks to become a specialist paramedic.
- (3) Notes that Gary has served the community of Taree for the last 20 years and will retire to his property at Nabitac with his wife.

COLIN AND VERNA NEWELL SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Colin and Verna Newell, of Tuncurry, on the celebration of their 60th wedding anniversary.
- (2) Notes that Colin and Verna have lived their entire married lives in Tuncurry and that they celebrated their anniversary with 28 members of their family including grandchildren and great grandchildren.

DOMENICO AND GIESPPINA MAZZONE FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Domenico and Giesppina Mazzone, of Forster, on the celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary.
- (2) Notes that both Domenico and Giesppina migrated to Australia from Calabria in the mid 1950s and that the couple have four sons and five grandchildren.

WELLER FAMILY COUNTRY SHOW MOVEMENT CONTRIBUTION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Selwyn and Val Weller and their children Murray, Penni and Kim of Nabitac on being awarded the Agricultural Societies of New South Wales Award for outstanding contribution to the New South Wales country show movement.
- (2) Notes that this is the first time in the Society's history that the award has been made to a family and that the award recognises the lifetime contribution made by each member of the Weller family.

TAREE ROTARY CLUB SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Rotary Club of Taree on celebrating its 75th year of community service to the people of Taree and the Manning Valley.
- (2) Notes that the Rotary Club of Taree has been closely involved with local communities and overseas, such as developing a local hospital with suitable nursing quarters in Kokoda, since its inception on 25 September 1937.

TRIBUTE TO JOE DAWSON

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges and congratulates Joe Dawson, a member of the 39th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment on his service to the country and to Legacy.
- (2) Notes that Joe Dawson served in New Guinea on the Kokoda Track and that his records assisted author Peter Fitzsimmons in writing his bestselling book, *Kokoda*.
- (3) Notes that Joe Dawson is a much loved member of the Forster community.

COUNTRY RUGBY LEAGUE MERIT AWARD RECIPIENT BOB ANDERSON

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Bob Anderson, of Manning Point, on receiving the Country Rugby League Merit Award for his service and commitment to rugby league.
- (2) Notes that Bob Anderson first became involved in rugby league in 1952 playing with Wentworthville in junior league and played first grade before moving to Ourimbah to be a player-coach.
- (3) Notes that Bob took on a development job with Group Three before moving into administration as a member of the group's management committee, a position he still holds.

NORM AND ETHEL FOSTER SIXTY-FIFTH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Norm and Ethel Foster of Taree North on celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary.
- (2) Notes that Norm and Ethel, now aged 88 and 87 respectively, have two children, Heather and Kevin.

TRIBUTE TO SANDRA WILSON

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the death of Sandra Wilson, Patrol Captain, Club Treasurer, Trainer and Official of Pacific Palms Surf Life Saving Club who passed away suddenly following the Rock to Rock Swim at Elizabeth Beach.
- (2) Notes that Sandra joined the club in 2001 at the age of 54 and quickly gained many awards and qualifications, including Club Person of the Year for outstanding service in all areas of club life in 2010 and the 10 Year National Patrol Service Award from Surf Life Saving Australia in August 2011.
- (3) Notes that Sandra will be remembered as a tireless member of the Pacific Palms Surf Life Saving Club and as a woman who was devoted to her family, always had time for friends and was always willing to help out where needed.

WALLSEND MARYLAND JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms SONIA HORNERY—That this House congratulates the executive, volunteers and players, both past and present of the Wallsend Maryland Tigers Junior Rugby League Club, for the 50 years of rich and successful football history in the Hunter.

LUTHERAN WOMEN NEW SOUTH WALES CONVENTION

Ms SONIA HORNERY—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates local Lutheran women for hosting a very successful annual Lutheran Women New South Wales convention last weekend in the Hunter.
- (2) Notes that women from all over the State attended, some remaining in the area to enjoy the beautiful Hunter environment.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the work of an interdisciplinary team of scientists at the University of Newcastle on their potential discovery of a simple blood-based test to identify people in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease.
- (2) Notes the study makes a considerable step towards cheap, non-invasive testing by identifying a blood protein panel to predict Alzheimer's disease in its early stages.

BISHOP TYRRELL ANGLICAN COLLEGE ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Commends Bishop Tyrrell Anglican College for conducting an Anzac Day service on 24 April 2012, which commemorated fallen soldiers of the past in an admirable manner.
- (2) Notes Anzac Day is an important time for students to learn about our country's history and understand the sacrifices these soldiers made for the nation.

CARDIFF NORTH PUBLIC SCHOOL ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Commends Cardiff North Public School for conducting an Anzac Day service on 27 April 2012, which commemorated our soldiers who fought in war.
- (2) Notes Anzac Day is an important time for students to learn about our nation's history and understand the sacrifices made by our soldiers in the past and present.

AUSTRALIAN UNDER 18 WOMEN'S HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates local 16-year-old Mariah Williams on her performance as a major player for New South Wales at the Australian Under 18 Women's Hockey Championships held at the Newcastle International Hockey Centre during April 2012.
- (2) Commends the outstanding efforts of Newcastle teenager, Estelle Hughes, playing for Tasmania to help its hockey profile.

AUSTRALIAN UNDER 17 NETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Newcastle netballers Tanisha Stanton and Phoebe Seamer on their performance for New South Wales against Victoria at the Australian Under 17 Netball Championships.
- (2) Commends their efforts in helping New South Wales win its first national championship in five years.

JERVIS BAY LIONS CLUB WHITE SANDS CHARITY PRINCESSES

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Annalise McDonald, of Huskisson, on being crowned the White Sands Primary Charity Princess for 2012.
- (2) Congratulates Tahia Phillips on becoming the White Sands Junior Charity Princess for 2012.

UNITED NATIONS YOUTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Miss Hayley Johnson on being selected to represent New South Wales at the National United Nations Youth Conference.
- (2) Notes the National United Nations Youth Conference is conducted by the United Nations Youth Australia, a national community-based organisation.
- (3) Notes the event is being held in Melbourne with 15 students who will participate in model United Nations debates and forums.

RETIREMENT OF AUNTY MAUDE MOORE AND AUNTY EDNA WHITMORE

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the retirement of Aunty Maude Moore and Aunty Edna Whitmore from Oolong House, Nowra.
- (2) Notes Aunty Maude and Aunty Edna have been cooking and caring for young Aboriginal men at Oolong House for 25 years.
- (3) Congratulates Aunty Maude and Aunty Edna on their contribution to the South Coast Aboriginal Community.
- (4) Wishes Aunty Maude Moore and Aunty Edna Whitmore and their families all the best in their retirements.

ULLADULLA BLESSING OF THE FLEET FESTIVAL

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the annual Ulladulla Blessing of the Fleet Parade took place on 8 April 2012.
- (2) Congratulates Blessing of the Fleet Chairman Phil Brown and the organising committee, including members Sylvia Franklin and Wayne Fry.
- (3) Congratulates the Wizard of Oz float for winning the Best Float Award, the Great Aussie Backyard for second and the Alice in Wonderland for third place.
- (4) Congratulates Miss Shayna Wilson who was named the 2012 Ulladulla Blessing of the Fleet Princess and runners up Connie Violaris and Rose Pearce.

IGA RETAILER OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Milton and Mollymook IGA supermarkets for being recognised at the 2012 IGA Retailer of the Year Awards.
- (2) Congratulates the Milton IGA team on being awarded Meat Department of the Year, Deli Department of the Year, Liquor Department of the Year and Checkout Service of the Year.
- (3) Congratulates the Milton IGA team including Shane Wilson, Anthony Latta and Robert and Kim Powell.
- (4) Congratulates Mollymook IGA on being awarded Fresh Produce Department of the Year.
- (5) Congratulates the Mollymook IGA team including Stuart Barr.

SAILABILITY CALLALA

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sailability Callala for participating in the Access Class World Sailing Championships.
- (2) Congratulates the Access 303 crew of Grace Kennedy and Justin Millsom who finished fourth in the World Championships.
- (3) Congratulates the Skid crew of Vanessa Waller and Malcolm Cameron who finished sixth in the World Championships and fourth in the Australian Championships.
- (4) Congratulates Malcolm Cameron, President of Sailability Callala, on his organisation of the event.

NOWRA CROQUET CLUB NINETIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Nowra Croquet Club on the celebration of 90 years of croquet in the Shoalhaven.
- (2) Congratulates the Nowra Croquet Club committee members, including President Elsie Crawford, Captain Margaret Sawers and Publicity Officer Pat Poynter.

SOUTH COAST ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the contribution of South Coast Returned Service League sub-branches including Nowra-Greenwell Point, Culburra Beach, St Georges Basin, Ulladulla, Huskisson, Callala Beach, Bomaderry and Sussex Inlet to the successful organisation of 2012 ANZAC Day celebrations on the South Coast.

- (2) Notes the importance of ANZAC Day both on the South Coast and internationally.
- (3) Expresses its appreciation to Australia's men and women who have served and are currently serving in the Defence Forces.

CUNJURONG POINT MANYANA RURAL FIRE BRIGADE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Cunjurong Point Rural Fire Brigade on the celebration of its 40th anniversary.
- (2) Notes the significant contribution of the Cunjurong Point Rural Fire Brigade to the South Coast community including its efforts throughout the 2001 Christmas fires, 1994 Manyana bushfire and 1992 Bendalong bushfire.
- (3) Congratulates Presidents Alex Frew and Gary Barton, Secretary June Frew and Treasurer Melody Lovelace.
- (4) Congratulates and notes the work of Captain Neil Johnson, Senior Deputy Captain Keith McBride and Deputy Captains Alex Frew and Col Gladman.

DRAGON BOAT RACING STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Diana Burleigh, Lillie Forrester, Jacqueline Turner and Samantha Wong for representing New South Wales in dragon boat racing.
- (2) Commends the hard work and dedication of the team in its training.
- (3) Acknowledges the role that parents of young sports people play in contributing to the success of their children.

NSW SENIORS WEEK ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Michael O'Connell, of Arncliffe, for being awarded a 2012 NSW Seniors Week Achievement Award for community service.
- (2) Congratulates Mrs Suzanne Medway, of Banksia, for being awarded a 2012 NSW Seniors Week Achievement Award in the field of environment, science and agriculture.
- (3) Acknowledges the significant contributions that seniors make to the Rockdale local community.

ROCKDALE ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contributions made by volunteers and organisers of Anzac Day ceremonies throughout the Rockdale electorate.
- (2) Commemorates Anzac Day 2012 as the 97th anniversary of the landing on the beaches of the Gallipoli peninsula.
- (3) Pays tribute to the courageous men and women from Rockdale who have served in defence of Australia.

ST JOSEPH'S CHURCH, ROCKDALE, 120TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the unveiling of the St Mary MacKillop's sculpture at St Joseph's Church, Rockdale, on Monday 30 April 2012 by the Governor, Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir, AC, CVO.
- (2) Congratulates St Joseph's Church, Rockdale, on its 120th anniversary.
- (3) Commends Father Brendan Quirk for his dedication to the Church community.
- (4) Expresses gratitude to the previous leaders of the Church who have held positions of responsibility to sustain the Church over its 120 years.
- (5) Extends best wishes to the parishioners and the Church in the future.

JINGELIC SHOW

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises that although the 85th year of the Jingellic Show was rained out in early March 2012, the Show Committee rescheduled the event and incorporated a very successful showjumping competition.
- (2) Congratulates President "Ace" Coughlan, Secretary Liz McLellan and the Jingellic Show Committee on its outstanding achievement and on the presentation of the showgrounds.

NSW AUTISM RECOGNITION AWARD RECIPIENTS MIKE EDEN AND KARENA LEET

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Commends Mike Eden and Karena Leet on their fundraising efforts for the Aspect Riverina School, Albury.
- (2) Congratulates Mike and Karena on being awarded the David Foster Award for Volunteer Service at the 2012 NSW Autism Recognition Awards held in Sydney.

ALBURY COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the contribution made by Roma Freeman, of Albury, for her 50 years of service to the Country Women's Association.
- (2) Congratulates the Albury Branch of the Country Women's Association on its 85th anniversary.

HENTY GRAND SCOTTISH DEBUTANTE BALL

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Henty Presbyterian Church on the organisation of the 57th Grand Scottish Debutante Ball.
- (2) Recognises the great commitment to the Ball by: Church Administrator Di Janetzki; President Chris Maher; Secretary Beryl Meyer; and Matron of the Ball, Helen Terlich.

TAHMOOR PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the 345 students of Tahmoor Public School on their efforts at the annual Easter hat parade.
- (2) Acknowledges the dedication and commitment of the teachers at Tahmoor Public School who provide the students with the skills required.
- (3) Notes that the students were tasked with making the hats out of recycled materials.

APPIN MASSACRE

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the community who commemorated the anniversary of the Appin Massacre of 1816.
- (2) Acknowledges the Dharawal people who were killed in one of the most horrific atrocities in Australia's history.
- (3) Notes that on 17 April 1816 soldiers forced about 14 Dharawal women and children off the cliffs at Broughton Pass.

YOUTH SOLUTIONS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Youth Solutions youth advisory group on the launch of its campaign on recreational drugs.
- (2) Acknowledges the Give us a Hand initiative allows young people and members of the community to interact online while learning facts about drugs.
- (3) Notes that this initiative has been implemented and supported by the young people on the youth advisory group.

UNICYCLE CHAMPION JARYD HARRIS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jaryd Harris, of Tahmoor, who attended his third Australian National Unicycle Championships, with 11 first places and four Australian records, and now has established a total of 12 Australian records.
- (2) Notes that Jaryd is currently completing his plumbing apprenticeship, while working part-time and continuing his training.

MACARTHUR REGION YOUTH FORUM

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all the youth advisory councils of the Macarthur region which met during youth week 2012 to discuss issues affecting youth throughout the region.

- (2) Notes and encourages the active participation of those attending the forum.
- (3) Notes that public transport, jobs, homelessness and activities for young people were some of the major issues that were discussed at the forum.

BUXTON AUTUMN FESTIVAL

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Pam Ferrari and the team of organisers of the Buxton Autumn Festival held at Wollondilly on 28 and 29 April 2012.
- (2) Thanks the Picton Theatre Group who were there on the day as Buxton Bushrangers.
- (3) Notes that such events create tourism for the area of Wollondilly with over 60 stalls, steam train rides and entertainment for children and families.

BELGIAN SHEPHERD DOG BREEDERS JULIE AND CRAIG FYNMORE

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Julie and Craig Fynmore, of Thirlmere, who were winners at the Sydney Royal Easter Show this year with their four Belgian shepherd dogs.
- (2) Notes that the four dogs won six first place and three runner-up ribbons between them.
- (3) Acknowledges that Julie and Craig have lived in Thirlmere since 1998 and have travelled nationally and internationally to enter their dogs in different events.

WOLLONDILLY YOUTH WEEK EVENTS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the entire Wollondilly Youth Advisory Council for its efforts in organising youth week 2012.
- (2) Thanks Rob Moran and James Berry from Wollondilly Shire Council who provided support to the young people on the committee.
- (3) Notes there were over 15 events targeted at various age groups across all the major towns in the Wollondilly electorate, including a movie night, disco, touch football and Xbox competitions.

THARAWAL ABORIGINAL ART SHOW

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Tharawal Local Aboriginal Land Council for its recent inaugural Aboriginal Art Show on 30 and 31 March 2012.
- (2) Notes there was a range of different pieces of art exhibited and created by the region's Aboriginal people.
- (3) Thanks the artists exhibited including Leslea Feerick, Aleshia Lonsdale, Nyree Reynolds, Vanessa Tompkins and James Hurford.

VALENTINE ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Lions Club of Valentine for its organisation of the Valentine ANZAC Day service on 25 April 2012.
- (2) Notes that there was a large turnout for the ceremony.
- (3) Congratulates students from Warners Bay High School, Valentine Public School and Eleebana Public School for their participation in the ceremony.
- (4) Congratulates the 16 Transport Squadron Australian Army, Lake Macquarie Winds Band and the Salvation Army for their contributions to the ceremony.
- (5) Acknowledges the work of Lions Club of Valentine President Peter Steel, Treasurer Colin Edwards and Secretary Leon Burwell.

BELMONT ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Belmont RSL Sub-branch for its organisation of the Belmont ANZAC Day service on 25 April 2012.
- (2) Notes that the ceremony was well attended with the Macquarie Mall overflowing.

- (3) Congratulates the students of Warners Bay, Floraville, Jewells, Belmont North and Belmont Public Schools, Belmont Christian College, Belmont High School and St Francis Xavier's College along with local Cubs, Scouts, Girl Guides, Sea Scouts, Australian Air Cadets and 316 Airforce Squadron Cadets for their participation in the march.
- (2) Acknowledges the work of sub-branch President Joe Hayes, Secretary Neil Head and Treasurer Sid Phillips.

DOYALSON ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Doyalson RSL Sub-branch for its organisation of the Doyalson ANZAC Day service on 25 April 2012.
- (2) Notes that the ceremony was well attended.
- (3) Congratulates the students of Lake Munmorah High School and Mannering Park, Lake Munmorah and Budgewoi Public Schools for their participation in the march.
- (4) Acknowledges the work of sub-branch President Robert Couper, Vice President Dennis Rayner, Secretary Wayne Meech and Treasurer Trevor Blackstock.

GWANDALAN-SUMMERLAND POINT ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the ceremony was well attended.
- (2) Congratulates the students of Gwandalan Public School for their participation during the ceremony.
- (3) Acknowledges the work of Lions Club of Gwandalan President Des Tuillier, Treasurer Len Morris, Secretary Gary Kwast and the ANZAC Committee.
- (4) Congratulates the Lions Club of Gwandalan for its organisation of the Gwandalan/Summerland Point ANZAC Day service on 25 April 2012.

PELICAN ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Pelican Flat RSL Sub-branch for its organisation of the Pelican ANZAC Day dawn service on 25 April 2012.
- (2) Notes that there was a large turnout for the ceremony.
- (3) Congratulates students from Pelican Public School and Blacksmiths Public School for their participation during the ceremony.
- (4) Acknowledges the work of Pelican Flat sub-branch President Ross Peters, Treasurer Richard Latham and Secretary Terry Preston.

SWANSEA ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Swansea RSL Sub-branch for its organisation of the Swansea ANZAC Day service on 25 April 2012.
- (2) Notes that there was commendable community support for the event.
- (3) Congratulates students from Swansea High School, Swansea Primary School, Caves Beach Public School, Blacksmiths Public School, Nords Wharf Public School and Marks Point Public School for their participation during the ceremony.
- (4) Acknowledges the work of Swansea RSL Sub-branch President Robert Flanagan, Treasurer Gregory Jehn and Honorary Secretary Barney Blundell.

BLACKSMITHS PUBLIC SCHOOL FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Parents and Citizens Association President Damian Connell, Secretary Laura Taylor and Treasurer Lisa Hunter for their organisation of the Blacksmiths Public School 50th anniversary celebrations, including the evening markets and school fair.
- (2) Notes Blacksmiths Public School provides a nurturing environment for children and takes pride in the academic, cultural, environment and sporting achievements of its students.
- (2) Acknowledges the work of Blacksmiths Public School Principal Leanne Young and her dedicated teaching and administration staff.

BUDGEWOI PUBLIC SCHOOL FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) Notes Budgewoi Public School celebrated its 50th anniversary on 13 August 2011.
- (2) Congratulates the school for providing an environment of quality learning, fostering effective relationships between teachers, students and the community and instilling important values in its students.
- (3) Acknowledges the work of Budgewoi Public School Principal Kerry Moore, teachers, staff and the Parents and Citizens Association executive.

UNITED HOSPITAL AUXILIARIES OF NEW SOUTH WALES NORTH COAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Casino branch of the United Hospital Auxiliaries of NSW for staging a successful North Coast Regional Conference at Casino on 24 April 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the commitment and dedication given to the Casino branch by its President, Edna Fuller, and Secretary, Robyn Spruce, and other members.
- (3) Acknowledges the attendance at the conference by the Mayor of Richmond Valley Council, Councillor Col Sullivan, Executive Officer of the Northern Rivers Local Health Network, Chris Crawford, State President of the UHA, Mollie Strong, Executive Officer of Casino and District Memorial Hospital, Ray Phelps, and guest speaker, State Coordinator of RSL Day Clubs, Tom Barnsley.

CASINO EYEWATCH

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Casino Neighbourhood Watch on holding an information session on the new online crime prevention initiative Eyewatch at Casino on 24 April 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the commitment and dedication of the coordinators of Casino Neighbourhood Watch, Peter and Donna-Maria Adams, who were instrumental in establishing the local group and promoting the event.
- (3) Acknowledges the attendance at the meeting by the Mayor of Richmond Valley Council, Councillor Col Sullivan, officers of the Richmond Local Area Command, as well as presentations by Chief Inspector Joshua Maxwell from NSW Police Headquarters and Tweed Heads Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, Gordon Levensen, and the "welcome to country" by Aunty Gwen Hickling.

RETIREMENT OF LIBRARIAN FRAN MCGUIRE

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Pays tribute to Mrs Fran McGuire for her 22 years of service given to the Maclean community and who recently retired as the local librarian.
- (2) Commends her passion and commitment in helping people from all walks of life in her role as the local librarian.
- (3) Wishes her well in her retirement.

HOLY FAMILY PRIMARY SCHOOL, GRANVILLE

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kangaroo Six, Year 6 students from Holy Family Primary School in Granville, for taking the initiative to produce their own short movie for the school's TV station to learn about how they can help people understand the diverse and different cultures in Granville.
- (2) Commends their exploration of multiculturalism in Australian society.

ST GEORGE GREEK ORTHODOX PARISH, ROSE BAY, FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Greek Orthodox Parish of St George, Rose Bay, and its community celebrated its 50th anniversary this month.
- (2) Congratulates the Parish Priest, Father Gerasimos Koutsouras, Parish Committee President, Mr James Photios, Ladies Auxiliary President, Mrs Betty Gemenis, and the parish community on the occasion of the anniversary.
- (3) Commends the Greek Orthodox Parish of St George community for its vibrancy, broad range of pastoral activities and important work within the local community.

DE LA SALLE COLLEGE, REVESBY, AND LASALLE CATHOLIC COLLEGE, BANKSTOWN

Mr GLENN BROOKES—That this House:

- (1) Recognises that 7 April 2012 was the Feast Day of Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle, the patron of Christian teachers.
- (2) Congratulates the principals and teachers of De La Salle College at Revesby and LaSalle Catholic College at Bankstown for continuing the inspired work of Saint Jean-Baptiste de la Salle.
- (3) Wishes the students of both colleges every success with their studies throughout 2012.

AUSTRALIAN SIKH GAMES

Mr GLENN BROOKES—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the work of the General Manager and staff of Bankstown City Council for their efforts in making the 25th Australian Sikh Games, held on 6 to 8 April 2012, an outstanding success.
- (2) Congratulates and thanks the organisers of the 25th Sikh Games for positively promoting the City of Bankstown.
- (3) Encourages the General Manager and his staff to continue to promote Bankstown as a destination of choice for business, sporting activities and tourism.

HARRY REMFRY 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr GLENN BROOKES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Harry Remfry, of Yallambee Village, Revesby, who turned 100 on 25 March 2012.
- (2) Recognises the excellent work of the management, staff and volunteers at Yallambee Village Aged Care.
- (3) Acknowledges that Bankstown City Aged Care Ltd is a not for profit aged care provider.
- (4) Notes its outstanding service to people who are aged, disabled or suffer with dementia in the Bankstown and East Hills area.

WARREN TENNANT MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT MATHEW WICKS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates local athlete Mathew Wicks for being awarded the Warren Tennant Memorial Scholarship at the Newcastle District Cricket Association Awards night on 28 April 2012.
- (2) Thanks the members and executive of Newcastle District Cricket Association for creating opportunities for young athletes.

NEWCASTLE DISTRICT UNDER 17 CRICKETER OF THE YEAR CAMERON ROXBY

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates local athlete Cameron Roxby for his award for under 17 Cricketer of the Year at the Newcastle District Cricket Association Awards night on 28 April 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the members and executive of Newcastle District Cricket Association for their promotion and support of young athletes.

GUIDE DOGS

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges Guide Dog Awareness Week which ran from 22 to 28 April 2012.
- (2) Supports the Guide Dogs Welcome Here Campaign to encourage hospitality venues to be aware of guide dog access laws.
- (3) Thanks the Guide Dogs NSW/ACT organisation which breeds and trains guide dogs through the training centre in Glossodia, near Richmond, to help improve access, mobility and quality of life for thousands of people who are vision impaired.

HAWKESBURY INNER WHEEL CLUB AND MEALS ON WHEELS

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Notes the vital work undertaken by Meals on Wheels which provides meals to seniors and people with disabilities in our community.
- (2) Acknowledges the important role of volunteers who prepare and deliver meals on a daily basis.
- (3) Thanks community organisations like the Hawkesbury Inner Wheel Club and President Yvonne Tuckerman who donated ten insulated bags that will be used to maintain the heat and high quality of the food delivered.

LOCHIEL HOUSE RESTAURANT, KURRAJONG HEIGHTS

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Lochiel House Restaurant in Kurrajong Heights has continually maintained the acclaimed *Sydney Morning Herald* Good Food Guide Chef's Hat since 2003.
- (2) Congratulates the owners, Chefs Anthony Milroy and Monique Maul, who have sold the business that they successfully built.
- (3) Thanks them for their service to the growth and development of hospitality and tourism in New South Wales.

WENTWORTH COMMUNITY HOUSING NATIONAL HOMELESSNESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Wentworth Community Housing on receiving the Excellence and Innovation in Partnerships Award at a National Homelessness Achievement awards ceremony at Parliament House, Canberra, in March 2012.
- (2) Notes the award was for Project 40, a collaboration of more than 80 organisations of outer Western Sydney delivering a supportive housing service for people and families experiencing chronic homelessness.

SYDNEY BEARS ICE HOCKEY CLUB

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House:

- (1) Commends the Sydney Bears ice hockey team on its move to the Sydney Ice Arena in Norwest Business Park.
- (2) Acknowledges that the Sydney Ice Arena is a world class sporting venue.
- (3) Recognises the benefit to the community of the Sydney Bears ice hockey team's move into Baulkham Hills.

NORTHMEAD EARLY EDUCATION CENTRE

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Northmead Early Education Centre on its recent opening.
- (2) Recognises the tremendous value that the Northmead Early Education Centre will provide to the community.
- (3) Commends the team at the centre for all its work in delivering this new service.

ATHLETE MITCH TYSOE

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mitch Tysoe, of Springfield, in the Gosford electorate for winning the 110 metre hurdles at the recent Australian Athletics Championships held in Melbourne.
- (2) Recognises that his winning time of 14.04 seconds is the second fastest time for 2012 and currently ranks him second in Australia.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.

Community recognition notices agreed to.

PLATTSBURG PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [10.05 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges that the Federal Building the Education Revolution scheme enabled construction of a state-of-the-art library in the wonderful Plattsburg Public School, in the heart of Wallsend;
- (2) congratulates the former Government on funding a much-needed fence around the school; and
- (3) congratulates the school on holding a ceremony to note the contribution of the Federal Government, the students, teachers and the school community.

An effective education system requires sufficient resources and facilities to nurture the learning process. Recently I praised the constructive work at Glendale Holy Cross Primary School, which received funding to

construct three new classrooms and refurbish four classrooms, administration offices, the canteen, staff and laboratory facilities, the library, computer room and a toilet block. Fortunately for my electorate, Glendale Holy Cross Primary School was not the only educational institution to receive funding under the Building the Education Revolution scheme as delivered by the Federal Labor Government. Plattsburg Public School was one of many State and private schools across New South Wales to benefit from the scheme and receive more than adequate funds to finance the construction of a state-of-the-art library on the school premises, in addition to an upgrade in classroom facilities as well as a much-needed security fence installation.

The new library was delivered at a cost of \$1.4 million and the school's classroom facilities were upgraded at a cost of \$650,000, which provided employment for my constituents and a learning environment to cultivate the nurturing process for students enrolled at our local school. The state-of-the-art library provides wonderful experiences for the children, including the use of connected classroom facilities for education and training opportunities. Students have been able to enjoy virtual excursions—"travelling" to places that our school community would never have been able to fund trips to visit. The population of Plattsburg Public School includes a diverse range of students, including children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The introduction of the virtual excursions and experiences has enhanced the cultural literacy of not only the disadvantaged students but also the student body as a whole. The library space provides so much more than just technological experiences. It provides a relaxing and enticing space for students to enjoy literature, and for teachers to inspire the children through reading the high-quality books on the shelves that line the room. Ellen Bax, the principal of Plattsburg Public School, is very pleased with the school's new resources. She said that the library enriches the school's students by giving them access to learning environments beyond the school grounds through connected classroom technology. In addition Ellen said:

The library offers a functional, fresh space for one of our staff members with significant competence in information and communication technologies [ITC] to continue to build their expertise.

Ms Bax also said:

We successfully applied for an Asia Literate Grant with three partner schools, being Wallsend Public School, Shortland Public School and Callaghan Campus, Wallsend High School. Working with these schools we plan to deliver Japanese language experiences using the technology provided to us in the library. Now, how good is that? It's not just a building it's a communication conduit.

I could not agree more with Ms Bax. The President of the Parents and Citizens Association at Plattsy, Karen Maurer, said that the school has evolved into a state-of-the-art institution because of "the foresight of a government that invests in the future of this nation, through high-quality education of our nation's most precious assets—our children." Plattsburg Public School was established in 1865. Its 150th birthday is quickly approaching. I was a kindergarten student at Plattsburg—I was not part of the 1865 opening, although some days in here I feel as though I was—and my older sisters and brothers experienced Plattsy as well. Karen Maurer is proud to say that with the help of the funding, "instead of presenting tired old buildings to the community celebrations, we can proudly display both the modern and historical buildings that are based on our school site."

In addition to the state-of-the-art library and the installation of the new security fence that was funded by the State government, the parents and citizens association has now been able to direct resources to fund important programs to the children within the school. Karen added, "This has been possible as the fence has minimised break-ins and arson attempts, so both the school and the P and C funds do not have to be directed to repairs after such events." Karen said, "This has brought a great sense of achievement to the very active parent-carer body, as we know that the fundraising that we do to supplement school resources is being directly spent on improving our children's education." Further, the fence has brought a great sense of security to the students, as their fear of unwanted visitors has also declined.

Ellen Bax and Karen Maurer have been inspired by the generosity of the Federal Government in making such a large contribution to the future of public education by investing in their school. I state publicly that Plattsburg Public School is one of those schools that needed the funding. It is a working-class school. They have done it tough, and the community and I are very appreciative of the funding that has been received from the Building the Education Revolution [BER] program. The Plattsburg Public School and our community are sincerely grateful. I take this opportunity to thank all the hardworking teachers at Plattsy, the parents and citizens association and all the parents. I look forward to a brighter future and utilising the school's facilities, which no doubt will enhance the educational opportunities for all students.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [10.11 a.m.]: I join in the debate on the motion moved by the member for Wallsend, Sonia Hornery. The New South Wales Government broadly supports the motion moved by the member for Wallsend, and is very pleased that Plattsburg Public School has had a good experience with the Building the Education Revolution funds. The school is one of the very many schools that have had the opportunity to participate in the program and perhaps is one of the few that is happy with the outcome. Under the primary schools for the twenty-first century component of the Building the Education Revolution program, the Plattsburg Public School received just over \$2 million for a classroom facilities upgrade as well as the construction of a new library.

The library includes the provision of connected classroom facilities, allowing exciting experiences for students such as virtual excursions. I commend the school community for the great work it has done and for the innovative and creative thinking it has brought to the table with respect to educating the children of the school. The classroom facilities upgrade involved refurbishing a heritage building to provide two state-of-the-art classrooms fitted with interactive whiteboards, among other things. The works also included a special programs room, a storage space, cleaner's facilities, covered walkways and a new security fence. The works were finished at the end of 2010 and were ready for students' use at the beginning of 2011. The school also received \$125,000 under the National School Pride component of the program for general maintenance, painting, a telephone system and a public address system. The public address system was particularly critical for the safety of students in emergency situations and during lockdowns.

However, I have to say that not all schools had a great experience with the Building the Education Revolution. The New South Wales Liberals-Nationals Government has been very critical of the implementation of the Building the Education Revolution, particularly by the previous New South Wales Government. The outcome was supposed to be that we would all refer to it as a once-in-a-generation opportunity to provide essential funding for education facilities that were desperately needed in New South Wales schools. However, there are too many examples of how this program did not deliver value for money in our public schools in New South Wales. A number of schools in my electorate are very critical of the way that the Building the Education Revolution was implemented and the fact that they did not get the opportunity to manage the projects. Rather, the Department of Education and Training under the previous Government insisted that the school would accept what was being delivered by the then Government.

I must say though—and I am very happy about this—that Plattsburg Public School received value for money. I commend the school for the great work that was done in that context. As a member of the New South Wales Government, I am pleased that the school obtained value for money in the delivery of that program. The current New South Wales Government is taking on board the lessons that have been learnt from the experiences of the former New South Wales Government in the Building the Education Revolution program. For instance, we are taking action to address the school maintenance liability and infrastructure backlog that was left to our Government by the previous Labor Government.

When we were elected a year ago, the Minister for Education asked the Department of Education and Communities to conduct an assessment of maintenance issues in all New South Wales schools. We have received the results. After 16 years, Labor left New South Wales schools with a \$156 million maintenance liability and another \$798 million in infrastructure backlogs. In other words, almost \$1 billion was not spent on maintenance and infrastructure delivery to New South Wales schools, so shame on the Labor Party. Thanks to Labor we now have a legacy of rundown toilet blocks, science laboratories, food technology laboratories and roofs that need replacement.

As part of the reforms of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government we are doing four critical things. We are providing more resources, paying lower fees for construction work and maintenance, adopting a standard industry asset management system that was never previously in place, and getting better value for money for the taxpayers of New South Wales. As a Government we are committed to addressing Labor's billion dollar backlog, and we will be smarter about how we spend taxpayers' money, not only in schools but across-the-board, for this State. Frankly, the waste and mismanagement we witnessed during the Labor Party's implementation of the Building the Education Revolution program was disgusting. We simply cannot afford to repeat those mistakes.

Notwithstanding, I support the commendation of the member for Wallsend of the Plattsburg Public School library. I acknowledge that the Federal Building the Education Revolution scheme in some way enabled the construction of that state-of-the-art library and classrooms at the school. I do not congratulate the former State Government for funding the much-needed fence around the school because it was poorly administered and

poorly delivered. I congratulate the school on holding a great ceremony to note the construction. I congratulate the school also on directing the Building the Education Revolution funding by contributing to improvements for the students, the teachers and the school community.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [10.18 a.m.]: I am pleased to participate in this debate. I congratulate the member for Wallsend and Plattsburg Public School on their achievements under the Building the Education Revolution [BER] program. In 2009 the Federal Building the Education Revolution program, which is the largest school infrastructure program in Australia's history, was implemented in my electorate of Wollongong, with thanks to Federal Labor's unprecedented investment. In 12 years of the previous Howard Government, investment in our schools had never been seen at all. With \$2 million having been spent on maintenance works across 16 schools in the Wollongong electorate, I am able to say that my schools were overwhelmingly happy to have received infrastructure projects which in their wildest dreams, under the previous Howard Federal Government, they could never have hoped for.

The \$3.2 billion that was spent on improving New South Wales public schools and the injection of Federal money were very welcome additions to the New South Wales Labor Government's already record-breaking commitment to public education. Maintenance such as roof and toilet upgrades may not be particularly glamorous but it is important to the everyday life of our schools. Wollongong electorate schools that received this much welcomed maintenance work in the first round included Berkeley Public School, Berkeley West Public School, Farmborough Road Public School, Gwynneville Public School, Illawarra Senior College, Illawarra Sports High, Kemblawarra Public School, Lake Heights Public School, Mount St Thomas Public School, Para Meadows School, Primbee Public School, Smiths Hill High School, Warrawong Public School, Windang Public School, Wollongong Public School, and Wollongong West Public School. New classrooms, libraries, halls and science and language laboratories were built in local schools to help support students in their studies and provide the very best resources possible.

The Primary Schools for the 21st Century component of the Building the Education Revolution package commenced in May and June 2009 and was completed by December 2010. Wollongong schools that received new facilities under this component included Unanderra Public School, Windang Public School, Gwynneville Public School, Wollongong West Public School, Warrawong Public School, Berkeley Public School and Mount Kembla Public School. The second round of funding saw Coniston Public School, Wollongong Public School, Cringila Public School, Lake Heights Public School, Primbee Public School, Kemblawarra Public School, Port Kembla Public School, Mount St Thomas Public School and Para Meadows School all receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars of infrastructure.

The third round of this unprecedented building program saw Berkeley West Public School receive \$2.6 million, Farmborough Road Public School \$2 million and Hayes Park Public School \$3 million. I have had the pleasure of attending hall openings at Coniston Public School and Koonawarra Public School and the opening of covered outdoor learning areas at Windang and West Wollongong public schools, as well as witnessing firsthand the use of the state-of-the-art science laboratories at Illawarra Sports High. There is absolutely no doubt that these infrastructure upgrades have made a real difference to the school communities. I commend the then State Labor Government and the Federal Government for their vision and commitment to public education in this State and, indeed, the nation.

I condemn the New South Wales Government for its constant criticism of an investment in infrastructure that was unseen and unheard of in this country, particularly in New South Wales. In 12 years of the Howard Coalition Government no such investment was made on behalf of public schools, yet the current Coalition Government criticises the former State Labor Government for the biggest investment ever in public schools. It is a joke. The electorates of Coalition members also benefited from the Building the Education Revolution investment in our schools. Those members should be applauding the Federal Labor Government, not criticising it.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [10.22 a.m.]: I support my colleague the member for Wallsend and her motion in relation to Plattsburg Public School. I congratulate Plattsburg school on providing an environment of quality learning that fosters effective relationships between teachers, students and the community and instilling important values in its students. I acknowledge the Plattsburg Public School staff—principal Ellen Bax, the teachers and staff, and Kathy and Amanda from the administration office—for the work they do in providing our children with the best opportunity to move forward in the future. One aspect that makes a good school even better is a strong parents and citizens association, and Plattsburg Public School is fortunate to have just that.

I acknowledge the Plattsburg parents and citizens executive members, president Karen Maurer, vice-president Alison Neal-Mahony, secretary Sandra Moriarty and treasurer Susan Saxby. Under the Building the Education Revolution the New South Wales Department of Education was able to provide connected classroom facilities and a new library, which allows exciting experiences for students, such as virtual excursions. The classroom facilities upgrade involved refurbishing the school's heritage building, a building of importance to the local area, with two state-of-the-art classrooms and the very popular smart boards. Last week I visited two of my local schools, St Patrick's Swansea and St Francis Xavier Belmont, and was fortunate to spend time in the kindergarten classroom and also with year 6 students. It was amazing to see how things have changed from when my children were at school.

The information technology built into today's classrooms provides a unique interactive learning experience that stimulates the students throughout the day. Libraries are not rows and rows of books anymore; they have bean bags and cushions in a brightly coloured garden scene and a large area for computers for students to explore the world online. Today in this House we recognise the community of Plattsburg Public School but, more importantly, we recognise the importance of education and the essential need to arm our principals and teachers with the modern-day tools they need to succeed. I acknowledge and commend the efforts of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government in working to this end.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [10.25 a.m.]: At the outset, I commend the member for Swansea for his contribution to debate on this motion. Plattsburg Public School is a school with 200 pupils, established in 1865 at the foothills of Wallsend. In relation to schools in the Hunter, and more broadly across the State, we must recognise their age and the fact that the infrastructure is approaching or is over 100 years old. The maintenance and upkeep at that stage of a building's life are far more demanding than for a more modern building. The member for Wallsend brings to the House an acknowledgement of the Federal Building the Education Revolution, a program that launched \$16.2 billion into 24,000 projects across 9,500 schools in Australia. That figure, \$16.2 billion, sounds a significant amount of money, and it is, but it pales in comparison to the \$30 billion taken out of education over the 12 years of the John Howard Government. It seems that the least the Labor Government could do was to replace some of that money through building projects such as these.

As we debate this motion today, I note that the \$40 million made available by the New South Wales State Government for education this year is leftover funding from the Building the Education Revolution. So, instead of criticising this program, the Government should say thank you. Paragraph 2 of this motion congratulates the former Government on funding a much-needed security fence around the school. Erecting safety fences around our schools and installing flashing lights on the streets are important education initiatives of the former Labor Government, and I am happy to see them continue under the current Liberal Government—sorry, the current Liberal-Nationals Government. Sometimes I get confused because I do not know who has power over there. However, I am concerned about the continuation of this program. Recently I wrote on behalf of a school to the Minister for Education about the erection of a fence. The school is on a busy State road and the School Security Fencing Program has been ongoing for some time.

This Government can say that Labor could have done undertaken this project but did not. That is true, but this Government is now in charge of the books and it is up to it to deliver. The Minister's response was that under the Local Schools, Local Decisions program the school may be able to fund the security fence itself. This is a massive concern for me. I hope we will not get to the point under that program where schools have to make decisions about teaching staff, power, water, paper and fences. Under the former Labor Government they did not have to make those decisions. Fences were fully funded and outside the school's budget. I make that point with regard to paragraph 2 of the motion because, as I said, it is a matter of concern. Regardless of which side of the Chamber members are on, if they are not concerned about school security fences being funded out of the Local Schools, Local Decisions program they are in dreamland.

Paragraph 3 congratulates the Plattsburg Public School on holding a ceremony to note the contribution of the Federal Government to students, teachers and the school community. I have been to a number of these ceremonies, and they are always fantastic events. Members on both sides of the House would acknowledge that they provide an opportunity for us to interact with our local school communities. In today's debate Government members have been slandering the Building the Education Revolution process. If those members think the program is so bad, they should not turn up to the presentation ceremonies. They should not put their names and faces beside a program that they consider despicable. They should stop turning up to functions that recognise the Building the Education Revolution as an important part of our education system.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! When order is called I expect members to respond accordingly.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [10.30 a.m.]: I shall make a brief contribution to debate on the motion. I congratulate the member for Wallsend for moving this motion and for her efforts in acknowledging Plattsburg Public School and the Building the Education Revolution scheme. This morning there is a little hostility in the Chamber about the Building the Education Revolution scheme, but the reality is that we and the majority of school communities agree that the benefits certainly outweighed the costs of the scheme. The Building the Education Revolution program had many different purposes, including, of course, to stimulate our national economy and save jobs in Australia, namely, in the construction and infrastructure industry, which employs close to 10 per cent of Australians.

The Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, is relieved that he did not have to administer the Building the Education Revolution project. He was unable to administer a small assistant disability travel program for 700 children across this State, so he certainly would not have been able to administer a project of the scale of the Building the Education Revolution across our State. Fortunately, the former State Labor Government and the Federal Labor Government together administered this national funding project. The majority of school communities across our State recognise one fact: it was pretty unlikely they would ever have seen new school halls, new libraries or any other new facilities in such quick turnaround time as they did under this scheme. The member for Cessnock said that a number of members opposite were glad to accept the accolades and jump into photo opportunities with new facilities.

In 2010 the member for Hawkesbury called the Building the Education Revolution an abhorrent waste of taxpayers' money, yet was more than willing to jump in the photo at an opening ceremony for new facilities for Rouse Hill High School resulting from Building the Education Revolution funds. If we googled other Coalition members or found some of their newsletters and local newspapers, I am sure we would find photos also of them at opening ceremonies even though they continue in this Chamber to attack a significant scheme that provided a tremendous advantage to schools across our nation. I take this opportunity again to congratulate the member for Wallsend on bringing this matter to the attention of the House. We should always acknowledge the contributions of our schools in these schemes. The construction phase of the new facilities would have been difficult for all schools but, as I said earlier, in the end the benefits certainly outweighed the cost. Congratulations to the member for Wallsend on moving this wonderful motion.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [10.34 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Newcastle, Wollongong, Swansea, Cessnock and Bankstown for their contributions. I am pleased that the member for Newcastle supported the library and other facilities at Plattsburg Public School. He said that it was one of the few schools that is happy with the outcome of the Building the Education Revolution funding. Perhaps things are different in the Newcastle electorate, but I have not received any complaints from the people, teachers and staff in the Wallsend electorate. I acknowledge that the scheme experienced some hiccups, but overall principals in public and private schools have acknowledged that the injection of funding into their schools in the past two years enabled them to build facilities they never would have been able to achieve in the normal course of events. In fact, one principal at a Catholic school told me that it would not have been able to build the facilities in its projected plan for the next 20 years, but was able to do so through the Building the Education Revolution. I am pleased that that school was grateful for the opportunity.

I ask members to be quiet; their calling out is really rude. The member for Newcastle mentioned many examples of schools in his electorate that were very unhappy with the delivery of the Building the Education Revolution and the facilities they received. I have not seen any of them mentioned in the *Herald* and I have not heard any of them mentioned on the radio stations. I would be interested to hear from those schools in the Newcastle electorate that are not happy with the libraries, toilets, new art facilities and new covered outdoor learning area areas they received. The member for Newcastle acknowledged that we all are desperate for more resources in our schools and the Building the Education Revolution was the reason we introduced it.

The member for Wollongong said that the Building the Education Revolution was the largest investment of funding in public education maintenance that we have ever seen. Something of this magnitude certainly was not seen in the years of the Howard Government. She mentioned also that all schools in her electorate were overwhelmingly happy with their facilities. The member for Swansea was gracious and kind, as he always is, and acknowledged the work of the schools and strong parents and citizens associations, which has grown with the development of maintenance. This working-class school would not have had the money for new facilities in the normal procedure. I really appreciate his positive comments. The member for Cessnock said that many of our schools are aged. Plattsburgh school, which was built in 1865, was where my mum attended and also my siblings and I for a short while. It is an old school and ageing infrastructure costs money to maintain.

The member for Cessnock mentioned also that \$116.2 billion was injected by Building the Education Revolution nationally, which meant maintaining local jobs, boosting our local economy and certainly keeping the construction industry afloat. The member for Bankstown questioned, as I did, and was surprised at, the hostility of some Government members against the Building the Education Revolution project. She and I agree that it was unlikely any schools would have seen these facilities were it not for the benefit of the Building the Education Revolution. I conclude by congratulating Plattsburgh Public School and thank those members who were willing to make positive comments about what is overwhelmingly a brilliant injection of funding to provide facilities for public and private schools. It is a credit to the Federal Labor Government.

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

Motion agreed to.

INNER WEST LIGHT RAIL

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.40 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the extension of light rail will provide improved transport options for thousands of inner-west residents;
- (2) calls on the Government to integrate light rail into the public transport ticketing system; and
- (3) calls on the Government to arrange for concession card holders to travel on the light rail at a concession rate.

My community, local businesses, councils and residents campaigned for over 10 years to extend the light rail network and achieve fare integration for Inner West Light Rail in the public transport system. I was delighted when the Government responded last year to calls for integration as well as arranging for concession cardholders to travel on light rail at a concession rate. Those changes have made light rail a viable transport option for residents in my electorate, in particular, concession cardholders and pensioners who had been excluded from obtaining concessional fares on the light rail network. The Government's purchase of the light rail network is a victory for the local community and an opportunity for more efficient integrated public transport ticketing.

The Greens, alongside the local community, have campaigned long and hard to bring the light rail network back into public hands. The Greens believe that the public sector can best deliver this system and I am delighted that the Government has purchased the light rail and monorail system. I acknowledge the work and positive steps of the Minister in this regard. The light rail passes through my electorate and as a result of these changes it has been better utilised by residents. Having taken ownership of the light rail network the Government now needs to take steps to fully integrate ticketing with the broader transport network. I note that the limited MyZone ticketing was introduced for light rail services in June 2011. In the first month there was approximate recorded usage of 127,000 MyZone tickets. Total patronage in July 2011, including MyZone and light rail tickets, was 25 per cent higher than at the same time in previous years, demonstrating the important role of even this limited integrated ticketing. A fully integrated ticket system, including concession fares, would greatly increase the use of the light rail system.

I note the Government's commitment to introduce the Opal ticketing system. Every member knows about the terrible and disgraceful waste of money under the former Government of in excess of \$100 million on the Tcard system. In the 16 years that the former Labor Government was in office it did not develop that system, despite committing to have the system in place by the staging of the Olympic Games 12 years ago. I understand smartcard travel will be available on the Sydney Ferries network first, then the CityRail network, followed by Government and private bus networks. I call on the Government to update the House on the preparations for the installation of this new system. Let us hope that this Government does not repeat the failures of the last Government when implementing the system.

The Government's purchase of the light rail network should pave the way for the speedy extension of light rail from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill and construction of the greenway alongside the light rail. The Government has an opportunity to deliver a system that Labor failed to deliver to my community. As I am sure many in this House are aware, The Greens were disappointed when this Government took office and announced a two-year delay in the construction of the light rail and the abandonment of the greenway system. I joined local mayors, members of Parliament, Friends of the GreenWay community group and others to present the

10,000 signature petition on the steps of Parliament House on 31 May 2012. The greenway is an important aspect of the broader integrated transport network. After a decade of campaigning it is time for the Government to deliver.

I congratulate the dedicated supporters who have been involved in this campaign, in particular, Friends of the GreenWay. The greenway provides an integrated active transport link that will enhance the effectiveness of light rail. The Minister for Transport should support this project as a vital opportunity to encourage active transport and engagement with this light rail system. It includes an integrated pedestrian walkway and cycleway. Over 22 schools are involved in this project and they have been disappointed that the Government is refusing to fund it. In the first budget the Coalition Government announced a delay for the light rail, signalling a significant setback. I note that there has been strong community support for the extension of the light rail from Lilyfield to Dulwich Hill and a number of transport experts have backed this proposal. I look forward to the Government updating the House on the timeline for the light rail extension.

When this Government took office we were informed that there would be about a two-year delay and that the light rail extension would not be opened in 2012 but was expected to open in the first quarter of 2014. It has been said that the purchase by the Government of the light rail system would improve the opportunities and speed with which it could implement the light rail extension. I hope that the Government follows through and indicates to us all when that will occur. Two high schools are located in my electorate—St Scholastica's College and Sydney Secondary College. Today I will talk about Sydney Secondary College as it is a good example of a public high school in my electorate with junior campuses in Balmain and Leichhardt and a senior campus at Glebe. It is madness that students are required to commute across the electorate to attend their local State high school. For many of those students light rail is the best option but they use buses because a student concession cannot be used on the light rail network.

I will continue to campaign to ensure that those students have the same access to the light rail system as they currently do with public buses for travel between home and school. It makes sense and the Government should implement the system. Getting students off buses and onto light rail will reduce morning and afternoon congestion on roads in the electorate of Balmain, which will help to reduce travel times, improve local air quality, improve business opportunities and transport reliability for employees. The light rail network will reduce road usage by people who drive because in the past a reliable, quick and efficient public transport service was not available to them.

I understand that the Government has committed to conducting feasibility studies to extend the light rail network in the central business district—Central to Circular Quay, Central to the University of New South Wales, and Central to the University of Sydney. I ask the Government to update the House on the progress of its feasibility studies and to assure the community of an expedited light rail network. Ticketing and trip opportunities for commuters are an important part of the project. In a question to the Minister for Transport I have previously raised the subject of jobseekers having access to MyMulti tickets. I again raise that important issue. I commend the motion to the House and look forward to a discussion on it today.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [10.46 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the motion moved by the member for Balmain. This Government is committed to investigating all options to improve public transport in New South Wales. This means looking beyond traditional heavy rail or road projects to find solutions that will work best for different parts of the transport network and allow the Government to provide convenient travel for public transport customers. This Government believes that light rail will play an important part in the future of transport in Sydney, unlike the former Government who always treated light rail as a nuisance.

In 2008 former Labor transport Minister John Watkins said, "We are absolutely against light rail" and "It's a bad answer for Sydney." When Labor introduced MyZone, light rail was deliberately excluded; it never took light rail seriously. One of our key transport commitments is the delivery of a 5.6 kilometre extension of light rail in the inner west of Sydney. The extension will run from the current light rail terminus at Lilyfield, along the disused freight rail corridor, to Dulwich Hill. Delivery of the Inner West Light Rail Extension is well on track for services to begin in early 2014. Recently the Government bought Metro Transport Sydney, the current owner and operator of the existing light rail line. This gives our Government the flexibility to look at all the options for how best to deliver and operate an expanded light rail network for Sydney without being tied up in convoluted contractual arrangements that date back many years.

Labor treated light rail as something to be avoided but we believe that light rail can form an important part of the transport mix for Sydney. Once the Inner West Light Rail extension is operational it will improve

public transport access and connections between areas where people live, work and play. In particular, it will enable commuters to take advantage of new connections to surrounding shopping and entertainment districts, such as the Sydney Fish Markets, Darling Harbour, Paddy's Markets, Capitol Theatre and Leichhardt Marketplace. Under the previous Government MyZone tickets could not be used on light rail services. On 13 July 2010 the *Sydney Morning Herald* published a letter from the then transport Minister and now Leader of the Opposition, Mr Robertson, to the member for Canterbury, Linda Burney. The Minister explained why private buses, but not light rail, had been included in the MyZone system, and said:

Private bus operators provide a service on the New South Wales Government's behalf in areas where Sydney buses does not operate.

It was further reported:

The Member for Blacktown went on. "The Metro Light Rail is a service that provides a transport alternative to bus and CityRail services."

But what was known to every transport professional in the public and private sectors obviously escaped the Leader of the Opposition, who was Minister for Transport at the time: that light rail will actually feed commuters into CityRail stations and interface with many important bus routes. So MyZone integration was vital if it was to achieve anything like its full potential. This truly demonstrates the rampant ignorance of those that sit opposite on all matters involving transport in this State. Is it any wonder that the transport integrated ticketing project, known as Tcard, has been a disaster for not a decade but the past decade and a half. It should be noted that even the appointment of the member for Keira, Mr Ryan Park, an energetic young man of some repute—

Mr Ryan Park: Thank you.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: —as deputy director general in the Department of Transport failed to stem the seemingly never-ending disasters of transport service delivery and planning at that time. All this changed when this Government, within its first 100 days in office, integrated light rail into the MyZone system. Labor said it could not be done; we achieved it within our first 100 days in government. The use of MyZone tickets on light rail has proved extremely popular since the initiative was introduced on 27 June 2011. Since its introduction, there have been 1,378,003 recorded boardings using a MyZone ticket. Or, put another way, since the initiative started almost half of light rail's patronage has been through the use of the MyZone ticket. Not only are residents of the inner west benefitting from the integration of the MyZone ticketing system on light rail; anyone regularly travelling on light rail can save at least \$6 a week using a MyMulti-1 ticket. Labor said it could not be done—but look how popular it has been.

Customers who use full fare or concession daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly MyMulti tickets to travel on bus, train and ferry networks are able to use these tickets on light rail. In addition, pensioners are able to use their pensioner excursion tickets on light rail services. Families are also benefitting with recognition of the Family Funday Sunday tickets on light rail. The purchase of the Metro Light Rail will mean the Government can ensure light rail is fully integrated with the wider public transport network. This Government is taking light rail seriously. Those opposite have no credibility after 16 years of failure. If standing orders allowed it, the member for Balmain would be applauding the Government's actions in this regard.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [10.52 a.m.]: This motion is important because light rail is an important issue. I congratulate the member for Balmain for advocating on behalf of his community and for using this forum as a way in which to raise important issues—and light rail is an important issue. I thank the member for Strathfield for his ongoing support of me as a member in this place. But I think the member for Strathfield has been misquoted in the recent edition of *Strathfield Life*. I want to check this with the member because, although I thought the *Strathfield Life* had long been a supporter of the member for Strathfield, it leads with a three-page spread headed:

"I'm very disappointed": Charles Casuscelli charts first year of failure, but promises improvement.

I do not think that is right; I will be putting in a call to the *Strathfield Life* today and saying, "We need a retraction on this." It could not possibly be right that a member of Parliament has said after 12 months in the job, "Look, I'm pretty disappointed with my first 12 months." I have read through the article; it does not mention light rail. But in it the member mentions a number of important issues; and I applaud him on the sorts of issues he has raised in his first year. I note he says he has had a number of important Ministers visit his electorate—but

nothing about light rail is reported. However, light rail is an important part of Sydney's transport mix. Let it be known that the previous Labor Government developed and enhanced the MyZone ticketing system—for which Coalition Government members now take a lot of credit. The MyZone ticketing system has saved commuters huge amounts of money.

Mr David Elliott: Half a million on the Rozelle Metro blown up in smoke. Give the money back.

Mr RYAN PARK: I know members on the other side, particularly those in The Hills district, are going through some difficult and sensitive preselection times at the moment. I know the soft Right and the hard Right will come together with Hawke. Where is my good friend the member for Castle Hill? I cannot wait to see him in question time today. I know it is difficult in The Hills at the moment; it is also difficult on the Central Coast. But we have been told that all will be calm, and Mr Hartcher will do the right thing and the moderates will get up. What we do not want to see is light rail being used as a political football. The Government made key commitments about light rail in the lead-up to the last election. I congratulate the member for Balmain for bringing an important issue such as this to the attention of the New South Wales Parliament. It is our job as local members to be honest with our electorates; that is why I do not think the *Strathfield Life* article is accurate in what it has put forward about my good friend the member for Strathfield. I would like to think that he would not be disappointed after these 12 months. I would like to think that his first year has not been a failure. But we will leave that for others to judge.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [10.55 a.m.]: I have to give it to the member for Keira: he is a comedian. And he would have no difficulty finding another job if he were not a member of this place. He is hilarious when talking about the past. But I want to congratulate the member for Balmain for bringing this motion before the House. It is important to acknowledge the continuing improvement in transport options across Sydney as a result of this new Government's getting on with building the North West Rail Link, getting on with extending light rail services to the inner west, and getting on with the many other projects across New South Wales. The Inner West Light Rail extension is the first step in the New South Wales Government's plans to extend light rail in Sydney. It will connect to existing light rail services, which operate from Central to Lilyfield, and run along the former Rozelle freight rail corridor, through the inner west to Dulwich Hill.

I, for one, have been driving through this area for many years, so it is great to see that that land, which has lain idle, will serve local communities; it will certainly make places along there even easier to reach for residents of the inner west. To ensure accessibility, the project will include new access paths and facilities for switching between transport modes, kiss-and-ride parking and disabled parking spaces. This is an important project; it will provide greater access to public transport and connections between where people live, work and visit. The inner west extension will also provide better public transport integration—allowing passengers to transfer between light rail, bus and bike, as well as heavy rail at Lewisham and Dulwich Hill, encouraging sustainable and healthy travel options.

When it comes to ticketing, the implementation of the Opal ticketing system will give light rail passengers the benefit of a fully integrated, multimode ticketing system. The Opal will become the ticket to ride for 1.5 million commuters and thousands of day trippers and tourists, making their journeys easy and seamless. The smartcard system will make travelling on public transport easier and simpler for people living in, working in and visiting the greater Sydney area; and it will encourage more people to leave their cars at home. When it comes to concession cards, customers who use full fare or concession daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or yearly MyMulti tickets to travel on the bus, train and ferry networks are able to use these tickets on light rail.

I am pleased to say that, with the purchase of the company that owns the light rail and the monorail, these concession arrangements will remain in place. Under the purchase deal, the New South Wales Government has purchased Metro Transport Sydney for just under \$20 million; and, for now, the operation of light rail and monorail services will continue as normal. The member for Camden told me this morning that the mayor of Camden wants the monorail to operate at Camden. These people want things given to them. The mayor of Camden has an association with the Labor Party, so my concern is that he may be giving advice to the Labor Party on transport—because he wants the monorail out at Camden for the cost of upgrading Camden Valley Way.

He has no idea and those opposite have no idea. When it comes to public transport they are completely lost. In light rail, heavy rail and public transport we are getting on with the job of delivering for New South Wales and Sydney. We will continue to remind the public that the previous Labor Government, who knew nothing about transport, from 1997 right through to 2008 promised the Tcard but we got nothing, except for a

big bill of \$100 million. The \$100 million wasted on that project and the \$500 million wasted on the Rozelle Metro would have gone a long way to funding light rail and the North West Rail Link. I commend the member for Balmain for bringing this motion to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.00 a.m.]: I am delighted to make a brief contribution on the motion moved by the member for Balmain. I commend the member for Balmain for bringing a public transport issue to the House and initiating genuine debate on not only public transport needs in relation to light rail but also on the public transport needs of all of New South Wales. My electorate of Hawkesbury, which encapsulates the new growth area of Rouse Hill, has waited with baited breath for the arrival of a North West Rail Link—a rail link that was promised to our area in 1998 by the then Premier Bob Carr, and that was cancelled and then promised again by other Premiers for 12 years. It was promised to be delivered to Castle Hill in 2010 and it is now 2012.

We had to wait until the election of the O'Farrell Government before we got a commitment for the North West Rail Link, and, with my full admiration of both the Premier and the Minister for Transport, a commitment of \$2.5 billion has been made in the current budget across this term of government to commence that very, very important transport link. The history of public transport in New South Wales is interesting, and light rail has played an active role. Our neighbouring State of Victoria has maintained its use of trams. It was either visionary or backward thinking—I prefer to think it was visionary. Victoria kept its tram system operating throughout its cities, unlike Sydney where we have now gone back to the future and we are embracing light rail again, which is a very important mode of transport.

I pick up on the disparaging comments made by the member for Keira about the member for Strathfield, who was being genuine and honest in his representation of his area. Genuineness and honesty are not attributes that, apart from me and various members of the Coalition, one finds in Parliament; those sorts of qualities are very rare indeed. The member for Strathfield has a genuine, heartfelt vision for his area that he wants to see fulfilled. As a person who has been a high achiever in his past life, he would consider that the processes and the roles of government are somewhat delayed and he would be trying to get action and outcomes for his areas as soon as possible, which is in stark contrast to the former member for Strathfield who, unfortunately, did not deliver for her area.

However, the comments of the member for Keira are the sorts of disparaging remarks that we expect from the Opposition, such as the member for Keira, who was, in fact, the former deputy director general of public transport in a former life. One wonders what he was advising the Minister for Transport in his role as the deputy director general at the time. Was he advising him to spend half a billion dollars on an inner-city metro that we never got? Was he advising him not to build the North West Rail Link? Probably the only advice he gave the Minister was to not park in a no standing zone outside Ken's at Kensington. Unfortunately, disparaging remarks have plagued the House this morning. In a previous debate the member for Bankstown also made some disparaging remarks about my being in a photograph in relation to the Building the Education Revolution. I can state quite unequivocally that it was not a photograph in relation to the Building the Education Revolution; it was a photograph in relation to a new high school at Rouse Hill.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.04 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Strathfield, the member for Keira, the member for Londonderry and the member for Hawkesbury for their contributions. The contribution I made today as a member of The Greens recognises that all sides of Parliament should take responsibility. It is not a personal issue, it is not an issue about an individual member's performance; it is about looking at the performance of the former Government and this Government. No-one can challenge the fact that the former Government had a disgraceful record when it came to light rail, the Rozelle Metro and other issues in my community.

It is important to note that the only reason that light rail is being extended from Leichhardt to Dulwich Hill is the huge amount of community pressure. The member for Strathfield spoke about the former Minister for Transport, the Hon. John Watkins, who, in 2008, absolutely ruled out extending the light rail. Labor eventually buckled because of the pressure and the logic put forward by the community and the transport planners. Similarly, with the Rozelle Metro \$500 million was wasted on a project that everybody in the transport sector knew was a complete waste of money. Again the former Government buckled under pressure from the community. This Government is now, rightly, investing in the North West Rail Link. My community said, "Do not spend \$8 billion in Rozelle. Spend it in the north west where it can be better used".

It is important for this House to recognise that the Government now has an opportunity to make real progress. When this Government came to power the first thing it announced was that light rail would be delayed

for two years and that the GreenWay would not be built. That was not a good start. But the Government has achieved some good things, and my motion, which was moved some time ago, acknowledges the fact that many of the things that we called for in my community—the integration of MyZone tickets and the integration of concession tickets—have been achieved by this Government. The Government has made some progress but more needs to be done.

Today, on behalf of the Government, the member for Strathfield confirmed that the first quarter of 2014 is now the starting date for the light rail extension. That is two years later than anticipated, which is disappointing. My job is to make sure that this Government sticks to that commitment and that there are no further blowouts. I will work with the Minister for Roads and Ports to make sure that happens. The Government has remained silent on the question of the GreenWay. I am a strong advocate of integrating pedestrians, cycleways, light rail, buses and heavy rail, and the GreenWay is an important part of that project. I have mentioned the 22 local schools that were involved in the program to use the light rail corridor so that their students could walk to school and avoid the congestion in the inner west.

It is not just about the inner-west; the inner-west is a gateway to the central business district. Taking vehicles off the inner-west network gives more opportunity for businesses and those people who must use the roads to access the central business district. It is to the benefit of all of the electorates in Sydney. It is important that the Government recognises the benefits that light rail can deliver. The extension of the light rail is critical. It is important to have a light rail system extended to the central business district, the University of New South Wales and the University of Sydney. I understand the Government is undertaking a feasibility study on this issue and I look forward to seeing the conclusion of that study.

It is important to recognise the advances this Government has made, but we will be vigilant. All members should take note that while the Government can make commitments, as we saw with the former Government, sometimes commitments do not come to fruition. I thank all members who made a contribution to this debate. I recognise their interest in these transport issues. I make a commitment to the people of my electorate that we will ensure that the light rail is extended and that we will continue to campaign to make sure that integration happens and, in particular, that school students can use the light rail as the best form of transport to and from school.

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

Motion agreed to.

NEW SOUTH WALES TRAFFIC EDUCATION CENTRE

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [11.09 a.m.]: I move:

That this House calls on the Minister for Roads and Ports to consider the re-use of the Armidale Traffic Education Centre as a full-time facility for driver training, particularly for young people in country New South Wales.

It is my pleasure to advise the House—or perhaps remind the House—that the New South Wales Traffic Education Centre in Armidale was opened in March 1991 by Premier Nick Greiner, who stated at the time that it was a State facility that received significant State Government funding support estimated to be around \$2 million. At that time I had recently been elected to the Armidale City Council, as it was then known. I remember that the facility was widely welcomed by the community and it received a lot of support from the Government at the time. It was considered one of Australia's best driver education training centres in its time. It featured state-of-the-art facilities, including a large vehicle manoeuvring area for driver training. I have visited the facility on a number of occasions and, as a result, my driving has improved. It is an impressive facility. Even to this day the size of its skid pan is something well worth seeing.

At the time the Government was keen to support not only driver education for young people but also, as was stated in a policy announcement, it would look into providing employees of government agencies with mandatory driver training at the facility. I think that is what the various and related agencies had in mind when the facility was built. People saw enormous potential in the project, and the vision and feasibility studies surrounding it attempted to capture that potential. However, after the facility was built the Government did not proceed with its policy and the New South Wales Traffic Education Centre in Armidale has been underutilised ever since. It is currently being used by Fire and Rescue NSW for its northern region training requirements, such as new recruit driver training and motorcycle training for L- and P-plate licensing by contractors, which is accredited by Transport for NSW.

From time to time commercial and volunteer groups also utilise the facility. For example, the Rotary Young Drivers Awareness program is run at the centre by local Rotarians. I am aware that the centre has made a number of attempts to attract further driver training opportunities. I commend the Armidale Dumaresq Council for its management of the centre. I was on the council at the time that the council and its mayor stepped in to operate the centre to ensure that it remained operational and viable. I know that the council has been trying for many years to get successive New South Wales governments to establish and support government-funded driver education training because there is very little on offer for young drivers in regional New South Wales. The centre offers significant opportunities to meet some of the issues raised by the O'Farrell Government. On 18 October last year I was pleased to hear the Premier raise in the House the importance of young driver safety.

The Premier highlighted the national road safety research project, which involves trialling a behaviour-based education program for new P-plate drivers aged 17 to 22. The trial is being held in four regions: western Sydney, Tamworth and Armidale, Dubbo and Forbes, and Lismore. I also read the Premier's comments in *Hansard* from August 2000 in which he highlighted as a matter of concern the deaths of seven young people as a result of motor accidents that had occurred over a period of only a few days. I remember the concern expressed in the House by members and shadow Minister O'Farrell, as he was at that time. Given those comments, I put to the Government that reusing this facility and fully utilising its capacities is a good thing. It is a purpose-built facility that is certainly in the interests of driver education that already exists. That is a good deal for driver education and taxpayers.

Mr Kevin Anderson: It is an excellent facility.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY: It is an excellent facility, as the member for Tamworth says. I acknowledge the delegation from Tamworth Regional Council, which is here as the guest of the member for Tamworth to witness discussion on the member's petition that will take place this afternoon. It is good for the whole of country New South Wales to have driver-training facilities. We do not want the facilities to be developed and built only in Sydney. We should not have to relocate ourselves and our children to the metropolitan area to gain access to basic services that our communities and young people should have access to. As I said, the facility is already built and it is waiting to be used. Every member in this place is concerned about the tragedies that occur on our roads as a result of motor vehicle accidents that impact not only the drivers of the vehicles, many of whom are young people.

Statistics from the Transport Centre for Road Safety show that fatalities occur across the board. Fatalities in the five- to 16-year age group have increased by 20 per cent. Those people were clearly passengers in vehicles. We must think about the devastating impact that has on their families and communities. In the past 12 months the number of deaths in the age group between 60 and 69 has increased by 44 per cent. There is no doubt that road trauma is tragic, but it can often be avoided. It is important that the Government reconsiders using the premier resource that is the New South Wales Traffic Education Centre at Armidale as a full-time facility for driver education and training. That could be accomplished for a relatively small financial outlay by the Government and would deliver enormous benefits to regional New South Wales and the New England north-west.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.17 a.m.]: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing this important issue to the attention of the House. Having served for five years as a police officer in the member's electorate I am acutely aware of the facility.

Mr Richard Torbay: A very good officer too.

Mr TROY GRANT: Thank you. I participated in some police training at the New South Wales Traffic Education Centre at Armidale, and from my experience I can endorse the comments of the member regarding the quality of the premises and the vast opportunities it offers. The Armidale driver education centre, which is run by the Armidale Dumaresq Council, was opened in March 1991. It has provided training programs including car, truck and bus advanced driving courses, four-wheel drive off-road and on-road operator courses, ambulance driving courses, defensive motorcycle training and agricultural motorcycle training. In addition to having that facility the Armidale region is also blessed with a number of driving instructors at its disposal to conduct learner-driver training, which is a great asset for that region.

As the member rightly said, many members in this House speak about road trauma. I did so only last week. In Dubbo we tragically lost a 19-year-old in an horrific incident on a street in the central business district. Another 19-year-old and a 20-year-old remain in intensive care with serious life-threatening injuries. The

subject matter is very real and very current, as the member for Northern Tablelands said. He made some extraordinarily good points in relation to this Government's awareness of this issue and its cognition that the issues experienced, particularly by learner drivers in rural and remote areas, must be addressed. Giving them the opportunity to access these sorts of sites and further driver education will ensure that young drivers in regional areas experience no disadvantage.

On 19 March, as the member for Northern Tablelands alluded to earlier, the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, who is a wonderful Minister, announced that the Government would investigate introducing one-day safer driver courses for learner drivers and will review the current logbook requirements. We understand that enhancing the learning and ability of young drivers are of paramount importance. The course is being developed by a board of independent road safety experts and a supporting advisory panel. The first meeting of the board occurred on 18 April. The design of the safer drivers course for learner drivers will be based on recent and relevant road safety research and evidence. The member for Northern Tablelands alluded to a lot of the course content. A significant increase in passenger fatalities as a result of bad driving behaviour is of grave concern. It is proposed that the course will contain both practical and theoretical components, and will have a focus on safe driving attitudes and behaviour.

The board is considering reducing the required logbook hours from 120 to 100 for learners who complete the course. The board will also consider whether learners who complete both the safe drivers course and the structured lessons scheme with a professional driving instructor should receive a further reduction in logbook hours. That goes to the heart of the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands. He is drawing the attention of the House to a wonderful driver training facility in his electorate, and I endorse his remarks. It already exists and is ready to be utilised. The Government notes that important facility and I reiterate my thanks to the member for Northern Tablelands for bringing that facility to the notice of the Government to consider as we take this issue forward and try to achieve something of substance.

I spent 16 years as an operational police officer out of a total of 22 years of police experience. Those 16 years were spent on some major highways in regional areas. I have worked on the Newell, Oxley, Castlereagh, the New England and the Pacific highways. One of the experiences of my policing career that I took away when I left was the dread and reflections of how many fatal motor vehicle accidents I attended that involved various contributory factors, such as excessive speed, road conditions, et cetera. Far too many of them were caused by poor driving behaviour by drivers of a young age. I am sad to inform the House that on too many occasions I had to remove deceased young people from cars and on too many occasions I had the horrible duty late at night of knocking on a door to inform family members of the loss of their loved ones because of poor driving behaviour. My experience has given me the opportunity to view the problem from various angles.

During my police training I had access at the Goulburn Police Academy to a facility that is very similar to the one at Armidale, which has skid pans and a track, and takes drivers through various manoeuvres, so I have had the opportunity to experience the benefits that result from enhanced training and extended driver training opportunities. I know that my driving improved remarkably from when I was an 18-year-old who first attended the academy. I perhaps have had more intense professional training than is available to the wider population, but the opportunity to advance my driving skills and techniques in that training by accessing those facilities was of great benefit. I therefore recognise significant merit in the argument advanced by the member for Northern Tablelands.

On the flipside, the opportunities we have to ensure that young drivers avoid fatal motor vehicle accidents and improve their driving in any way possible is something that any government must take seriously. This Government and the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, are taking the matter seriously, which is demonstrated by some of the measures I have outlined such as the graduated licensing scheme and the current logbook scheme. All those types of initiatives are highly valued and are very important to the future driver training. I conclude by thanking the member for Northern Tablelands for reminding the Government of the wonderful facility that is operationally ready for the Government's consideration as a facility that may be used to improve this vital area of public safety.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [11.24 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Northern Tablelands that calls on the Minister for Roads and Ports to consider the expanded use of the Armidale traffic education centre as a full-time facility for driver training, particularly for young people in country New South Wales. As the shadow Minister for Roads and Ports, and as a parent who is worried about my own children's driver training, I am keenly interested in this issue. It is quite disappointing that a facility that was opened in 1991 by former Premier Greiner has never really been used for its intended purpose. Neither side of politics can take any credit from that outcome.

We all want to see the community's assets being used for the purpose for which they were intended. It makes good sense to me that the Minister work with the member for Northern Tablelands to maximise the use of the facility in the best interests of drivers in country areas, particularly young drivers. Unfortunately, young drivers are over-represented in accident statistics on our roads. Every parent wants and expects the State Government to do more to protect them. I remember my own driver training experiences. On my sixteenth birthday, I turned up to the motor registry office in Penrith, filled in my name on the form, presented a copy of my birth certificate and picked up my learner's licence. I walked home, jumped in the car with my mum and drove to school. There was not a lot of driver training in those days. Although driver training has improved, there is still room for more improvement.

Under Labor's 16 years in government, the number of fatal and injurious crashes involving drivers under 26 years of age was halved in the 10-year period to 2010. This Government must realise that it is now responsible for road safety and must continue the practical safety measures that were begun by the former Labor Government. Preventing just one tragic accident from occurring and avoiding loss of life is reason enough for this Government to finally commit to better training and licensing for young drivers. I recall that prior to the election, the now Deputy Premier, Mr Stoner, canvassed the issue of driver training and talked about implementing a "safer drivers program". According to Mr Stoner, many clubs and road safety organisations had expressed an interest in providing that training.

Unfortunately, like many other programs he mentioned prior to the election, we still have not seen the results being delivered. I would like to know the clubs that were so keen on running driver training. How many one-day courses have been run under the program? I do not think there have been any. Just like the Pacific Highway promise made by Government members, it seems they cannot be taken at their word. Here we have a purpose-built facility that is designed for driver training, but it is being underutilised. Tragically, while we have made progress on saving the lives of young drivers with the dedicated efforts of the former Government, this Government still has so much to do. I support the motion of the member for Northern Tablelands and recognise his commitment to his community, to road safety and especially to young people in his electorate.

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [11.27 a.m.]: I acknowledge the important motion that has been moved by the member for Northern Tablelands, which addresses two issues: educating our young people, especially, in an attempt to stem the number of tragedies that have occurred on our roads, and driver behaviour. At the outset, I reiterate that the Government is committed to improving the safety of young drivers in New South Wales. In March this year the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, announced the Government's commitment to road safety and driver safety with the introduction of the one-day safer drivers course for learner drivers and a review of current logbook requirements. The design of the safer driver course for learner drivers will be based on recent and relevant road safety research and evidence.

It is proposed that the course will contain both practical and theoretical components, and will have a focus on safe driving attitudes and behaviour. In recent months in my electorate of Monaro, five road fatalities have occurred. That is sad. I have drawn the attention of the House to those fatalities. There has been constant and ongoing debate about road improvements, but in the case of the fatalities that occurred in my electorate, driver behaviour consisting of speeds at greater than 140 kilometres an hour and crossing double lines were partly to blame. The issue comes down to driver behaviour. Let me unpack the term "driver behaviour". Behaviour relates to our observable actions and how we conduct ourselves on the roads. This automatic aspect of our behaviour is based on a mental and psychophysical program called schema, which represents structures that organise our knowledge and assumptions and is used for interpreting and processing information.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Who wrote this? I bet you didn't write it.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: You may be surprised to know that I did the research. Over time we develop schema or automatic behaviour for our driving, but in an ad hoc manner based on our perception of driving situations. Other factors that affect driving behaviour include our attitude, awareness and motivation. Therefore, safe driving behaviour comes from learning essential skills. Of course, the establishment of more programs to learn those essential skills will result in improved behaviour on the road. Safe driver skills relate to more than just the control of vehicles. Drivers need to develop hazard perception through scanning techniques and looking ahead to avoid hazards.

A number of the skills that must be included in driver training programs are introducing key risk behaviours, increasing hazard perception, developing risk management skills, coping with multitasking demands of vehicles on the road and in traffic conditions, dealing with emergency situations, creating a safety

environment inside and outside the vehicle and achieving the environmental benefits of safe driving. These are all learning outcomes that can be obtained only by spending more time on the road, by participating in specialised programs and by learning the types of attitudes and skills that drivers require—particularly young people, due to their lack of experience on the road. With these skills, drivers will be able to respond to the changing conditions that take place every day. The Government is cognisant of the particular issues experienced by learner drivers in rural and remote areas and will ensure that they are not disadvantaged by the introduction of the safety course.

The Government also is aware of the diverse role that the Armidale Traffic Education Centre has played in training emergency service drivers and providing truck and bus advanced driving courses, four-wheel drive courses, off-road and on-road operator courses, defensive motorcycle training and agricultural motorcycle training. However, the Government will not nominate or endorse any specific driver training provider to learner drivers. I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for his support of the Armidale Traffic Education Centre. As the content and delivery of the safer driver course is developed, consideration will be given to the type of facilities that will be able to provide the course to learner drivers. I commend the member for Northern Tablelands for his motion.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [11.31 a.m.], in reply: As I had hoped, this motion triggered constructive debate in this place. I thank all members who have made a contribution to the debate: the Parliamentary Secretary and member for Dubbo, the shadow Minister and member for Lakemba and the member for Monaro. I particularly acknowledge the contribution of the member for Dubbo and his understanding of the facility and the issues raised in the motion. I note that the member has undertaken driver training courses at the Armidale Traffic Education Centre. None of us would want to be in his position when he attended accidents and witnessed the impact of fatal accidents on those involved and on their families. It would have been a devastating experience, but his perceptions as a former police officer inform the House about the importance of driver education.

The member for Lakemba and the member for Monaro similarly were supportive of taking every opportunity to deliver good traffic education and driver education facilities. Why not use facilities that are currently available and have been built for the purpose of driver education? It would represent a great deal for the Government and New South Wales taxpayers, as the Armidale Traffic Education Centre is an established facility. Although millions of dollars have been invested in this facility, it has been underutilised. I remind the House of some statistics. Preliminary figures from the New South Wales Transport Centre of Road Safety show that in the last 12 months there have been 387 fatalities on New South Wales roads. A staggering 173 of these fatalities occurred on country, non-urban roads. There is a clear message in that. Another devastating statistic for New South Wales families, which I touched on earlier, is that there has been a 20 per cent increase in fatalities of people aged from five to 16.

Clearly, they are innocent passengers or pedestrians and their deaths have a devastating impact on the driver, family and everyone else involved in these accidents. It is also important to note that the statistics show issues across all ages. As I said, 48 fatalities were recorded in the 60- to 69-age-group, a massive increase of 44 per cent. Obviously, driver education can be of great value right across the sector although, of course, a strong emphasis is placed on young people, learner and P-plate drivers. Road trauma is tragic and everything that the Parliament, the Government, the relevant agencies and authorities, parents and others can do to save lives should be done. Utilising the maximum benefit from this facility in Armidale would also make a positive contribution. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

WEAVE AND KOOL KIDS CLUB

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [11.34 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the great work done by Weave and the Kool Kids Club Early Intervention Program for children aged seven to 13 in social housing from Kingsford to La Perouse in the Maroubra electorate; and
- (2) calls on the Minister for Family and Community Services to commit to future funding, following reports in the *Southern Courier* on 24 May 2011 that the Minister would consider it.

I am sure my electorate of Maroubra is not alone, particularly amongst coastal electorates and those where housing sells at times for six-figure sums or more, in having people harbour a misapprehension that the area and the people who live within it are well heeled. The Maroubra electorate has within it a great many people who fit the traditional description of battlers—and I am glad they do because they are characters—and we have the third- or fourth-largest number of tenants in public housing per electorate in the State.

One of the difficulties that traditionally are associated with people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the battlers, is that from time to time their kids may suffer: they are not looked after and some of them are abused. There are families—not always from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, but more often than not—with a large number of children who have difficulties. Fortunately, there are groups in our area who do their best to look after them. Weave, based in Erskineville, is one such group. Weave works to build stronger, healthier communities in order to reduce social and economic disadvantage. It is a non-profit community organisation managed by a voluntary board. Its operations manager, Siobhan Bryson, is a terrific lady. I have had a lot to do with Siobhan. She has been a great advocate for Weave, particularly one of its activities called the Kool Kids Club.

The Kool Kids Club was established in 2001 as a response to the limited recreation and leisure opportunities for children aged seven to 13 in the La Perouse area. It is an early intervention and prevention program. This is the type of program that all governments support and all our electorates and communities need, as was recognised last week at Government House when the Premier, the Attorney General, the Leader of the Opposition, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and many other members of this place attended the launch of the Justice Reinvestment Program, of which Weave was a terrific advocate. Early intervention is the way to go. As a former police Minister, I want money spent on identifying troubled kids early and keeping them out of jail, rather than on police and jails and locking kids away. By locking them up, we are abandoning them and missing the opportunity to have those young people contribute to society.

The Kool Kids Club is attended by over 85 per cent of children identified as Aboriginal. The club is staffed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous youth workers who do amazing work in early intervention, with up to 200 children a year passing through its ranks. The staff engage children who have limited access to social and recreational activities and who may have other complex personal issues in their lives. A program of age-appropriate activities is provided. The program operates in south-east Sydney and is available to children and young people living in the La Perouse, Chifley, Little Bay, Phillip Bay and Matraville areas, specifically, and also those attending two terrific schools, La Perouse and Soldiers Settlement primary schools. Some of the programs include Indigenous surfing, dancing, short film projects, music workshops, sports, art and Indigenous cooking.

The club has a terrific team. I place on record my appreciation to Lucy Butler; Paul Coleman, who is known as West and is a terrific and charismatic guy and, most importantly, attended the right school—Marcellin College, Randwick; Jono Carey; and others too numerous to mention. Over time Kool Kids Club has been funded by three funding bodies under the former Department of Community Services: the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy—[ACYFS]; Families NSW; and Better Futures. In 2009 the Aboriginal Child, Youth and Family Strategy changed its focus from children from nought to 18 years to children from nought to five years. This resulted in Kool Kids Club losing a third of its funding.

Since 2007 or 2008 I have personally introduced people from the Kool Kids Club to every community services Minister, and I will continue to do that. I know that the current Minister for Family and Community Services, Pru Goward, knows about Kool Kids Club and its difficulties. In the past she has expressed a willingness to consider additional and continued funding for the club. Unfortunately, because of the way government funding operates, which, I suppose, is one of the system's drawbacks, every three or four years programs run out of money and organisations have to go cap in hand to government and the community for assistance.

Until a better model arrives, Kool Kids Club simply needs funding. I place on record my appreciation to people from the community who have funded Kool Kids Club. The Clovelly Community Bank branch of the Bendigo Bank provided \$50,000 in 2010. The bank's director, Merran Lang, commented about that donation in the local media. Kool Kids Club is thankful for that donation. Recently, I gave Kool Kids Club \$27,000 from the Community Building Partnership program—long may that program continue—so the club could buy a bus. I thank the House for listening to my contribution. I wholly support Kool Kids Club and I hope the Government and this Minister, as previous Ministers have, will give it due consideration. Let us get some money for Kool Kids Club.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [11.43 a.m.]: The Kool Kids Club is a good local organisation doing important work with vulnerable children and young people in the La Perouse area. The project supports around 80 young people aged seven to 13 years at any one time with after-school and holiday activities. I understand that 80 per cent of the participants come from Aboriginal backgrounds. The project strives to engage with the local Aboriginal community and, by all reports, is well respected by members of this community. In 2011-12 the New South Wales Government supported Weave and the Kool Kids Club through a one-off fixed-term payment of \$53,474. I confirm that this project is one of several being considered for additional funding in 2012-13. The New South Wales Government is committed to supporting local community organisations doing this kind of work with young people.

Teen years represent a particularly vulnerable stage of life for all young people, especially regarding risk-taking behaviour. It is important for young people to have choices of constructive activities to be involved in, and it is a whole-of-community responsibility to make sure those choices are available. In the NSW 2021 plan this Government sets out its goal of working with children and families more at the prevention and early intervention point of the spectrum, wherever possible, rather than allowing problems to escalate and become entrenched. To that end, the Department of Family and Community Services funds a range of prevention and early intervention programs that strengthen families and reduce the risk of harm to children and young people. In 2011-12 we spent over \$900 million on these initiatives, including those that support children and families, such as Families NSW.

Family and Community Services is undertaking major reform initiatives that focus on putting more resources into earlier intervention, including reform of the child protection system. We are reviewing the performance of our prevention and early intervention programs and putting in place an evidence-based performance framework that will guide funding decisions. We are taking great strides to break the cycle of disadvantage. For example, we know that teenagers in the child protection system generally received less attention and priority because they were perceived as less vulnerable than younger children and more difficult to engage, yet the case for focusing on teenagers from disadvantaged backgrounds is overwhelming.

Having survived often severely deprived or traumatised childhoods, teenagers frequently face the dangers and uncertainty of adulthood alone. Without care and support at this point, they often go on to live in the same disadvantaged cycle from which they came. We know also that they are more likely than other young people to be unskilled, illiterate, unemployed, or suffering from mental illness or addiction. The New South Wales Government is committed to improving services for vulnerable families, including teenagers. The teen years represent a particularly vulnerable stage of life for all young people. The high probability is that children as young as 12 years already exhibit risk factors that may lead to disengagement from school, youth homelessness, unemployment and challenge to their family or carers.

Work is well underway within the Department of Family and Community Services to implement an innovative and fresh approach to working in partnership with families. This includes reviewing programs and policies that impact on teenagers in the 12- to 17-year-old age group who already are, or are at risk of being, in out-of-home care. This review will build on the work of groups such as the Adolescents with Complex Needs Panel, which comprises senior representatives from Family and Community Services, Health and Education. The panel works to bring together a multi-pronged and therapeutic service response specifically targeted to the needs of this age group. We are also investing more resources in local communities to strengthen at-risk families.

From 1 January 2012, Brighter Futures, the early intervention service for at-risk families, is being delivered exclusively by non-government organisations that are best placed to work constructively with families in this way because of their value set and their community standing. This also frees up capacity within the department to work with families with complex issues involving mental health, drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence. The Strengthening Families program will keep more children safely at home, thereby reducing the number of children who enter and remain in statutory out-of-home care, by intensively working with high-risk families to improve parenting skills and address complex problems. From January 2012, 240 additional caseworkers will focus on this work.

The New South Wales Government is committed to improving services for the most vulnerable people in society, including children and young people, but to achieve this we need the support of a strengthened non-government organisation sector. We are working to strengthen the non-government organisation sector through tailored capacity-building initiatives such as the Disability Industry Development Fund, Growing the Community Housing Sector, Keep Them Safe workforce development and the non-government organisation

Capacity Building Plan. The non-government organisation sector often is better able to ensure that services and infrastructure in local communities reflect the needs and characteristics of the area because it has the trust and confidence of the community and primarily is responsible to it and the people it supports.

Non-government organisations are inclusive, participatory and quality focused, and they have the capacity to create social capital in a way that government and the private sector cannot. The rich diversity of the non-government organisation sector provides a benefit for New South Wales that cannot be realised through government alone. We are committed to exploring new and innovative approaches to strengthening the Family and Community Services sector in New South Wales. Several innovative projects in the non-government sector already show promising results and might be as likely as the Kool Kids Club to benefit from an injection of funds. Two examples of these projects are the Mountains Youth Services Team in the Blue Mountains and Regional Youth Support Services Inc. on the Central Coast.

The Mountains Youth Services Team supports the development of disadvantaged young people by providing relevant and dynamic programs that empower young people to grow intellectually, emotionally and physically. The team has partnered with Blue Mountains Youth Accommodation and Support to deliver the Glue Factory. The Glue Factory is a hub service based in Katoomba that provides support to young people between the ages of 12 and 25 who are in crisis, vulnerable or dealing with drug and alcohol services. Regional Youth Support Services Inc. is a focal point of access on the Central Coast for high-quality services, resources and facilities specifically tailored to people aged 12 to 25 years.

This group encourages greater awareness, harmony and understanding of issues that are important to youth. It provides outreach support to at-risk young people as well as afternoon activities such as homework club, digital arts, arts and craft and fun food and games nights. Both of these organisations provide invaluable services to their local communities. The 16-year legacy of Labor waste, mismanagement and policy sloth in Family and Community Services has led to the need to undertake major reforms to ensure we work better and smarter to improve our programs and their outcomes for vulnerable people across New South Wales.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [11.50 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Riverstone for his contribution to this debate. I specifically indicate that I am grateful, as was Kool Kids Club, for the one-off \$53,000 grant from the Government last year. All community organisations across the State live in perpetual insecurity that their funding will not be renewed in a year or two. Whether it is State or Federal funding, it is up to members in this place to remain vigilant and ensure that those who deserve funding are brought to the attention of the House and the Minister. I say to the House that the Kool Kids Club deserves funding.

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

Motion agreed to.

DENTAL HEALTH WEEK

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [11.52 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that Dental Health Week is observed from 1 to 7 August 2011;
- (2) notes that this year's theme is bringing public awareness to oral cancer; and
- (3) calls on members of this House to promote the message that together we can give oral cancer awareness a voice.

Dental Health Week is a great opportunity for me to talk about a dental issue in this House—oral cancer. Over the years the Australian Dental Association public health campaigns have focussed on measures to ensure dental health awareness of gum disease, mouthguards and issues related to age-specific demographics. Dental Health Week always falls on the first week in August. Last year's campaign focussed on making the community aware of oral cancer. It is not one of the high-profile cancers in the public domain but accounts for 2.5 per cent of cancers worldwide. It is the eighth most common cancer in men and the thirteenth most common cancer in women worldwide. To put it into perspective: There are 93 members of Parliament in this Chamber; statistically one or two of them is likely to develop oral cancer.

It is important to raise awareness of oral cancer. As for other cancers, the earlier it is detected the greater the chance for a cure. Unfortunately, the majority of oral cancers are not detected until they are in the

advanced stages and have spread to the lymph nodes. At this stage the mortality rate is high. The five-year survival rate is low—around 15 per cent, with some studies citing 50 per cent. Again, early detection is paramount. The squamous cell carcinoma variety counts for 95 per cent of all oral cancers. This is the cancer that people recognise as one of the most common skin cancers.

Oral cancer can affect anyone, but some lifestyle choices increase the chance of developing it. Factors that increase the likelihood of oral cancer are tobacco and alcohol use—which also affect many other cancers and bad health outcomes in the nation—the sexually transmitted human papillomavirus [HPV], and sun exposure. Tobacco users—cigarette, cigar and particularly pipe smokers—are six times more likely than non-smokers to develop oral cancer. Users of smokeless tobacco, which includes dipping snuff and chewing tobacco, are 50 times more likely to develop oral cancer of the cheek, gums and lining of the lips. Fortunately, these forms of tobacco use are not very common in Australia. Another lifestyle choice that increases the chance of developing oral cancer is the habit of chewing betel nut or betel nut quid—betel nut leaves chewed together. This habit has a strong correlation with oral cancer. Betel nut chewing is common in south-east Asia, India and Melanesia and our near northern neighbours New Guinea.

The importance of betel nut chewing was brought to my attention in my practice when a patient, an Aboriginal lady, presented with red staining on her teeth. I recalled some of the pictures that I had seen in textbooks about people chewing betel nut. It was of extreme concern to me when she related that betel nut chewing was common amongst Aboriginal people—a fact that not many practitioners are aware of. Heavy alcohol use, especially consumption of spirits, increases the chance of developing oral cancer, but the two together have a multiplicative effect. Heavy use of alcohol and tobacco together increase by 15 the risk of oral cancers. Once smoking and alcohol have ceased, the damage can be reversed in about 10 years to levels almost as low as those for non-drinkers and non-smokers—that is, if the cancer has not already taken hold.

New research has identified the human papillomavirus as a growing cause of oral cancer. It is a sexually transmitted virus; there are no preventative measures and no outward signs of infection. It is implicated in the increasing incidence of young, non-smoking oral cancer patients. Twenty-five per cent of oral cancers are from causes other than smoking and alcohol. Traditionally, the greatest incidence of oral cancer is in males over 50 who smoke. However, it is not always the case. In my years of dental practice I have diagnosed three patients with oral cancer. I remember them vividly. One was a man aged over 70 with a long history of pipe smoking. Another was an older gentleman whose history I was not certain of.

The third patient was a man my age with no predisposing lifestyle factors. He was a healthy, fit male who was a non-smoker and non-drinker—he was also a personal friend of mine. The ravages of this disease have had a personal effect on me. Unfortunately, all three died within a short time of diagnosis. As well as tobacco, alcohol and the human papillomavirus, sun exposure is an important initiator in the form of lip cancer. When I was a student the classic patient was the middle-aged farmer who spent a great deal of time exposed to the weather. This form of cancer may be prevented by using a sunscreen lotion and wearing a hat outdoors. The difficulty with oral cancer is that it is usually not painful until well advanced. Some of the signs and symptoms include white and red patches in the mouth, an ulcer or sore that does not heal and bleeds easily, and thicker hard spots or lumps.

There are various others signs, but those are the most prevalent. The clinical appearance of a potentially malignant tissue is an important predictor of malignant transformation. Areas that are entirely red in appearance or partly red and white have the highest risk of malignant progression. The development of ulceration that does not heal within two weeks often denotes advanced malignancy. The treatment of oral cancer is drastic, with surgery followed by post-operative radiotherapy and often chemotherapy when the cancer is advanced. Recurrence of the cancer and new cancer development in the area of the excised lesion is high at 10 to 20 per cent. The after-effects of the treatment are also traumatic and debilitating. As has been said, prevention is better than cure. I bring to the awareness of members the importance of visiting their dentist so that early detection of oral cancer can occur.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.58 a.m.]: The greatest tragedy in the Australian health system is that dental health has the lowest equality index for Australians. A person's socioeconomic status can be gauged simply by looking in his or her mouth. When it comes to dental health, the ability to pay or not determines one's health. That is why oral cancer is important: it is strongly socio-economically determined. Dental Health Week is really important because it raises community perception about oral cancer. I thank the member for Blue Mountains for raising this important topic, because every day three Australians are being diagnosed with oral cancer, and the vast majority of these diseases are preventable by the health prevention

measures that the member spoke about. Unfortunately, between 1994 and 2008 only 60 per cent of Australians had a dental check in a 12-month period. An enormous number of Australians do not receive adequate dental care because of lack of access to dental care or lack of money to pay for it.

The symptoms of oral cancer are varied, and they are easy to mistake as ulcers or blood blisters. That is why dental checks are so important. As the member for Blue Mountains said, for far too many people diagnosed with oral cancer the diagnosis is at a late stage of the disease; and an eminently treatable condition becomes one that is highly likely to be fatal. Even if it is treatable, the surgery is often extremely disfiguring and distressing. Six in 100,000 Australians will die from oral cancer; two in 100,000 women will die from the disease. That means that in 2006 we lost 613 Australians from oral cancer. But it is not just oral cancer that people need to see their dentists about. They should have their dentists look at all aspects of their dental health, because periodontal gum disease, if left untreated, is associated with heart disease, stroke and respiratory disorders.

That is why the recent Federal budget is such good news. The Federal Government has targeted \$515 million for oral health for those least able to afford dental care; 400,000 people who have been on the waiting list will now get their treatments. But there are also significant boosts for the dental workforce; \$345 million of that \$515 million is for a blitz on public dental waiting lists. There is also an allocation of \$81 million for training programs for dental graduates and oral health therapists. One of the great things that has happened in the past few years is the opening of a dental school at the Charles Sturt University. We have nowhere near enough dental graduates; the more, the better.

The Federal Government also has allocated \$78 million to support up to 100 dentists a year relocating to practise in remote areas. Also, \$10.5 million is allocated for oral health promotion activities, such as those important in reducing the incidence of oral cancer. Also allocated is \$450,000, over three years, for a pilot program to support pro bono dental services in order to improve access for disadvantaged Australians. As I regularly work in an Aboriginal health service, I can assure the House that it is absolutely vital to have dental health services on site as part of a multidisciplinary team. Regarding New South Wales, I would like to reflect on promises made by the previous Government.

Basically, they were for the establishment of a dental health action plan, a clinical dentistry network, a feasibility study into dental health, and a severe chronic disease management program. We have directed a number of questions about dental health to the Minister. For example, the report of the New South Wales Dental Taskforce was a subject of a question asked by Mr Paul Lynch on 13 April this year, and answered on 17 April. The response was that the Ministry of Health is considering the advice of the New South Wales Dental Taskforce, and that a dental health action plan will be released at some stage—goodness knows when. How good would it be if that report of the task force were made public? At least the Dental Taskforce has provided its advice. How good would it be if that advice were made public, because dental health is everybody's business. Nearly 14 months after the election, and no dental health action plan has seen the light of day.

Question No. 1929 asked about the inclusion of a dental health feasibility study in the Severe Chronic Disease Management Plan. This question also is sitting on the Minister's desk; it is currently being considered by the Government. It is not clear from the answers to any of the questions when this study was done, what is in it and when it was received by the Government. Again, that advice from experts in the field could easily be made public. The dental budget for New South Wales in 2010-11 was \$167 million; this year it will be about \$174 million. This Government refuses to release any figures on public dental workforce data, directing members who seek that data to an annual report, which does not include details of the dental health workforce. Nor does it publish any data on vacancies for dentists. We know that one of the biggest problems with the public dental health system is a shortage of dentists.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Point of order: I ask that the member be directed to return to the thrust of the motion, which is not about budget speculation; it is about oral cancer as the theme this year in Dental Health Week. I ask that the member be directed to confine his comments to the subject matter of the motion.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will bear in mind that the thrust of the motion is Dental Health Week.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I would have thought that dental health and the dental health budget are connected. I would think people in the gallery would know that dental health care is not free in Australia—one of the reasons that this country has such poor dental health. That is precisely the problem. I am glad the Minister has made that point for me. The fact is that oral cancer is a consequence of poor dental care; and poor dental care largely comes from reduced access to dental care for money reasons. I commend the motion.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [12.06 p.m.]: I begin by congratulating the member for Blue Mountains for raising this important issue, and thank the member for Macquarie Fields for his contribution. It is always nice to have the opportunity to participate in a debate in which the shadow Minister for Health takes part. It is really important to discuss Dental Health Week, because oral cancer is one of the least understood cancers. I acknowledge the presence of many visitors in the gallery; so I think it is worth reiterating some of the key points raised particularly by the member for Blue Mountains.

At least three Australians are diagnosed every day as having oral cancer. In addition, many other oral diseases impact the lives of a large number of people in our community. It is estimated that oral cancers account for approximately 6.5 per cent of all cancers diagnosed in Australia. Oral cancer is in fact the sixth most common cancer. It also affects the tongue, the lips, the cheeks and the soft palate. Dental Health Week, which is in August every year, is an initiative of the Australian Dental Association, which is to be commended for its fantastic initiative. This year it is all about raising awareness about oral cancer, its causes and its symptoms and, most importantly, what we can do to minimise the risks of oral cancer. Obviously, all of us should regularly check our mouths to identify any changes. We are the best people to do that; they are our mouths. We should look for any developing sores. But it makes sense that we also take time out from our busy schedules to have regular dental checks.

The symptoms of oral cancer have been spoken about in this debate. They are varied. When I read about them, I was a little surprised that some of the symptoms could actually be signs of cancer. They were: ulcers or sores in the mouth that perhaps do not heal quickly, or bleed easily; red or white patches in the mouth; blood blisters; thick spots or lumps that may or may not be painful; a roughened area of the mouth; numbness in a particular area; and pain or tenderness. There may also be symptoms that are not so obvious, such as changes to teeth bite, difficulty moving the tongue, loose teeth, sore gums, maybe a change in sense of taste or, as was mentioned before, swollen lymph glands. Research has shown also that oral cancer in young people is linked to the human papillomavirus [HPV], which is known to cause genital warts and cervical cancer. In that respect, talking to one's general practitioner about the HPV vaccination may be useful.

All those symptoms are things for which a dentist will look during a dental check-up, but we can all do ourselves a favour by not ignoring what could be the early signs of oral cancer. Not surprisingly, one of the ways of reducing the risk of developing oral cancer—and, in fact, any oral disease—is to look after our mouths and maintain good oral health by regularly brushing our teeth, flossing once a day, eating a healthy diet with lots of fresh vegetables and fruit that are high in antioxidants, as well as lean protein, minimising the intake of sugary foods and beverages, drinking plenty of fluoridated tap water, drinking alcohol in moderation, not smoking and, it should go without saying, protecting our lips from the sun by using a broad spectrum sunscreen. Sadly, the survival rate for oral cancer is quite low and that is because often it is not detected or treated until it is well advanced. In summary, it is all about detection and prevention, and Dental Health Week in August each year is about educating Australians so that they can do this better. I encourage all members to use every opportunity to spread that message.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [12.10 p.m.]: I thank the member for Blue Mountains for bringing this important issue to the attention of the House. I support this motion that notes that Dental Health Week is observed in August and the importance of increasing public awareness of oral cancer. It goes without saying how important dental care and hygiene are to our everyday lives. Increased public awareness of the importance of dental care is taught at a young age in our schools and the relevant departments responsible for this deserve to be commended. By instilling the importance of good dental hygiene early in children's lives they are likely to hold on to those habits throughout their lives and that will prevent the potential threat of oral cancer and other oral-related ailments.

The 2011 Dental Health Week, under the auspices of the Australian Dental Association, was devoted to increasing public awareness of oral cancer. It is said that oral cancer is one of the least understood conditions among the general public; yet, according to the association, at least three Australians a day are diagnosed with oral cancer. Certain lifestyle choices increase the risk of getting oral cancer, such as smoking and tobacco use. Smoking is currently the prevalent cause of oral cancer. According to the association, the heavy use of alcohol combined with smoking increases by 15 times a person's chances of getting oral cancer. Another potential cause of oral cancer can be prolonged exposure to the sun, including the lips. With the increased use of sunscreen these days the number of people being diagnosed with oral cancer caused by excessive sun exposure is decreasing, although as a society we must stay vigilant because putting sunscreen on the lips is not something we always remember to do.

Because the symptoms of oral cancer are often mistaken by the layperson as being ulcers or other small ailments, diagnosis often happens quite late. It then follows that the death rate from oral cancer is high, because by the time the correct diagnosis is made the cancer may have metastasised or spread to other regions of the body. Detection can be simple and non-invasive. If a person notices a lump, some swelling, ulcers or colour disfiguration that has not gone away after two weeks it may well be worth going to one's dentist and getting

checked out. The dentist will check the person's tongue, gums and the roof and floor of his or her mouth for signs of oral cancer. Dentists also may employ what is known as the brush test or perform a biopsy. As I have said, dental hygiene and oral care are important for us all.

The Federal Labor Government has put oral care significantly high on its agenda, committing \$345.9 million to provide dental services to 400,000 adults. Rural areas will be targeted as will be low-income earners because those groups have been identified as most at-risk from oral cancer and other dental health problems. Prevention is always better than cure. Good dental hygiene is important in preventing oral cancer; choosing not to smoke and drink will also help. These may be lifestyle choices that individuals need to make; however, by raising public awareness our society will have a better grasp of the risks they face when they engage in this type of behaviour. The Australian Dental Association is to be congratulated on 2011 Dental Health Week and putting the issue of oral cancer in the public sphere. Again I congratulate the member for Blue Mountains for bringing this important issue to the attention of the House. I support the motion.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [12.14 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Port Macquarie, the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Cabramatta for their contributions. It is disappointing that the member for Macquarie Fields chose to get on the political bandwagon in relation to funding, considering that under the former Labor Government dental health in New South Wales had the lowest spend per capita—

Mr Ryan Park: Don't be like this.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I did not hear the member for Keira interjecting on the member for Macquarie Fields. The member will listen to the debate in silence.

Mrs ROZA SAGE: I repeat: Under the former Labor Government in New South Wales dental health had the lowest spend per capita in the whole of Australia for every Australian State or Territory. It is welcome news that the Federal Government has chosen to provide some money for dental health, but \$350 million for the whole of Australia is but a drop in the ocean in addressing the health needs in this State. The member for Port Macquarie informed the House that three people are diagnosed with oral cancer every day and that 6.5 per cent of Australian cancer patients are suffering from oral cancer. It is not a cancer that is well-recognised but it is very debilitating. Checking our mouths regularly and in particular having dental check-ups is important.

Some of the symptoms of oral cancer are ulcers, in particular, sores that do not heal and red and white patches in the mouth. The problem with oral cancer is that often there is no pain associated with it, so it can be very advanced when it is detected. A healthy diet is important. The risks of alcohol and tobacco contributing to oral cancer are enormous. Together, heavy alcohol consumption and heavy tobacco use increase by 15 times the risk of getting oral cancer. However, if in the early stages of the cancer there is a cessation of tobacco use and alcohol consumption the mouth can recover. The survival rate of oral cancer is low if it is detected very late. If it is detected early the survival rates are considerably better. As I said, prevention is better than cure.

I especially thank the member for Cabramatta for his thoughtful contribution and for encouraging more public awareness of oral cancer. He pointed out that good dental hygiene and dental habits in childhood would put people in a good place for the rest of their lives in the prevention of oral cancer. As the member said, oral cancer is the least understood of all cancers and tobacco use is one of the major causes of oral cancer. In fact 95 per cent of oral cancers are the squamous cell carcinoma variety, which people commonly refer to as skin cancer. The symptoms are often difficult to detect. I reiterate that it is important that people go to a dentist and ensure that their mouths are checked out.

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

Motion agreed to.

BRAVEHEARTS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.19 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges the extraordinary contribution Bravehearts makes towards child protection in New South Wales;
- (2) acknowledges the annual Bravehearts dinner at Parliament House on 7 September 2011 and encourages all members of this House to attend; and
- (3) requests that the House pay greater attention to strengthening child protection laws in New South Wales.

I acknowledge my friends from the Jamberoo Croquet Club who are in the gallery. I am pleased that members of my community are in this Parliament to witness some of the work I get to do on their behalf as their local member. Bravehearts and child protection should unite all sides of this House. No matter what flag we carry at election time, it is important to ensure the care and protection of our children and ensure that there is a system of law in place to deal with those people who seek to behave inappropriately around children. I was involved with Bravehearts locally during my time as a Shoalhaven city councillor. In 2008 I was proud to be the first councillor in the State to move a motion to financially support Bravehearts. Other councils, including Randwick City Council, have since followed suit. I thank in his absence my friend and colleague the member for Coogee, Bruce Notley-Smith, who moved that motion when he was Mayor of Randwick.

I had the tremendous privilege of hosting the annual Bravehearts dinner at Parliament House last year during Child Protection Week. I was involved in hanging white balloons on the front of this building to celebrate and remember Child Protection Week. I acknowledge the Speaker who is in the House and who hosted the dinner prior to me. I also acknowledge the hard work and dedication of north Nowra residents Wendy and Roger Woodward who attended Parliament for my inaugural speech. In March 2007 they established Bravehearts in New South Wales and have continued their involvement locally with the Shoalhaven board of Bravehearts. I also acknowledge the contributions of Shoalhaven Deputy Mayor, Andrew Guile, who serves on that board.

With the vision of Bob Wilson, a former shire president of the Shoalhaven, and successful businessman, also known around this place as the "godfather" of Bravehearts, a bipartisan action committee was formed which remains active and includes my good friend Speaker Shelley Hancock, the member for South Coast; fair trading Minister Anthony Roberts; the member for Lane Cove; Deputy-Speaker Thomas George, the member for Lismore; Parliamentary Secretary Geoff Provest, the member for Tweed; Sonia Hornery, the member for Wallsend; and the Hon. Paul Green, Mayor of the Shoalhaven.

Many members would also be aware of 2GB morning radio presenter Ray Hadley's support for Bravehearts as its New South Wales ambassador. Mr Hadley is a fierce advocate for tougher child protection laws and I share his passion. I look forward to continuing my association with Bravehearts and strengthening child protection laws to better support and protect the most vulnerable in our State. I note that at present the Queensland Government is looking at a "two strikes and you are out" policy to deal with people convicted of paedophilia. My involvement with Bravehearts came about through a chance encounter. Ben Blackburn is known to many in this House. He joined the Labor Party at the age of 15 and went to work for Milton Orkopoulos, a former member of this place.

Mr Orkopoulos was a Minister and a man of great standing in his community until it became clear that all was not right with him. At the age of 15 years Ben was a volunteer on the staff of Minister Orkopoulos and one of Milton's victims. He went through an extraordinary period in his life and was one of the people, along with Gillian Snedden, who stood up and chose to expose the behaviour of Mr Orkopoulos. Their actions led to the charging and conviction of Milton Orkopoulos for paedophilia and that conviction resulted in his imprisonment. I met Ben Blackburn after that point in his life. The events caused great upheaval to his studies as a Higher School Certificate student, but he then turned his life around. Many people who have experienced such a terrible crime fall off the rails entirely, but Ben chose to take his life in a different direction.

Ben worked as an education officer with Bravehearts, teaching children about right and wrong touch, and going into schools and advising students and young people on what they need to know about what is acceptable adult behaviour. In doing so Ben sought to be a real champion for protecting the most vulnerable people in this State. I met Ben through this activity. He has since left the Labor Party and is now a valued member of my electoral office staff. I know he is pleased that I am mentioning his story in this House today. Behaviours such as the actions of Mr Orkopoulos do not happen because of political associations or affiliations; they happen for many reasons but they must be dealt with in the toughest and harshest way. I commend Ben Blackburn for his bravery in standing up to somebody who clearly was taking advantage for all the wrong reasons.

Many people in this place are familiar with the tremendous work of the child protection organisation Bravehearts. Bravehearts has now delivered its Ditto's Keep Safe Adventure education program to over 200,000 children across Australia. Bravehearts is determined to equip children with the knowledge and skills that they need to avoid risky situations and to give them an understanding of their right to protect their own bodies. I put the House on notice that this is an issue that concerns the people of New South Wales. We, as democratically elected members, should be taking up the fight for those who need our support and protection. I sincerely hope that this debate engenders another look at our laws relating to paedophilia, another look at those

people who take advantage of young people, and another look at those who in my opinion deserve to rot in prison if they are convicted for what they do to young people. They do not deserve the rights and liberties of free people when they take away the rights and liberties of young people.

As a Parliament we should be resolute in ensuring that these people feel the full wrath of the law and that they are not able to offend again. Bravehearts is aiming to achieve this through education and prevention on the ground—bringing one of this country's most innovative and productive programs to schools across this country. The purposes of its Ditto education program is to teach children the skills to keep safe. Bravehearts is taking these programs of safe, fun, effective and innovative messages to schools around the country. I thank the O'Farrell Government and the former Labor Government for their support. I hope that all members remain united in ensuring that this bipartisan issue is above politics and that they work for the children we seek to protect.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [12.26 p.m.]: My colleague the member for Kiama and I agree on many issues in this place; in fact, we probably agree on more issues than we disagree. This is another area in which we are resolute in our agreement. I also acknowledge in the gallery the Jamberoo Croquet Club, whose members have come from a beautiful part of the world.

Mr Gareth Ward: Almost as nice as Keira.

Mr RYAN PARK: It is almost as nice as the Keira electorate—it is getting close. No issue is more confronting, difficult to talk about or face than child protection. As a former chief of staff to a police Minister I spent a great deal of time working with the brave individuals in the NSW Police Force who do some of the most difficult work investigating child abuse, particularly in relation to the grooming of children over the internet and the way in which adults manipulate children and take away their innocence. I remember talking to people in the sex crimes unit and the child protection unit in the NSW Police Force who said that staff turnover was high in those units because they could not be exposed to that type of criminal activity for a long time without serious damage being done to their psychological wellbeing.

Today we are recognising Bravehearts and Hetty Johnston. I came across Hetty during my time as the chief of staff to the police Minister. This organisation and many other victims' organisations are blessed not only with the support of this place but also with the support of some of the strongest and most determined advocates in this country—those who stand up for the most vulnerable people in our community. As the father of a two-year-old child I know that children are the most vulnerable people in our community, along with the elderly and those with disabilities. As the member for Kiama correctly pointed out, these advocates stand up for children whose innocence has been taken away.

Last night I watched a documentary on child abuse and the systematic abuse that was experienced by a number of children from members of the clergy. Decades and decades later, the people described the impact of that on their lives, which they will never forget. Considering the dedication of organisations like Bravehearts, the advocacy of people like Hetty Johnston, and the determination of people such as the member for Kiama in bringing these important issues to the attention of this House, it is absolutely of paramount importance that members of the House, who have the honour of representing their communities in this Chamber, form a greater understanding about the laws involved in child protection and a greater understanding of organisations such as Bravehearts that support young people. Every member of this House, regardless of political persuasion, should unite in sending a very clear message to the community about appropriate standards and what will be done if the line is crossed.

Hetty Johnston and Bravehearts conduct research, lobbying and campaigns that include White Ribbon Day, Bravehearts online, Supporting Hands as well as counselling and support programs. In addition, in spite of the utmost difficulty, they also conduct crisis information and crisis line work. Bravehearts crisis counselling deals with people who are currently going through child abuse or who recently experienced it, or child abuse that recently was revealed in their famil. Those people are looking for support. On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition, I take my hat off to Hetty Johnston and the Bravehearts organisation. They do work that many of us would find very difficult to face for an hour, yet they do it on a daily basis. I also take my hat off to the New South Wales Police Force, particularly officers who have to face and investigate this crime every day of the week. Child abuse is an increasing problem, which is not being helped by widespread use of the internet. It is a problem that men, women, mothers, fathers, grandparents, and brothers and sisters must confront.

Recently in my electorate I met a woman who is establishing an advocacy group to deal with this very important issue. The group will be known as Christina's House of Hope. She said to me, "Ryan, what I expect of

you as a local member is that you will be willing to talk about these issues. The more we talk about these issues, the more we bring them out into the open, and the more chance there is of the perpetrators, who are carrying on this awful behaviour, getting the very clear message that we have all got our eyes and ears focused on protecting young people in our community." It is not something that should be hidden away. It is not something that should be too difficult to talk about. It is something that we need to face up to.

Every member of the House has the privilege of legislating for the people of New South Wales, and we need to do exactly that when it comes to effective child protection laws. When child protection review legislation is introduced to this House, we must spend time on ensuring that we get it right. Our political persuasion does not matter. Our duty is to the young people of the communities we represent. I very much thank the member for Kiama for bringing to the attention of the New South Wales Parliament this important issue. I thank Hetty Johnston and her team at Bravehearts. They should rest assured that all members of this House will continue to be strong advocates for young children and children generally to ensure that they have lives worth living and that they have the security and protection of legislation that helps not hinders them.

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [12.33 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the Jamberoo Croquet Club and add that I am patron of the Nowra Croquet Club and the Milton-Ulladulla Croquet Club. I have played croquet and enjoyed it. It is lovely to see members of the club in the visitors' gallery, and I hope they have enjoyed their morning. I am very pleased to contribute to debate on the motion and commend Bravehearts. I am extremely proud of the member for Keira and the member for Kiama for the comments they made about Bravehearts. I am sure that most people in this Chamber, in this State and in this country would be aware of the very disturbing statistics concerning child sexual assault. My view is that it is not enough to be aware of the statistics and to be concerned about them.

We have to do more than talk about child abuse in this Chamber. We have to do whatever we can to ensure that the statistics are reduced in whatever way possible. I am very pleased, as the Speaker of this Parliament, to have hosted a wonderful fundraising dinner last year in the New South Wales Parliament. Similar fundraising events have been held each year for the past three years and the funds go to Bravehearts, which is spreading its message across this State. But it has been very difficult for that organisation to convey messages about what they can do and what they are doing. The member for Keira and the member for Kiama have conveyed very clearly Bravehearts' activities, but we must support them and do more.

Very often members of Parliament are criticised for all sorts of reasons—for the things they do not do and for the things they say or should not say—but on this type of issue, there is bipartisan support for fundraising to make sure that Bravehearts is supported. The member for Keira may have been at the previous event. For what reason was that fundraising undertaken? It was to ensure that Bravehearts could take its Ditto's education program into schools in this State. In other States, that message is being conveyed to schools as I speak. We need to do more in New South Wales. I was very pleased that at the conclusion of last year's fundraising dinner, the Government committed \$100,000 to piloting projects in schools to ensure that those well-researched programs could be conveyed to children in this State in an effective manner.

I am so pleased and proud of what has been achieved in the Shoalhaven. The member for Kiama touched on that issue earlier. The Shoalhaven City Council makes an ongoing contribution to Bravehearts of \$3,000 a year. That is backed up by the mayoral ball, which is organised by our current mayor, the Hon. Paul Green, MLC, and his wife. Each year the mayoral ball is a fundraiser and the funds go directly to Bravehearts. In many ways the Shoalhaven has led the way. I am sure the people in the gallery will be very pleased to hear that the Shoalhaven has led the way. I note that the Randwick City Council has come on board and also makes annual contributions to Bravehearts, but the Shoalhaven and the South Coast are well aware of the work that is being done by Bravehearts because we are part of it.

I acknowledge the Hon. Paul Green and his wife, Michelle, Wendy Woodward, Ross Woodward, Chris Benning, Councillor Andrew Guile and others who work hard to highlight the wonderful work of Bravehearts. This year the New South Wales Parliament will acknowledge White Balloon Day on 7 September. I hope that the people in the gallery will return to see the front gates of this Parliament decked with white balloons. All members will be wearing white ribbons to make sure that 7 September is all about Bravehearts. I hope that if we have another fundraising dinner, as many members as possible will come and empty their pockets of loose change—and a bit more besides—because Bravehearts needs our help. It is not enough to come into this Chamber and be very passionate about the subject. We have to turn up, show up, empty our pockets, get out our chequebooks and credit cards and make donations to Bravehearts—an organisation that is so very, very worthy.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoynes) [12.37 p.m.], by leave: I congratulate the member for Kiama, Gareth Ward, on his work and say to members of the Jamberoo Croquet Club that they have a very strong advocate and representative in Kiama, who fights for his community not only for increased funding but also for very important matters of critical responsibility that we, as representatives of our communities, must protect. The member for Kiama has been an advocate of Bravehearts for a number of years. As members who preceded me in this debate have said, Gareth not only talks the talk but he attaches the dollar value to his community work through the local council to fund this great organisation. I congratulate the Speaker, Mrs Shelley Hancock, on her wonderful work and involvement in hosting a number of events for Bravehearts, and the Hon. Marie Ficarra, who has hosted a number of fundraising breakfasts in conjunction with Mr Vince De Luca, OAM. Bravehearts aims to break the silence, thereby engendering healing and support, and provides support for child sexual assault prevention and protection strategies.

Bravehearts advocates for increased understanding and promotes increased education and critical research. Bravehearts members comprise survivors, parents, friends, partners, professionals and non-abusive members of the community who share the belief that child sexual assault must cease. As the Speaker said, Hetty Johnston founded White Balloon Day in Brisbane in 1997 in response to the revelation that a family member was a paedophile. A brave disclosure by a seven-year-old led to the realisation that this much-loved family elder had preyed on innocent children and their trusting parents for 40 years. Compounding this tragedy was the fact that this 40-year reign of terror and horror had never been disclosed, let alone reported. With the support of her family, Hetty decided that the time had come to change the culture of silence that has for too long aided and abetted the assault and torture of our most vulnerable members of society, our children. The search was for a symbol to demonstrate this issue; hence, we now have White Balloon Day, an annual national event run by Bravehearts. It is widely supported by the community, and the commercial and government sectors alike.

In addition, White Balloon Day enjoys overwhelming support and encouragement, as it should, from the media, schools, churches, health practitioners, emergency services, the legal fraternity and community organisations. If we do nothing else, we as members of Parliament should advocate for what this wonderful organisation does and its work, whether it is the Ditto's suite of programs that we have seen throughout schools, research, lobbying and campaigning, Bravehearts Online, or the Supporting Hands program. Bravehearts is involved in so many different initiatives, including community awareness campaigns and risk audits. A risk audit provides a specialist physical and policy risk management audit service for various organisations that have contact with children. Again, I thank the member for Kiama for moving this wonderful motion and I commend it to the House.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.41 p.m.], in reply: It is my pleasure to respond to members' contributions on this important issue. Some of the best debates in this House—people in the gallery might have noticed—are when not many members of Parliament are in the Chamber. It is sad that the press at large does not get to see contributions from members from by both sides of the House that are beyond politics. I commend those who contributed to the debate and I will respond to points raised by each of them. I thank my old friend the member for Keira for his comments. I know he feels strongly about this issue and I commend his commentary about the police and their work in dealing with not only offenders but also the survivors. I thank the member for Keira for his considered and heartfelt contribution.

I thank the member for South Coast and the Speaker for the support she has given Bravehearts over many years, which is completely genuine. I thank her for her efforts in supporting White Balloon Day. I also note the efforts of Luke Sikora from her office, who also supports her in that role. My friend and colleague the member for Drummoynes gave an excellent speech about what needs to be done and what can be done into the future. I acknowledge the Government's commitment to this program: \$100,000 is a great start. It will provide an education program in our schools that gives young people the opportunity to learn what is right and wrong, and what sort of adult behaviour is acceptable and what is not. I also hope that Bravehearts achieves giving young people the confidence to step up and speak loudly when older people treat them inappropriately.

So many younger people feel intimidated and afraid about standing up to people who, in many cases, may hold senior positions of office. They may be in excellent positions in our community. One thing I hope this program does is empower young people to be able to say what is right and what is wrong, and to ensure that older people treat younger people with respect. A good friend of mine went through something that I never want to see anybody in this State go through. That is why we need to strengthen laws interstate in relation to paedophilia, child care and protection. I have already spoken with the chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee, the member for Castle Hill. I am writing to him to convey that my desire is to have the Government examine the

laws to ensure that New South Wales is not a place that sees this behaviour as in any way acceptable and that we send a strong and unequivocal message that paedophilia is inappropriate. I thank the chairman of the committee for considering that request.

To all those people out there who have lived with this horror and have not stood up, come forward. To those people who are living with the horrors of the past, we salute you and we certainly feel for you. I hope this State can provide the toughest regime but also the best education so that our young people never have to live a life of fear and intimidation, but rather enjoy all the rights and liberties of young people across the State. Too many young people have suffered at the hands paedophiles. I hope that this debate will trigger the reforms we need to make sure that young people do not have to live in the shadow of darkness, but in the wider light of the world.

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

Motion agreed to.

LIFELINE

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.46 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) commends the Government for demonstrating its commitment to improved mental health outcomes in New South Wales by delivering on its election commitment to provide \$2 million per year for four years to Lifeline and establishing the first ever Minister for Mental Health portfolio in New South Wales;
- (2) notes the rate of suicide in New South Wales continues to cause concern;
- (3) congratulates the very important work of Lifeline volunteers; and
- (4) notes the hardworking and dedicated counsellors at the Nowra and Wollongong Lifeline offices.

I did not intend to move two motions today but notice of these motions was given many months ago and when they come up for debate we take the opportunity to talk about issues that are important. I appreciated the opportunity to talk about Bravehearts, but another community group that is doing exceptional work is Lifeline. Right around the State there are so many people in different types of pain. Not too long ago if you made a comment at work that you were feeling a bit down or depressed, people would tell you to tighten up, put steel in your sinews and get on with it. But, we now know that mental illness, like any form of physical illness, is not to be dismissed. One of my political heroes who served in this place is John Brogden. I remember being in the Young Liberal Movement when John went through his ordeal with his mental struggle.

I will never forget the reaction, but after that experience he was able to take up the fight for Lifeline. I know that one of the reasons we now have increased funding for Lifeline in New South Wales is the work John did as well as that of Premier Barry O'Farrell. Again, this is something that goes well and truly beyond politics. It is so important to ensure that when someone is going through several types of pain that somebody is there to listen. So often, Lifeline volunteers struggled through those critical hours between midnight and 6.00 a.m. While all of us are fast asleep so many people are hurting. That is the time when people are often lonely and feel detached from the world, and that is when they need someone to talk to. I cannot imagine how many times having a friendly ear on the end of a telephone line may have saved a life. Many members of this place would be aware of people who are doing wonderful work with Lifeline in their electorates.

I am lucky that in my region two offices—Nowra and Wollongong—support the work of Lifeline. Before coming to this place, when I was working with Senator John Tierney, I remember him taking up the fight for Lifeline in Federal Parliament to ensure that in Telstra's universal service obligation it did not cost an individual to call Lifeline. There are many good causes in the community, but so many residents across New South Wales are struggling with mental illness. It is important that services are provided for people who need that assistance. It is good to know that Lifeline is there when people face that challenge. It is also good to know that the Government has continued to support Lifeline and has increased that support so that not only are we relying on volunteers to staff the phones, but also that there are paid counsellors and consultants.

I commend and pay tribute to the thousands of people involved with Lifeline who staff the telephones and dedicate their time day in and day out to those going through a problem in their life. Regardless of how insignificant the problem may seem to the outside world, it is important to that individual. For that reason I hope

this House continues to support the work of great charities such as Lifeline. I hope those charities continue to receive support from governments demonstrating their care and concern for people with mental illness. I hope we continue to unite in supporting these great charities doing good work to assist, care and protect the people of New South Wales.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.50 p.m.]: I acknowledge the efforts of Lifeline as noted in the motion moved by the member for Kiama. Lifeline was founded in 1963 by the late Reverend Dr Sir Alan Walker. The idea began when he took a call from a distressed man who later took his own life. Reverend Dr Sir Alan Walker was determined to not let isolation and lack of support cause more deaths and launched a 24-hour crisis support line. Lifeline has provided services in western Sydney since 1973. Suicide rates in this State are cause for concern. In no way do I read the following statistics with pride; rather, I do so with sorrow. The most recent Australian data—Australian Bureau of Statistics Causes of Death 2009—reports deaths due to suicide at 2,132. That equates to six deaths a day or one every four hours. Men in Australia are four times more likely to die by suicide than women, and Indigenous people are four times more likely to die by suicide than non-Indigenous people.

The late Father Jim McLaren said, "Whilst ever there is life, there is hope" a quote I heard on late-night radio many years ago that has remained in my memory. Too often we hear of people who suffered in silence and took their own life without seeking assistance of any kind and we wonder why help was not sought. That may be an easy question to ask, but the anguish within the person suffering does not allow that person to look beyond taking his or her own life as a solution to the problem. Lifeline is one avenue that people can reach out to for help. People may feel embarrassed to speak to family and friends about their personal suffering; Lifeline volunteers offer that critical and much-needed help. Lifeline provides access to crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services.

In Australia a new call is made to Lifeline every minute. People call Lifeline's 24-hour crisis support service to discuss a range of issues from anxiety, depression, loneliness, abuse and trauma to physical or mental wellbeing, suicidal thoughts or attempts, and stresses from work, family or society. It is interesting to note that Lifeline also provides national services and campaigns that promote emotional wellbeing, encourage help seeking, and address suicide prevention and awareness. When I was teaching in the western suburbs of Sydney at St Pauls Catholic College, Greystanes, the community lost five fathers in one year. Five families were grieving along with the extended St Pauls community. I was the year 12 coordinator at the time and was aware of the circumstances of the deaths of all five fathers.

Three of the five fathers had taken their own life—young men with so much to offer—leaving behind young children and wives. I recall especially four brothers who had lost their dad. The eldest was in year 12 in my cohort, and his brothers were in years 10, 9 and 7. I taught all four boys. Words cannot express what these young men went through as a result of the tragic death of their father. As the boys, their mother and family were left to pick up the pieces, I recall in a conversation with the eldest son how he wished that his father had simply spoken up. That is where Lifeline can help. Lifeline is a start: It is someone on the other end of the line who can offer assistance and guidance to the suffering person; it is the glimmer of hope that can ultimately save a life. The Lifeline number is simple: 131114 for 24-hour crisis support.

Speaking up and not sitting in silence is an imperative message that we in this Chamber must continue to promote in the community. Lifeline would not be possible without its dedicated telephone counsellors, who undertake a comprehensive and highly regarded training program that prepares them for their work. Volunteer counsellors are trained to listen well and to help in emergency situations. The Lifeline telephone service allows callers to talk about their pain and fears and the volunteer counsellors aid them in finding workable solutions to their problems. I pay tribute to Lifeline telephone counsellors who continue their tireless work voluntarily helping those in need. I join the member for Kiama in acknowledging the dedicated counsellors at Nowra and Wollongong. I place on the record also that I acknowledge the hard work and good efforts of those in western Sydney who help those people on the margins. I support the motion.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.55 p.m.]: I support the motion of the member for Kiama. I commend the wonderful work of Lifeline, its volunteers and paid staff. I acknowledge the significant financial contribution of the State Government with last year's announcement by the Premier of \$2 million in recurrent funding support for the incredible work that Lifeline volunteers and staff carry out across New South Wales and Australia. As other members have articulated, it is now almost 50 years since the late Reverend Dr Sir Alan Walker first saw the need to establish an organisation such as Lifeline. It is instructive that he used the term "lifeline" to describe the work of this organisation. Lifeline provides a voice, a listening

ear and support for people in the depths of depression, anxiety and loneliness. These people literally need a lifeline, someone who will listen, a friendly voice offering human care and love, a real and genuine relationship to lift them out of the pit of despair they are in.

It is appalling that in our society people can fall between the gaps into a morass where they feel there are no options. Lifeline fills that gap. Incredibly, Lifeline has operated for almost 50 years without government support. The extraordinary testament to the efficiency and dedication of its volunteers is that this amazing organisation, which was initially set up by the Wesley Mission, has run on the smell of an oily rag. It is well overdue for government to support this organisation financially. It was terrific that funding for Lifeline was one of the first significant funding announcements the Premier made in 2011 on assuming office. We believe in this organisation; we believe in its important work for the people of New South Wales. Lifeline provides an important service for those weighed down by mental illness, financial concerns, or family issues. As we have heard from Robert Putnam and other researchers, one of the problems of western countries is social isolation and loss of community.

This massive problem crosses our societies. Every member in this place could attest that while some fabulous organisations, community groups, churches and sporting groups work in their communities, too many people live alone outside community without family support. These people particularly are at risk and they are the people to whom Lifeline offers that community connection and support. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the wonderful contribution of one of my predecessors as the member for Pittwater—John Brogden. Many members retire from this place, move on and get on with their lives, but John has remained involved in looking after our community. I commend his efforts as national patron of Lifeline. He is an incredible man, a close friend and mentor of mine. It is a wonderful testament to the people of this place that they go on to serve their community this way. It would be remiss not to mention Lucy Brogden, who, along with John, supports Lifeline in her capacity as patron of Northern Beaches Lifeline. I commend the motion to the House.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [1.00 p.m.]: The greatest health challenge of the twenty-first century is that of mental health and the increase in the incidence of depression in particular. That is why this is an important motion. Depression is becoming more common. Prevention is vital. The most important thing with depression is access to appropriate care when it is needed. That is why Lifeline is such a brilliant service—it is there when people need it. When that brief window of opportunity opens and people with depression are responsive to help Lifeline is able to intervene. I pay tribute to John and Lucy Brogden. One of the great privileges I have had was to meet them at one of the Lifeline functions. John has shown by his leadership since leaving this place how depression can be successfully treated and you can live a rewarding and successful life after having suffered from depression.

As we all know, there is still an enormous prejudice against mental illness. Those who have physical illness have sympathy and support but far too often those with mental illnesses are marginalised by friends, family and workmates. It is the prejudice against those with depression and mental illnesses that makes the conditions worse. That is another reason that Lifeline is vital—it is there when needed. Every person is at risk of having a problem with their mental health. At least one in five Australians will have a significant mental illness at some stage in their lives. One in five people in this House has had, does have, or will have a significant mental illness—and help is needed in dealing with it. How much better would it be if that prejudice did not exist and society as a whole supported those who suffered from mental illness and depression?

I attended, with the member for Campbelltown, the wonderful Lifeline Macarthur ball. I was able to listen to one of my favourite musical groups, the band the Bushwhackers. Lifeline Macarthur does a magnificent job and, as the member for Pittwater said, the volunteers are fantastic. The volunteers work evenings and nights, and continue to do it for years without remuneration. The volunteers do it for the common good. Frequently they do not tell others they are volunteering; such is their commitment to helping others. Everybody who is a Lifeline volunteer deserves the highest praise. Suicide is the most common cause of death in males under 44 and females under 34, and the average age of people committing suicide is 42 for men and 45 for women—a dreadful loss to everybody in Australia. Lifeline does a wonderful job and I commend this motion to the House.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [1.03 p.m.], by concurrence, in reply: I thank the members for Fairfield, Pittwater and Macquarie Fields for participating in this debate and for their contributions. I appreciate the heartfelt words of the member for Pittwater, who knows all too well what a good friend can go through at times of mental illness. The member for Fairfield gave a heartfelt contribution in relation to the Lifeline volunteers he has met. The member for Macquarie Fields would have seen the effects of mental illness during

his medical career. Every suicide is a tragedy. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has reported an encouraging and ongoing reduction in the rate of suicide in New South Wales from 14.8 per 100,000 people in 1997 to 7.1 per 100,000 people in 2009. But it is important to recognise where we have previously failed in this area.

Every death by suicide is one death too many. There would be few families in New South Wales that have not been touched by suicide in some way, which serves to reinforce our commitment to providing a comprehensive response to this great human tragedy. Preventing suicide requires everyone in our community to work together—mental health and suicide are everybody's business. The warning signs that someone could be at risk of suicide often go unnoticed but when people are aware of those signs there is a far greater chance that suicide can be prevented. Initiatives such as RU OK? Day are important. If people take the time to find out more about suicide and recognise the warning signs they may find out one day they can help somebody and save a life.

It is up to all of us, not just in this House but in the community, to reduce the stigma of mental illness by talking about mental health and suicide and increasing awareness to better ensure that people at risk of suicide—as well as families, friends and carers—are connected with the treatment, agencies and support they need. The Government has, for the first time, provided recurrent funding to Lifeline to ensure that organisation is able to reach more and more people. It should not be the case that organisations that provide such a valuable service are spending their time selling raffle tickets and raising money; they need to concentrate on saving lives. Lifeline in New South Wales takes more than 170,000 calls a year from people seeking crisis mental health support. The \$2 million a year funding provided by the Government will better enable Lifeline to train and sustain its volunteers and meet increased operating costs at its 15 centres across New South Wales.

On 22 February 2012 Minister Kevin Humphries was pleased to chair the inaugural meeting of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Suicide Prevention. The committee brings together key suicide prevention experts across the government, non-government and community sectors, research bodies and business to discuss ways to further decrease the rate of suicide in New South Wales. The establishment of the committee reflects the Government's commitment to prevention and early intervention for at-risk individuals to protect and support our communities and ultimately to reduce the number of suicides attempted in New South Wales. The committee will provide a forum for strategic and independent advice to the Government in the development of evidence-based suicide prevention policy.

It will work to identify the needs and priorities in this space so we can better partner across our communities to help each other. It is important that we continue to identify emerging priorities and issues and stay responsive so we can better respond to the needs of families and communities that are in need of our support. Suicide prevention is not just a health issue, making a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach even more important. I thank the people who have participated in the debate. I have no doubts that as we sit here today Lifeline volunteers are on the phone counselling people who need support. I commend them for their work, their outstanding commitment to saving lives and making New South Wales a better place to live.

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

Motion agreed to.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 16/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.09 p.m.]: As Chair of the Legislation Review Committee—the hardest working committee of this House—I take this opportunity to comment on the Legislation Review Digest tabled on 8 May 2012. This is the sixteenth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. Compared with any other committee, that would be 16 to zero. 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 sixteenth digest examined the bill introduced in the sitting week commencing 1 May 2012, the Tattoo Parlours Bill 2012. I will now speak briefly on the bill.

The Tattoo Parlours Bill 2012 continues the work of the legislation introduced by the Government earlier this year, specifically the Crimes Amendment (Consorting and Organised Crime) Act 2012 and the

Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Act 2012, and is part of the Government's aim to break the stranglehold that outlaw motorcycle gangs have over the tattoo industry. The bill is designed to create a licensing and regulatory scheme for the carrying on of body art tattooing businesses and the performing of body art tattooing procedures in order to regulate a popular industry which has long been used to generate finances for illegal groups and for the laundering of illegally obtained moneys. This bill marks another contribution by the Government to safeguarding the community from potentially dangerous or illegal practices. The committee has noted a number of issues arising under section 8A of the Legislation Review Act.

The bill creates a strict liability offence for the previously legal act of undertaking body tattooing without a licence, and persons performing this following the passing of this bill may not be given sufficient notice to avoid being inadvertently in breach of this law and committing this offence. The bill requires applicants for a tattoo parlour licence to consent to having their fingerprints and palm prints taken. The bill permits the Commissioner of Police to use fingerprints and palm prints taken during the licence application for any purpose and grants police the power to enter any licensed tattoo parlour with a dog. The committee refers to Parliament whether these clauses constitute a breach of a person's privacy and personal, physical integrity.

The committee refers to Parliament whether the taking of fingerprints and palm prints of persons for the purposes of making an application for a lawful activity or for any other reason the commissioner sees fits constitutes a violation of personal rights. The committee is also concerned about the prohibition on foreign persons applying for tattooist licences as this may be a discriminatory practice. The bill contains provisions that may make rights, liberties or obligations dependent upon non-reviewable decisions by removing the right of appeal against restrictions placed on controlled persons of declared organisations. The committee is concerned that the Minister can prescribe offences and penalties by regulation. That may constitute an inappropriate delegation of legislative power. The committee is also concerned that the delegation powers of this bill may be too wide and ill-defined, and refers to Parliament its concerns.

The committee also reported on the following regulations: the Home Building Amendment (Threshold for Home Warranty Insurance) Regulation 2012, the James Hardie Former Subsidiaries (Winding up and Administration) Amendment (Statutory Recovery Claims) Regulation 2012 and the Local Government (General) Amendment (Election Procedures) Regulation 2012. The committee made comments on these regulations in relation to the following issues arising out of the committee's responsibilities under section 9 of the Legislation Review Act: consumer protection, denial of compensation, right to privacy, freedom of political association, freedom of political speech, the right to vote and the rule of law. I invite members to review the digest for a detailed consideration of these issues with respect to the bill and regulations.

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. I thank those members of the committee staff who have worked on the digest. Once again there was a short turnaround, and I compliment them on their tireless work. I thank also the members of the committee, namely, the member for Kiama, the member for Rockdale, the member for Bankstown—who I was pleased was at the meeting—the member for Parramatta and our colleagues in the other place the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, Dr Phelps and Mr Shoebridge, who have provided invaluable assistance in the scrutiny of bills and regulations introduced to this Parliament and in ensuring that the digest will continue to be of assistance to all members.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.13 p.m.]: This Legislation Review Digest is the sixteenth of this Parliament and the eighth this year. I acknowledge my fellow members who serve on the Legislation Review Committee, the members for Myall Lakes, Parramatta, Kiama and Rockdale, and our colleagues in the other place the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and Mr David Shoebridge. I acknowledge that the member for Swansea was an observer at the committee. Once again I acknowledge the hardworking committee staff: Emma Matthews, Emma Wood, Jason Ardit and Todd Buttsworth. We have had back-to-back sitting weeks, and the staff had the difficult task of getting the digest ready in limited time. I was able to attend the committee meeting this week as it was held at lunchtime. I thank the chair for making the change to allow me to attend the meeting.

This week the digest reviewed one bill, the Tattoo Parlours Bill 2012. Yesterday I led for the Opposition on this bill in my capacity as shadow Minister for Fair Trading. I noted that the Opposition strongly supports the NSW Police Force. We are willing to give the police the powers and the resources they need to fight crime. The Tattoo Parlours Bill is designed to limit the control of outlaw motorcycle gangs of tattoo parlours. Organised criminal groups have a history of using legitimate businesses such as tattoo parlours as a front for illegal activities such as money laundering. Other honest tattoo parlour operators have been victims of extortion by outlaw motorcycle gangs for operating in what the gangs consider to be their territory.

I am sure that many in the industry will welcome this legislation, even if it imposes additional paperwork on them, as it will help to remove a criminal element that is within their industry. The Tattoo Parlours Bill 2012 is a detailed piece of legislation, and the digest provides a significant analysis of potential issues within it. During my second reading speech I expressed my concern that the Tattoo Parlours Bill 2012 might be subject to legal challenge. In the recent past we have seen that outlaw motorcycle gangs are all too willing to use the courts to challenge legislation. I am sure the Government understands it must be vigilant to ensure that legislation it puts forward is not struck down by the judiciary.

The analysis in the digest highlights several potential issues with the legislation. The committee referred to Parliament for its consideration the fact that the bill, if enacted, would make previously legal activities illegal. Presently tattoo parlour operators and tattooists are not required to register with Fair Trading. By introducing a system of registration the bill will make it illegal for otherwise legitimate businesses to run without a licence. The Government has committed to counter this by not specifying a cut-off date for registration until it has undertaken an extensive advertising campaign to inform tattoo operators and tattooists of their new obligation to register.

The digest also noted potential concerns about civil liberties arising from the bill. The bill will require tattooists and tattoo parlour operators to provide their fingerprint and palm print details and allow police to inspect their premises and bring sniffer dogs onto their premises. As legislators we are always faced with the difficulties associated with the need to strike a balance between civil liberties and law enforcement. That is often a challenge for those on both sides of this Chamber. However, this legislation recognises particular circumstances within the tattoo industry; sometimes it is necessary to impose strict laws on certain professional sectors to stamp out criminal elements, as is the case here. I commend the digest to the House.

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

Report noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report: Report on the follow-up of repeat recommendations from the Auditor-General's financial audits 2010

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

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.18 p.m.]: I am pleased to take note of the report of the Public Accounts Committee entitled "Report on the follow-up of repeat recommendations from the New South Wales Auditor-General's 2010 financial audits". The committee's audit review process is designed to test the adequacy of actions taken by agencies in response to performance audits conducted by the Audit Office. The committee questions agencies about the measures they have taken in responding to the Auditor-General's recommendations. If we are not satisfied or have further questions we can seek further information or examine witnesses in a hearing. The committee examination process has proved to be a very effective means of often prompting and always comprehensively testing action taken as a result of the Auditor-General's recommendations. The committee is determined to ensure that these recommendations are addressed. This is the first time in at least a decade that the committee has conducted a detailed follow-up of financial audit recommendations, and it reflects the determination of the committee to be more assertive in pursuing such matters.

The report that I tabled yesterday provides an examination of 19 repeat recommendations from the Auditor-General's 2010 financial audit reports. Those repeat recommendations were identified as being of high priority in an official list of 72 repeat recommendations. The recommendations arise from issues that the Auditor-General has repeatedly identified, in some cases over several years. The committee wrote to the 10 agencies responsible for implementing the recommendations: Treasury, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council, the ANZAC Research Institute, the Australian Museum, the Department of Family and Community Services, RailCorp, the Department of Transport, the Department of Health, Health Support Services, the Department of Finance and Services, the Roads and Traffic Authority—as it was then known—and the Department of Primary Industries.

The committee also held a public hearing in December last year to question government agencies in relation to some of the recommendations. We heard evidence from the Department of Finance and Services, the

Department of Primary Industries, the Roads and Traffic Authority—as it was then known—and the NSW Audit Office. This follow-up process was very useful in informing members about the complexity of some aspects of public administration and the difficulties agencies face in giving priority to audit findings, such as the Australian Museum's attempts to catalogue its entire collection—an issue that both the Auditor-General and this committee have addressed previously. The current report makes 12 recommendations in relation to the issues identified by the Auditor-General.

Several recommend that agencies publish key information so that the public can be informed more fully about such matters as the performance of Health Support Services, the plans for the Department of Family and Community Services to transfer the delivery of out-of-home care to external organisations, and the number of Aboriginal land claims that remain unprocessed. Those management issues have a real impact on the services received by the people of New South Wales. For example, the committee found that approximately 26,000 Aboriginal land claims are waiting to be processed. The committee recognised that the Department of Primary Industries has only recently assumed responsibility for processing those claims from the former Land and Property Management Authority and is attempting to address the issue. However, 26,000 unprocessed land claims is clearly unacceptable and warrants highlighting.

Some of the other recommendations made in the report relate to the use of contractors in the Ministry of Health, the completion of the Government Property Register and rebuilding State road pavements. In conclusion, I record my appreciation for the assistance provided by the Auditor-General and the Audit Office staff. I note that on a number of these issues they have been quite persistent and determined to continue to highlight relevant issues. But it is the role of the Public Accounts Committee to pursue such issues, to highlight them in this place and, indeed, to demand a response from government agencies. On all these issues, which have been repeat issues, the committee looks forward to a proper response from all relevant government agencies within the six-month period allowed under the standing orders. Finally, I thank my fellow committee members for their commitment to improving public accountability through the inquiries of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.24 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to this take-note debate on report No. 4/55 of 2012 of the Public Accounts Committee. I am not a member of the committee but I am always interested in the committee's reports. I thank the chairman for presenting what I think is the first report under the new Government. I refer in particular to chapter 9, Health, and particularly the issue of the payment to contractors by the Department of Health. The member for Davidson will be aware that this issue has been a sticking point for governments, members of Parliament and contractors no matter who has been in office. The enormous bureaucracy of the Department of Health has always seemed to be unable to grapple with the issue of paying contractors within a reasonable time. That has been brought to the attention of the Auditor-General and a number of the Auditor-General's recommendations have been highlighted in this report at chapter 9.

The Department of Health is a major employer of contractors and subcontractors. Many of those contractors, of course, have substantial resources and can carry debts for long periods. They have to buy many parts and pieces of equipment and pay subcontractors and the like and they are prepared to carry the cost of those until the Department of Health pays them for their work. However, I am sure all members will be aware of cases of much smaller contractors who are in the same boat of having to pre-purchase equipment and pay subcontractors and so on but who are unable to meet those costs. There has been a lot of political comment and a report by the Auditor-General in relation to the impact on those contractors if the Department of Health does not pay its accounts within a reasonable time. The Auditor-General's recommendation in the report at 9.4 states:

I again recommend the Department ensures Area Health Services pay creditors within agreed payment terms.

I recommend the Department develop a system to monitor the number of contractors who provide personal or professional services and the length of time they have done so.

The committee's recommendation, which we should all support, states:

The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Health develop and publish a management plan to reduce the number of contractors it engages and report on this plan in its Annual Report.

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Health ensures that the review of the Special Purpose and Trust Funds be completed by the Ministry and all Local Health Districts as a matter of urgency.

I am not referring to all the administrative and medical work but perhaps for those who have to perform work such as building, plumbing, painting and so on every effort should be made by members of Parliament as a

committee to ensure that there is a continual watch on the Department of Health because of its inability in the past to pay within a reasonable time a number of contractors who are carrying debts for long periods. I believe the committee is on the right track in ensuring that these reports are published and we look forward to monitoring the situation in the future.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [1.27 p.m.]: As a member of the Public Accounts Committee I make a contribution in regard to the tabling of report No. 4/55. There is no doubt that the Auditor-General must feel a lot of frustration when he is looking at some of the past shortfalls in departments and seeing that nothing has been done to improve the way the departments are transacting and dealing with the disbursement of funds. Some departments basically rely on a continual funding stream from the Government and, for all intents and purposes, do not see the necessity to involve themselves in good accounting practices. If those sorts of practices are allowed to continue there will be major problems with managing government departments.

The committee, under the stewardship of its chairman, is committed to ensuring that we address the recommendations made by the Auditor-General on repeated occasions. The Government is paying good money for the Auditor-General to carry out these audits. As a consequence, if we want to benefit from that expenditure we must follow up and ensure that the departments are implementing the recommendations and improving the way they manage their affairs. I believe that in the future we will see a change in practice, as clearly demonstrated in the recommendations. It does not take much effort to implement a recommendation and improve practices. If the committee is persistent and continues to follow up on the recommendations, we will see an improvement in the management of government revenues.

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

Report noted.

[The Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that the Deputy Premier, the Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, will answer questions for the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, who is absent from the Parliament today. The Minister for Education will answer questions directed to the Minister for Sport and Recreation today, who is also absent from the Parliament.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.17 p.m.]

KOALA PROTECTION

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. Why is the Minister taking the credit for saving koalas in a forest that she has already logged?

The SPEAKER: Order! The House will come to order so that the Minister can answer the question.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Recently the shadow Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Luke Foley, could not go much further than Macquarie Street for his environmental experience. He paraded a koala from the Featherdale Wildlife Park out in the Domain for a photo opportunity—a stunt—to say that koalas should be listed as vulnerable. Of course, koalas were listed as vulnerable in New South Wales in 1992, under a Coalition Government, and have been so listed since.

[Interruption]

Because he would not go out into a natural habitat, the shadow Minister was photographed just outside his office with his mate Macey, the koala, in a cute and cuddly stunt to have the Federal Government list koalas as vulnerable. New South Wales has listed koalas as vulnerable since 1992. As to logging, I know those

opposite do not want to hear about the integrated forestry operations approvals [IFOAs] that they entered into for logging on the South Coast when they were in Government. It is because of the previous Government's agreements that logging has been taking place on the South Coast. As the member for Bega knows, approvals to log the Bermagui forest were entered into during the term of office of the previous Labor Government. The integrated forestry operations approvals have not changed, but what has changed is the New South Wales Government's commitment to ensuring that we have a sustainable forestry industry so that log supply is available, that the right conservation measures are in place to protect koalas that are vulnerable, and that we get the balance right. We must also ensure that we have appropriate funding. Had members opposite read my press release, they would know that it commenced with an acknowledgment of the Federal Government's grant —

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber, particularly from Government members.

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. We asked the Minister why she is claiming credit for protecting koalas when she is allowing their forests to be logged.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I am being absolutely and completely relevant. I am talking about forestry and koalas. There is a way for koalas to coexist by making sure that we have a sustainable forestry industry and that we provide habitat links for them. That is what this funding is about. The first line of my press release—and members opposite would know this had they bothered to read it—acknowledged the Federal Government's grant of \$1.9 million, which was applied for by the New South Wales Government. The funding will do what we set out to do, and that is to identify key koala habitats.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: The funding will ensure that there are linkages between koala habitats and that my colleague and I can map koala habits accurately, in conjunction with Forests NSW.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: We will ensure that we protect koalas and that their habitat is mapped so that forestry commitments can be met. We can do that by making sure that we have the right linkages between national parks, forests and koala habitats. Opposition members should not forget that this is happening during a week when we declared the Dharawal National Park, which has the largest koala habitat of any area closest to Sydney. That is on top of an additional \$700,000 committed by the New South Wales Government for koala recovery actions in April 2012 and other commitments. Forestry agreements have been underway since the term of the previous Government.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Wollongong and the member for Drummoyne will cease their discussions across the Chamber.

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Only recently have Opposition members discovered koalas—but not in their natural habitat. The Opposition brought a koala from the Featherdale Wildlife Park to the Domain. Poor Macey was out the back of Parliament with the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, the Hon. Luke Foley, being used as a media stunt. Members should not forget that the actions we have taken are on top of the \$700,000 State Government funding and the \$400,000 additional funding.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have asked for conversations to cease. The start to question time today has been extremely noisy.

Mr Clayton Barr: It is Thursday.

The SPEAKER: Order! Regardless of whether it is Thursday, Wednesday or Sunday, members will be heard in silence. I remind members that under new Sessional Order 249A the Speaker has the right to remove members, without previously placing them on three calls to order, if they continually interject or behave in an unruly manner. If necessary, I will have members removed from the Chamber. If that is what members want on their record that is what they will get.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Mr ANDREW FRASER: My question is directed to the Premier. What will be the impact on services and projects if an additional \$2.3 billion has to be found by New South Wales following the Federal Government's decision to shirk its Pacific Highway responsibilities?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question. He is well-known in this House as an advocate of the Coffs Harbour electorate and, in relation to upgrades of the Pacific Highway, as someone who at times takes such matters into his own hands. I say to members of the Jamberoo Croquet Club that what we are about to see is a bit of a bisque. I thank Mr Malcolm Ward for visiting this House today because I know that the member for Kiama is keen to disprove those terrible things that Labor says about him in the corridors—things that we wear as badges of honour when we upset Labor. We are delighted to see Mr Ward in the gallery.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am pleased to inform the House of the impact of the Federal Government's incredible and unfair decision to renege on the Pacific Highway funding deal that has been in place since 2009. If allowed, that reneging will require New South Wales taxpayers to stump up another \$2.3 billion for the project.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As the only regional representative of Labor in this Chamber, I would have thought that the member for Cessnock would understand the importance of country highways as much as people who live in Jamberoo are concerned about the Princes Highway.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: No matter which way we want to say it—\$2.3 billion or \$2,300 million—that is a large amount. It is easy for the Federal Government to tell New South Wales taxpayers to cough up funding for the Pacific Highway. It is easy because of the Federal Government's ability to raise revenue compared to the State's ability to raise revenue when we talk about a proportion of roughly 80:20. It is easy because 80 per cent of all revenue that is raised in Australia is raised by the Federal Government and 20 per cent is raised by the States. It is easy because since 2007 the Federal Government has consistently denied New South Wales taxpayers and communities across the State a fair share of the infrastructure funding that has been put on the table. It is important for citizens of the State to understand the impact of the latest Federal Government demands. We are not dealing with credit cards or amounts that can be put on a credit card while someone else looks after it. This is not the Craig Thompson approach to economics.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah, the member for Monaro and the member for Wyong will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This is money that New South Wales taxpayers will have to find should this deal stand, despite the fact that in 2009 the Federal Government, along with the then roads Minister, who is sitting opposite, and the then transport Minister, who is now no longer a member of Parliament, agreed to an 80:20 funding split on the Pacific Highway.

Mr Michael Daley: Not true, and you know it.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: He says, "Not true." He put out a press release in March 2009 welcoming the deal.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The memorandum of understanding he signed originally had an 83:17 funding share. I admit that a few months later the ratio was changed—to an 80:20 funding deal, with the

Federal Government to provide 80 per cent of the funding and the State Government to provide 20 per cent of the funding. In our first budget we put \$468 million on the table to ensure that we brought our funding up to the 20 per cent that was required. What sorts of projects will be jeopardised if this deal stands and we have to find \$2.3 billion? Projects long promised on the Princes Highway would be jeopardised. Projects on the Great Western Highway would be jeopardised. Projects on the Newell Highway would be jeopardised.

The long-awaited upgrade of Camden Valley Way, which is currently being duplicated at a cost of \$220 million, would be jeopardised. The \$55 million Erskine Park link road, of interest to members in western Sydney, would be jeopardised. The Windsor Bridge upgrade would be jeopardised. The \$60 million Shortland to Sandgate section of the Newcastle inner city bypass would have to be put on hold. As I said yesterday, there are consequences for roads across the State. There are consequences for rail too. Mr Ward, who is in the gallery, would be interested to hear that the new \$39 million Flinders station would be threatened. The \$11 million transport interchange at Sutherland, the \$14 million upgrade of Cardiff station and the \$4.4 million upgrade of the Thames Street wharf in Balmain would be put in doubt.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The sum of \$2.3 billion would swallow the \$1.2 billion being put aside by this Government to deliver an oyster card—the electronic ticketing system that was promised by those opposite during their 16 years in office but was never delivered. It is still being jeopardised by Federal Labor and the refusal of State Labor to stand up in the face of this assault on New South Wales taxpayers. [*Extension of time granted.*]

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Having to find \$2.3 billion would have a devastating impact upon our ability to deliver health services, especially given that in the Federal budget on Tuesday night it was also revealed that New South Wales would get \$5 billion less in GST revenue over the next four years. That is, \$2.3 billion taken off the table for the Pacific Highway and a \$5 billion drop in GST revenue.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I ask the Health spokesman opposite what projects does Labor want cancelled. Is it the \$300 million upgrade to Blacktown and Mt Druitt hospitals? Is it the \$139 million Campbelltown Hospital upgrade or the \$125 million we set aside for the new northern beaches hospital—a promise made by those opposite but not delivered? Or is the \$35 million upgrade of the St George Hospital emergency department? That \$2.3 billion has to be found, not out of thin air but out of the programs, services or projects that this Government is either committed to or wants to get on and deliver to communities across the State. Are Federal and State Labor seriously suggesting that we take money from funds used to employ the additional 550 police we were committed to delivering in our first term of office? Are they seriously suggesting that we do away with the \$130 million earmarked for new police stations and upgrades to existing police stations, or the \$180 million that is being set aside to assist people in rent crisis? It is time those opposite stood up for New South Wales and took the fight to their Federal colleagues.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber unrelated to the business before the House. Members who wish to engage in private conversations should do so outside the Chamber. I am having difficulty hearing the Premier and Ministers answering questions, and the questions being asked.

NATIVE VEGETATION REGULATIONS

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. She has stated on numerous occasions that a draft native vegetation regulation would be released in January this year. Given that it is now May, where is the draft regulation and when will it be released?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Had the member been listening—but, of course, she does not listen and nor can she read—when the member for Northern Tablelands asked me questions yesterday about the native vegetation regulation review, she would have heard me say that the matter will be going to Cabinet shortly. We have been consulting broadly and widely. We have been consulting with environment groups and farmers,

making sure that we get the native vegetation balance right, making sure that there is a clear understanding of what is needed to get the balance right, what it is that will allow farmers to get on with the business of farming, and making sure that regulations are such that farmers can take some control themselves, understand the rules and work with the catchment management authority to understand what works in their farming practices—

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I was going to look up the word "idiot" but I do not need to. There is one over there on the Opposition benches.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: We are making sure that farmers understand what farming practices are balanced with the environment. We have been out there with the environment groups—and this is the thing that the Opposition cannot cope with. The environment groups are prepared to work with us and with farmers in New South Wales to get outcomes to ensure that farming is undertaken with the right regulations and practices. We have been consulting and we will be putting the matter to Cabinet shortly. It will go out for another 10 weeks of consultation until we get it right—until the balance is right, until farmers understand what they can do, and until catchment management authorities have the right tools to navigate with, so that we end up with a good balance that protects and respects the needs of the environment.

TAFE ENTERPRISE AGREEMENTS

Mr GREG APLIN: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. What are the results of the first TAFE enterprise agreements under Fair Work Australia covering TAFE teachers and other TAFE educational staff?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I place on record the overwhelming support of every member of this Parliament for TAFE institutes and particularly TAFE staff across New South Wales. It is with much pleasure that I announce today the results of the Fair Work Australia ballot that was undertaken over the past seven days in response to a renegotiated award in New South Wales.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Why did you make them wait five months?

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Because negotiations have taken place as part of this. This is what we put to the staff. We love democracy. Under Fair Work Australia there is a balance. Previously there had to be an agreement between the union and the Government. This ballot went to the grassroots—TAFE teachers. It related to a guarantee of existing conditions in the enterprise agreements—that is those that were previously covered by a State award. Members will recall that not long ago they voted on legislation to place TAFE teachers under a Federal award—a position those opposite changed a number of years ago—so we shifted the employment conditions under the State award into their new enterprise agreement.

There was also a 2.5 per cent pay increase provided under the State Government's legislation—this was the subject of the question we put to them in this ballot—and the backdating of salary increases to begin on 6 January this year. I am pleased to say that when the ballot closed last night the percentage of yes votes cast for the agreement ranged from 93.5 per cent to 100 per cent. That is an overwhelming endorsement of the negotiations conducted in good faith by the two unions involved and TAFE New South Wales for this new enterprise agreement.

Ms Linda Burney: How many people voted?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Are you going to try to discredit the result by suggesting that not enough people voted? That is an insult to TAFE teachers. Every TAFE teacher had the opportunity to vote to endorse this agreement.

The SPEAKER: Order! Again, there is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Between 93.5 per cent and 100 per cent of teachers supported the—

Dr Andrew McDonald: What's the number? Is that 15 out of 16?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: What was that?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members had their opportunity to ask questions. This is not the opportunity for the member for Macquarie Fields.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I acknowledge the Australian Education Union, New South Wales branch, for encouraging the yes vote. Its letter stated:

Your union, the AEU NSW branch, strongly urges you to participate in the voting process and to vote yes for your proposed agreement.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: The strength of the union.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: What was that?

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Strength of union. The letter then deals with the actual issues raised in the agreement. We have had a great relationship with the Australian Education Union on this matter and I commend its participation. The other union involved was the Community and Public Sector Union. This is a great result: TAFE teachers making a decision about what they want in their enterprise agreement. This flies in the face of the scare campaign run by the Opposition when we changed the legislation a few months ago. The member for Marrickville said in that debate:

If the enterprise agreement is not finalised within 12 months, TAFE staff may fall back to the Federal modern award for post-education services, which could result in a substantial reduction in salary and conditions for many TAFE employees.

Mr John Robertson: A statement of fact.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We negotiated in good faith and I made a number of undertakings in my second reading speech and speech in reply. Those opposite ran the scare campaign and voted against the legislation. We did everything we said we would do, including giving salary increases. Those opposite were telling TAFE teachers not to believe any of it because there would be cuts to salaries. In fact, there is a 2.5 per cent salary increase. The inflation rate came down last week: Sydney's consumer price index is 1.6 per cent and statewide it is 2.1 per cent. The TAFE teachers received a salary increase above the consumer price index. I acknowledge New South Wales TAFE teachers and the unions involved for their assistance. [*Time expired.*]

NSW SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

Ms CHERIE BURTON: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. Will the Minister guarantee today that she will not in any way dilute the independence of the Scientific Committee established under the Threatened Species Conservation Act?

The SPEAKER: Order! I did not hear the question.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: Don't treat me like the way you treat police.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Kogarah will repeat the question. I did not hear a word of it because of the level of noise coming from the Government benches.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: My question is directed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. Will the Minister guarantee today that she will not in any way dilute the independence of the Scientific Committee established under the Threatened Species Conservation Act?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: The question was difficult to hear. I thank the member for reading it again. She needed to do that because she has no idea about the Scientific Committee. The question was prepared for her. Recently, we advertised four positions on the Scientific Committee and filled them, as well as the chair's position. We have been working cooperatively and productively with the Scientific Committee. If we had any

plans at all to disband it, we would have done so. We have no plans. We would not have advertised the positions and we would not have filled the chair's position if we planned to disband the committee. The question is just more scaremongering.

BOARDING HOUSE ACCOMMODATION

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: My question is addressed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. What action is the Government taking to protect vulnerable people in boarding houses?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Strathfield for his serious question. For 10 years the New South Wales Ombudsman has handed down one damning report after another into the experiences of some of our most vulnerable boarding house residents. Unfortunately, in some circumstances people with mental illness or with disability, those living on the poverty line if not below and, of course, international students have been subjected to psychological or even physical abuse in some of the State's boarding houses. We have had coronial inquests and confidential Ombudsman inquiries into numerous boarding houses. Last year the Government took action against one boarding house in the Central West by relocating some 45 people with disability who were subjected to unacceptable conditions.

We have taken this serious reform to get balance between maintaining sustainability and viability of the boarding house industry in this State and providing appropriate protections for some of the most vulnerable in our community. Homelessness NSW today described this reform as historic. The reform was informed by work the member for Ryde undertook concerning students, the Minister for Fair Trading, the Minister for Local Government, the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care to make sure that we strike the correct balance. The reforms announced today will also be informed by a consultation process over the winter recess. The Government is in the process of finalising exposure draft legislation that will inform that consultation process over the winter recess and the bill will be introduced to Parliament in the spring session.

The bill will focus on a number of key areas, including occupancy rights for residents; a registration process for the unlicensed sector in this State, which totals almost 600 boarding houses of which we are aware—no doubt there are more; and also strengthening the provisions that govern the current licensed sector, which is administered by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. We recognise also that the current penalties under the Youth and Community Services Act are hopelessly inadequate in deterring unscrupulous operators from doing the wrong thing. For this reason we will toughen the penalties significantly. Certainly, we will toughen penalties regarding registration.

The registration process will result in boarding houses registering with the Office of Fair Trading, which will inform local government to ensure that boarding houses comply with the appropriate regulations and compliance requirements. We will also enshrine through the proposed legislation occupancy rights for vulnerable residents. We do not want to overburden the regulation on small business, but requiring operators to produce a receipt when a boarder makes a rent payment and requiring a boarding house to give appropriate notification regarding rent increases or to adhere to standards of cleanliness and the like is critical and important. As part of the reform we also will strengthen powers of entry.

I acknowledge the many advocates and community organisations that have pushed for this long-overdue reform. Too many reviews have been held into this industry and too much time has been wasted. As a result, some serious circumstances have arisen for some of our most vulnerable in the community. In fact, this week the State Coroner will hand down a finding into six deaths in a Marrickville boarding house. The O'Farrell Government is taking this action, which has been welcomed by Homelessness NSW as an historic review. We look forward to working with those community organisations and the boarding house industry throughout the course of the winter recess of Parliament to strengthen legislation and make sure that we protect the most vulnerable in the community.

VOLGREN BUS CONTRACT

Ms SONIA HORNER: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. In light of reports that 11 workers are set to lose their jobs at the Volgren bus-building plant at Tomago, will the Government guarantee today to continue the rollout of 100 buses a year, giving Volgren certainty and preventing further job losses in the Hunter?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Wallsend for her question. I confirm that Volgren has advised that it intends to commence staff reduction at its Tomago bus-building site. I want to make this point very clear: the previous Government chose to bring forward bus orders for future years just before the last election. Those opposite have serious questions to answer about how its promises in the dying days of its governance have impacted the private sector and the community. There are two things that the private sector needs—certainty and consistency. I am pleased to remind the House of some facts on this issue.

In December 2008 Volgren and Volvo were awarded a contract for 150 new articulated buses for the State Transit Authority. The Tomago factory was constructed following the award of this contract. Regrettably, the blatant political move by those opposite prior to the last election created what is described as a market bubble. Knee-jerk reactions at the height of election campaigns are bad for industry and, regrettably, we are seeing their impact on the bus manufacturing industry. I am pleased to say that under this Government the demand is "more normal"—a term we use because we are proceeding at a measured pace.

Ms Linda Burney: What about on time?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: You might learn something if you stay quiet.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: In answer to the member's question, I am pleased to advise that in the 2011-12 budget 216 new buses were funded by this Government. The Government has established a procurement panel within Transport for NSW which is taking a responsible approach to bus procurement. This is what industry is asking the Government to do: take a responsible approach that provides certainty and consistency for the private sector. Getting value for money is important—something the previous Government was not interested in and showed no competency with. I am pleased to state on the record that Volgren was successful in the bus panel tender process and was awarded one of 10 contracts as a prime bus supplier for the next three years. Volgren was also approved as a subcontractor bus body supply option with four other prime suppliers.

Volgren supplies new buses, as I am sure those opposite would know, via production plants in Tomago in New South Wales, Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane. The Tomago bus plant was first officially opened in March 2010, and I am pleased that Volgren is continuing to make a contribution to the sector in New South Wales. Unlike those opposite, the Government will be upfront and honest about what it can deliver. The Government will provide certainty and consistency for the private sector. The Government will not make knee-jerk announcements at the height of election campaigns that have an adverse impact on the private sector. The Government will continue to work with industry to deliver the services that people throughout the State expect. I also add in relation to buses that those opposite, when in government, slashed 1,500 weekly bus services.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Opposition tried to play catch-up in the dying days of the election campaign and did not care about the impact it would have on the industry.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Opposition does not know how business works and does not appreciate the consequences of government decisions on the private sector. The Government will continue to work with the private sector to ensure there is a steady stream of supply and consistency in our approach to the private sector—unlike those opposite who caused unnecessary angst to sections of the bus industry and others throughout New South Wales.

FORESTS NSW

Mr TROY GRANT: My question is directed to the Minister for Primary Industries and Minister for Small Business. What is the Government doing to secure the future of forestry in New South Wales?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I thank the Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources and member for Dubbo for his important question, which relates to an important industry in New South Wales. Since coming into office, the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has looked closely at the performance of

Forests NSW, as well as the State's overall forestry industry. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government wants to make sure it is a viable, long-term viable industry that meets our needs for timber and sustains employment. The Government is conscious of maintaining the environmental and recreational value of our forests and a balanced approach. The timber industry in New South Wales is facing a great deal of problems: a weak housing market; a high Australian dollar; and high harvest and haulage costs. Combined, these issues create a difficult business environment.

I am pleased to announce three initiatives that will underpin the future of our timber industries: the corporatisation of Forests NSW; a review of the North Coast timber supply; and a long overdue review of the integrated forestry operations approvals. Under the former Government, which harboured ambitions to corporatise Forests NSW, this Government is getting on with the job of essential reform. The Government will establish Forests NSW as a State-owned corporation under the State Owned Corporations Act 1989. This decision is about improving the governance structure of Forests NSW so that it can focus on its core business and deliver better results for the people of New South Wales. It is not about privatisation because Forests NSW, which this Government inherited from that lot opposite, is in no condition to be privatised. The corporatised Forests NSW will remain publicly owned and the nature of its business will not change.

Last year, in the long final days of that lot opposite, KPMG undertook a detailed evaluation of Forests NSW and concluded that its governance and potential could be significantly improved by turning it into a State-owned corporation. There are a few important points to make clear. All timber supply commitments under existing wood supply agreements will be transferred to the new State-owned corporation and will continue to be underwritten by the Government. The corporatisation of Forests NSW will have no impact on the New South Wales Government's commitments under the Regional Forest Agreements. The Government also recognises the importance of Forests NSW to the environment, to existing recreational uses and to the very important role that Forests NSW plays in firefighting. All those roles will be performed by the new State-owned corporation. There will be no change in Forests NSW's relationship with local government.

All employees at the time of transition will move across to the new corporation and carry over their entitlements. A new corporate board will bring a tighter customer service focus, comprehensive environmental compliance, and a level of transparency which is long overdue. It will ensure that the politicisation that plagued this industry under the former Government will be ended. No longer will Ministers have the discretion to interfere in the commercial operations of this organisation—even if they are reliant on The Greens preferences, as we saw time and again under the former Government. This Government will ensure that important commitments under the Regional Forest Agreements will continue to be met and environmental benefits realised.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I will clarify a report in yesterday's *Sydney Morning Herald* about the regulatory oversight aspect. That report was incorrect; it has since been corrected. The fact is there will be no reduction in the regulatory oversight of Forests NSW in this corporatisation process. The Environment Protection Authority has a strong record of closely monitoring Forests NSW and it will continue to maintain a very active program. The Government is well aware of the timber supply issues on the North Coast. In 2003 the previous Government put the North Coast timber industry and its workers in a highly precarious position by signing 20-year wood supply agreements after removing thousands upon thousands of hectares of working forests over and above what had been reserved under the regional forests agreements. We all remember those days. The events that occurred at the time are very concerning; they have eroded confidence in the industry to invest, exposed our forests to increased harvesting pressures and potentially cost New South Wales taxpayers millions of dollars. Forests NSW and the industry, its workers and our communities have battled ever since.

Mr TROY GRANT: Given the serious nature of this matter, could the Minister provide further information?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: This Government will formally assess the situation in a review of the North Coast timber supply up to and beyond 2023. Anyone on the Opposition side who has dealt with this issue would understand the seriousness of the matter I am talking about. A steering committee has been established, involving the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Treasury, Department of Trade and Investment, Forests NSW and the Environment Protection Authority. The aim is to develop a blueprint for a sustainable and profitable native and plantation hardwood industry on the North Coast. There will also be a review of the integrated forestry operations approvals.

Forestry activities in New South Wales are governed by more than 70 separate regulatory instruments. Many are within the integrated forestry operations approvals that cover most native forest harvesting activities. The steering committee will also review coastal region integrated forestry operations approvals. I look forward to the drafting of a bill to formally establish a State-owned corporation for the management of State forests. We are making this announcement very early in the piece to facilitate full and open dialogue with staff, unions and local government authorities so that everyone fully understands the concept behind the corporatisation of Forests NSW and the reason we need to proceed down this path. This is in the interests of securing a long-term, viable timber supply for the citizens of New South Wales.

KINGS CROSS LATE-NIGHT TRANSPORT SERVICES

Ms CLOVER MOORE: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. As the recent police car pursuit in Darlinghurst Road, which tragically ended in a shooting, again highlighted the problem of thousands of young people in Kings Cross on the weekends, can the Minister extend train services throughout the night and remove legislative barriers that prevent private operators running late-night shuttle buses so these young people have transport when they need to get home?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for her question. To the extent that it covers responsibility in my portfolio, I am pleased to advise the member that the State Government has increased the number of Night Rider bus services available once regular train services stop. We are certainly looking at further extension of those services; and I was really pleased to make that announcement in October last year. From reports that I have received, that program is going very well. In further response to the member's question, we are looking at options to move people more quickly from that part of Sydney to other parts of Sydney. This Government cares about extending front-line services, especially late at night, and that is why we were pleased before the election to make commitments in relation to Night Rider bus services from the Sydney central business district, especially to south-west, north-west and western Sydney. Many commuters who now benefit from those services previously did not.

Again I put on record that Transport for NSW is considering other options related to movement of commuters during those times. This is, of course, in stark contrast to what happened under the former Labor Government. We know that it took hundreds of rail services and hundreds of bus services off the network. We understand and appreciate that especially young people who work and go out socially in the central business district need that transport home. That is why we will continue to work with the City of Sydney in relation to these matters. In fact, I understand our respective officers have had a number of conversations in this regard and those conversations will continue. I acknowledge the contribution that the City of Sydney made to our long-term Transport Master Plan, which looks at these issues in the medium and longer term as well.

COMPANION ANIMALS WELFARE

Mr BART BASSETT: My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. What action is the Government taking to reduce the euthanasia rates of dogs and cats in New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease making their predictable comments on the euthanasia of dogs and cats. The Minister has the call.

Mr DONALD PAGE: I thank the member for Londonderry for his question and I acknowledge his strong interest in companion animal welfare. Despite the noise in the Chamber, I am sure all members will be depressed to learn that in the past five years more than 150,000 dogs and cats have been euthanased in pounds across New South Wales. That is 15,000 dogs and 17,000 cats put down at pounds each year, largely due to the failure of individuals to be caring and responsible pet owners. Having said that, I acknowledge that there are many organisations and individuals who rescue animals on death row, and I commend their efforts. We as a community should deliver the message loud and clear that pet ownership is a serious responsibility. Pet owners need to understand the cost of and work involved in having a pet and ensure that their pets are microchipped, registered with the local council and desexed.

I am very concerned about the numbers of dogs and cats being euthanased, as is my colleague the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson. This Government believes there is a real need to further investigate why so many companion animals are being euthanased. I am concerned also about the proliferation of puppy farms, established to mass produce huge numbers of popular breeds and designer crossbred dogs. These places operate on a factory principle: to push out to market as many dogs as possible,

with little regard for the welfare of either the adult dogs or the puppies they produce. That is why a Companion Animal Taskforce has been established by the Minister for Primary Industries and me to look at this important issue.

The task force is chaired by the member for Charlestown, Andrew Cornwell, an experienced veterinary surgeon. It is doing an excellent job, and I thank Andrew for the job he is doing. The task force reflects the Government's commitment to focus on poor pet breeding practices, such as puppy farms, to increase microchipping and desexing and to crack down on poor pet practices to reduce the number of unwanted cats and dogs. The task force members are people who care deeply for pets, and are well placed to inform the Government on pet breeding, pet care and other related issues. They include the RSPCA, the Animal Welfare League NSW and the Cat Protection Society, as well as other groups.

Recently the Minister for Primary Industries and I released the task force discussion paper. It should invite healthy dialogue on matters pertaining to pet welfare. Some of the key issues in the discussion paper include: the introduction of a breeder licensing system and enforcement of the Breeding Code of Practice; a consistent approach to standards for approval of commercial breeders, boarding and shelter premises; mandatory listing of a breeder number on all cat and dog advertisements, and guidelines on advertising and sale of cats and dogs; removal of the existing two-step microchipping and registration process, allowing rebates for owners who desex their animals within three months of registration; and establishing a minimum qualification requirements for pet shop, breeding and pound staff.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would have thought Opposition members would take this subject a little more seriously. Those who are not interested will remove themselves from the Chamber, before I remove them. I refer in particular to the member for Toongabbie.

Mr DONALD PAGE: It is in the member's area, western Sydney, that we have the biggest problems; so the member should be listening. I continue with some of the key issues included in the discussion paper: review barriers to cat and dog ownership in rental and strata-title housing; introduce measures to encourage the confinement of cats to their owners' property, to reduce unwanted litters of kittens and reduce the impact of cats on wildlife; and develop a community-wide, socially responsible pet ownership education campaign. The task force is a clear sign of how seriously we take issues affecting our companion animal friends and animal welfare generally. We are determined to ensure problems are highlighted, investigated and resolved in the most effective way possible.

The task force, led by Mr Cornwell, will travel around New South Wales to hold community consultations that will discuss the issues that the task force is examining. It is our collective responsibility on behalf of a civilised, developed society to take a stand on unnecessary animal euthanasia, cruel breeding practices and other unacceptable human actions. I am sure all members share my concern that an average of 15,000 dogs and 17,000 cats are being euthanased each year in this State and regard that as unacceptable. I look forward to receiving the recommendations of the task force as soon as they are available. Submissions on the discussion paper will be accepted until the close of business on 1 July 2012. I encourage all interested parties to provide feedback to the task force so that we can improve companion animal welfare and reduce the unacceptably high level of euthanased dogs and cats in this State.

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

PETITIONS

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

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Pets on Public Transport

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

Pet Shops

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, 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**.

Animals Performing in Circuses

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

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

Public Safety

Petition requesting a review of the government policy on public safety, an increased police and security presence on late-night transport, and the implementation of measures to prevent public safety incidents, received from **Mr John Robertson**.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AMENDMENT (INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATIONS) BILL 2012

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 9 May 2012

No. 1 Page 3, schedule 1 [3], line 7. Omit "section 290B or 290D". Insert instead "Division 11 of Part 4 of Chapter 5".

No. 2 Pages 3–5, schedule 1 [3], line 21 on page 3 to line 24 on page 5. Omit all words on those lines.

No. 3 Page 6, schedule 1 [3]. Insert after line 14:

(3) Interim appointment of administrator

If an application is made under this section, the Commission may, by order made no later than 3 months after the commencement of this section, appoint an administrator for the organisation the subject of the application if it is of the opinion that:

- (a) it is likely that the basis for a declaration under this section will be established by the application, and
- (b) it is in the interests of members of the organisation or in the interests of justice that an administrator be appointed pending the determination of the application.

(4) If the Commission fails to make an order under subsection (3) in relation to the appointment of an administrator for the organisation within 28 days of an application for a declaration under subsection (1), the Minister may exercise the functions of the Commission under this section with respect to the appointment of an administrator if the Minister is of the opinion that:

- (a) it is likely that the basis for a declaration will be established by the application for the declaration or if a declaration has been made by the Commission, and
- (b) it is in the interests of the members of the organisation or in the interests of justice that an administrator be appointed pending the approval of a scheme under this section.

To avoid doubt, a decision of the Minister under this section may be subject to judicial review by the Supreme Court.

(5) An administrator appointed under subsection (3) or (4) has, during the term of office of the administrator and to the exclusion of any other person, the function of the conduct and management of the affairs of the organisation or such of those functions as may be specified in the order.

(6) An administrator appointed under subsection (3) or (4) holds office until the application under this section is determined or for such shorter term as the Commission may, by order, specify.

(7) If an administrator is appointed under subsection (3) or (4), any office holders of the organisation are suspended from office for the term of the administration.

No. 4 Page 6, schedule 1 [3]. Insert after line 29:

- (5) Despite any other provision of this section, in any order made under this section the Commission may direct that specified officers are to remain as officers of the organisation or a branch of the organisation for the purposes of giving effect to any scheme or other action taken under this section or of enabling the organisation to function effectively.

No. 5 Page 7, schedule 1 [3], lines 14–21. Omit all words on those lines.

No. 6 Page 8, schedule 1 [3], lines 30–35. Omit all words on those lines.

No. 7 Page 8, schedule 1 [3], line 37. Omit "section 290B or 290D". Insert instead "this Division".

No. 8 Page 9, schedule 1 [3], line 11. Omit "section 290B, 290D or 290G". Insert instead "this Division".

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.12 p.m.]: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendments.

In the other place last night a number of amendments to this bill were proposed and passed. The principal concerns of the non-government parties have focused on the powers proposed to be conferred on the Minister for Finance and Services under proposed section 290B. As was explained to the Legislative Assembly in the second reading speech, this was a power intended to expedite the appointment of an administrator and the establishment of a scheme where the issues are serious and urgent, such as in the current case of the Health Services Union. It was not intended to be a power used lightly, and the threshold and attendant review mechanisms via the Supreme Court recognised that. The amendments passed in the other place remove these provisions and replace them with a process which the Government believes will be less expeditious than that originally envisaged.

However, in the interests of addressing the very real and pressing issues now faced by Health Services Union members in this State, the Government has decided to accept the amendments passed in the other place. As I foreshadowed a moment ago, the principal effect of these amendments is to remove the Minister's powers to appoint an administrator of a registered organisation and initiate a scheme for the conduct and management of that organisation, as proposed in section 290B. The amendments excise that proposed section as well the accompanying section 290C, which provided for Supreme Court review of any ministerial action taken pursuant to section 290B. Instead the amendments augment the powers of the Industrial Relations Commission under proposed section 290D by providing for the making of an interim order to appoint an administrator if there has been an application for a declaration by the commission of dysfunction, misconduct or vacancy of offices under that section.

An interim appointment of an administrator can be made if the commission concludes, first, that it is likely that the basis for a declaration will be established by the application and, secondly, that it is in the interests of members of the organisation or in the interests of justice that the administrator be so appointed. Further, the amendments provide that, where the commission fails to make an order with respect to an interim administrator within 28 days of the application for a section 290D declaration, the Minister may appoint an interim administrator. The interim administrator's appointment will terminate when the commission makes a decision to refuse or approve the main application. Importantly, these amendments have a three-month time limit on their existence.

That is, appointments of interim administrators and/or the Minister's assumption of the power to appoint an administrator in the manner just described, will cease to have effect three months after the commencement of these provisions. Thus, these powers are effectively limited to a time frame that will expedite intervention in the Health Services Union matter only. The commission's powers under section 290D have been further amended to permit that specified officers may remain in office in the event that a scheme is put in place. Obviously, these changes also necessitate a number of minor consequential amendments which I will not detail here. In conclusion, the Government believes that while these amendments do not provide the optimal means of dealing with this issue, they provide a means of addressing the very serious and urgent problems besetting Health Services Union members in New South Wales. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [3.16 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the consideration of the Legislative Council amendments to the Industrial Relations Amendment (Industrial Organisations) Bill 2012. I agree with the proposition that is before the House. The most obvious point to make about the Legislative Council amendments is that they allow an administrator to be appointed in relation to the Health

Services Union. There was certainly never any difficulty from our side of the House about that happening; the difficulty we had was that there was a bit of overreach in that a provision that gave extraordinary power to a Minister designed to deal with the Health Services Union was able to be applied in a range of other areas.

It was an extraordinary power with, frankly, not much check on it. In this way, the immediate issue of the Health Services Union is resolved. In addition, the broader power of the Industrial Relations Commission is maintained, as originally proposed in the bill. That is a sensible resolution to the issue. It allows the administrator of the Health Services Union to be appointed without a lot of additional damage being done in unintended and unforeseen ways by giving extraordinary power to the executive in a situation where it was not necessary. The Opposition commends the amendments to the House.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—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.

FIREARMS AMENDMENT (AMMUNITION CONTROL) BILL 2012

Second Reading

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.18 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

As this bill was introduced in the other place on 15 February 2012 and is in the same form, the second reading speech appears at pages 8404 and 8405 of the *Hansard* for that day. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [3.19 p.m.]: The objects of the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 are to amend the Firearms Act 1996 as follows:

- (a) to prevent the sale of ammunition by a licensed firearms dealer to a shooter unless the purchaser is the registered owner of, or has a permit to acquire, a firearm that takes the ammunition (in addition to the existing requirement that the purchaser must hold a licence or permit for a firearm that takes the ammunition),
- (b) to require licensed firearms dealers to keep records of purchases and sales of ammunition.

The rationale behind this legislation is well known to the House and to the people of New South Wales. Over the past 12 years we have seen an escalation of drive-by shootings and crimes involving firearms. In 1998 a report to Parliament addressed the need for change. Since that time firearm offences have escalated, particularly in western Sydney. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government introduced a suite of measures to try to stop gun crime and drive-by shootings. The Government introduced amendments to the consorting laws to toughen up those laws and to make it easier for police to obtain convictions relating to those offences. The Government has amended the gang laws and increased penalties for crimes with guns. Through the Commissioner of Police the Government has established a police task force that has achieved over 560 charges this year alone.

Last night's news informed us that yesterday two more teenagers were arrested and charged with firearms offences relating to a drive-by shooting at an innocent person's home. It is because of the Government's resourcing and confidence in our police officers that they are achieving results. The Crime Commission is now working with police, so there is a two-pronged approach to attacking organised crime, bikkie gang members and other criminals committing these offences. Yesterday the Government introduced the tattoo parlours law which will enable the Department of Fair Trading to work with police and the Crime Commission in an attack on the hip pockets of bikkie gangs. There is more than one way to skin a cat. We can lock up criminals under the consorting and gang laws or we can wage an attack on their hip pockets and hit them where it really hurts. The Government is giving police more powers and making it easier for them to prove offences.

Government members have stood by police officers and told them that we have confidence in them. No matter what is said by members opposite about the Government not doing enough, the police know that we back

them and are proud of their achievements in fighting these crimes. This bill is another piece of legislation in a suite of legislation to make life harder for organised criminals. The Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research said that from October 2006 to September 2007 there were 161 unlawfully discharged firearm offences and 73 discharged firearms into premises, making a total of 234. From October 2007 to September 2008 the numbers for these offences were 149 and 78, making a total of 227. When Labor was in government between October 2008 and September 2009 there were 149 unlawfully discharged firearm offences and 102 discharge firearms into premises offences, making a total of 251. From October 2009 to September 2010 there were 125 and 73, making a total of 198. From October 2010 to September 2011, there were 152 offences of unlawfully discharge firearm and 88 cases of discharge firearm into a dwelling, making a total of 240. It is clear that this has been a long-term problem but it is a problem that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is addressing.

The Government is looking also at improving the resources of police and will increase the number of police by 550 in this term of government. A total of 150 additional officers have already been delivered. It was great that in December last year regional New South Wales, which was screaming out for more police, got the majority of that year's class of probationers. Likewise, it is great that the vast majority of the most recent graduates have been stationed in western Sydney. There are two main areas that concern The Nationals. The first is primary producers and the importance of firearms as their tools of trade, and the second is legitimate gun owners, sporting shooters and gun clubs in regional New South Wales. We are fighting for our constituents. We have had a number of consultations and we have highlighted a number of issues. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

For example, the purchase of ammunition for use in firearms registered to an employer such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service or primary producers has been raised with the Minister and the Hon. Rick Colless, The Nationals spokesman on firearms. As a result, a committee has been appointed to look at those issues. The Minister and the Hon. Rick Colless spoke with stakeholders which led to regulations being introduced relating to private producers, employers and employees to enable a permit to be issued so that an employee, spouse or partner can purchase ammunition. The second cause for concern is about law-abiding firearm owners in regional areas and members of gun clubs and the like.

As a result, a committee will be formed that will comprise members of the NSW Police Registry, the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, The Nationals Parliamentary Secretary for Police, Geoff Provest, NSW Farmers, the Sporting Shooters Association, the NSW Firearms Dealers Association, the Australian Rifle Association, the Amateur Pistol Association, the Game Council, the Antique Collectors Association, the Firearms Safety and Training Council, the New South Wales Rifle Association and the Shooters and Fishers Party. The committee is to consider the issues, establish how the legislation affects small business and legitimate firearms users, and report back with recommendations on regulations that will assist them. People should remember that this legislation will not come into effect until the regulations have been adopted. People who have some concerns may rest assured that the regulations are being examined closely and that stakeholders' views have been conveyed to the committee and their input will be included in the regulations.

As I stated previously, the legislation will not come into effect until the regulations have been adopted. In conclusion, I state that the concerns of constituents, legitimate gun owners, people who are involved in the firearms industry, people who need firearms in their workplace and people who have firearms for legitimate sporting pursuits are being taken into account. The committee will consider all of the concerns that have been expressed. Formulation of the regulations will take input into account. Therefore, people should wait until the regulations are published before they come to a final decision.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [3.29 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 and indicate, despite serious reservations about the quality and substance of the bill, that the Opposition will support it. At the outset, I have to say I have not seen a more monumental failure by The Nationals than this legislation since the Coalition has been in government. The Nationals own constituency has been absolutely pasted by this legislation. The implication is that law-abiding gun owners are involved in drive-by shootings in some of the western suburbs of Sydney. No doubt it is an affront to all law-abiding gun licence holders that The Nationals have failed to represent them in internal party room debates on this legislation. That represents a catastrophic failure by The Nationals whose members should hang their heads in shame as they again confirm their position as the Liberal Party's doormat in the Coalition.

It is not often that I see eye to eye with the Hon. Robert Brown, but when he refers to this bill as a "filthy deal between the Coalition and the Greens to do over the law-abiding firearms owners of this State", he is spot-on. With much fanfare, the Premier advocated the need for this legislation. He had the Commissioner of Police standing next to him when he said that he would wheel in this legislation. He said there was urgency

about it and that we had to get on top of the shootings. That was approximately nine weeks ago. This week the Government was shaken from its torpor by a newspaper article that sparked it into action to get the bill underway and considered by the Parliament. I have not seen a bill that is of more marginal utility than this bill.

The Opposition will support the legislation, but I make the obvious point that the Government can hand out all the restrictions it likes around the purchase of ordnance and ammunition throughout the State and require the production of permits and licences and all the rest of it, but once that ordnance leaves the shop, the Government has no way of tracking it. That is the fundamental flaw in this legislation. The Government has no idea of the quantum or depth of the secondary market in ammunition and ordnance, and that is the fundamental flaw with this legislation and the reason that I believe it will be of marginal utility. Earlier the member for Myall Lakes referred to increased numbers of police. Guess what? A couple of weeks ago, New South Wales was short of 240 police officers. The Government's much-proclaimed 550 new police officers over the course of a four-year term will not keep pace with population growth. To keep pace with population growth and maintain the existing ratios of police to population, the Government will need to employ an additional 800 police officers, but has failed to do that.

The Opposition has significant reservations about this legislation. It does not address the problems that will be caused, for example, when a licensed person who does not already own a firearm of a particular calibre borrows a firearm of the same calibre from a person who is not a member of that person's household, and wishes to purchase ammunition for it; nor does it deal with a person who is driving to a remote property to hunt and offers to bring ammunition for firearms owned by the property owner; nor does it deal with a licensed person who is the parent of a minor and who wishes to purchase ammunition for the child to use in a borrowed firearm that is of a different calibre to any firearm that the parent has registered; nor does it deal with a situation when a licensed person, who chooses not to own a firearm, borrows one for hunting or target shooting.

The legislation does not deal with any real life or practical circumstance that entirely legitimate law-abiding sporting shooters and hunters will have to navigate, now that this ordinary excuse for serious legislation has been introduced. For more than six months the Government failed to amend the laws relating to bkie gangs and the banning of bkie gangs. The Government took action only because of the urging of the Opposition and because of the shootings that took place across western and south-western Sydney day in and day out. The Government, and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services were dragged kicking and screaming to amend the legislation.

The consorting legislation, which was wheeled in by the small-l liberal Attorney General provides exemptions against prosecution for people who are involved in consorting, if they are consorting with a family member or if they are consorting in the operation of a lawful business. Moreover, before a person is charged with the consorting, that person is given a warning. This Government is not fair dinkum about dealing with violence in the streets of Sydney. This is a Government that has let extreme violence drag on for too long. The Government has been shaken from its slumber and, in a retrograde move, has been forced to introduce legislation that is of absolutely marginal utility. The Opposition supports the bill, but it is of marginal utility.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [3.36 p.m.]: The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 will amend the Firearms Act 1996 to implement a series of reforms to further strengthen the regulation of the sale and transfer of firearms ammunition in New South Wales. Gun-related crime must be addressed and our law enforcement agencies will be given additional support to tackle the issue. The member for Toongabbie was quite scathing in his criticism of the bill, yet said the Opposition will support it. I do not believe he can have it both ways. By supporting the bill, he has sent a clear message that the Opposition acknowledges that the bill will have a positive impact on reducing gun crime and will be a benefit to our community. The Coalition has backed, and will continue to back, the NSW Police Force and New South Wales Crime Commission in their dedication to use all available and appropriate resources in combating crimes involving firearms.

With no pun intended, this legislation is not a silver bullet and it is not expected to be. It is one way of assisting by enabling the NSW Police Force to use all available and appropriate resources to combat gun crime. Currently firearms dealers are not required to record transactions in relation to ammunition, even though for commercial reasons records are kept for the sale of firearms, but no distinct records are kept by dealers for sales involving ammunition. My electorate of Camden has a large rural constituency. I am sure that those who own firearms are law-abiding citizens. This bill does not seek to disadvantage appropriately licensed individuals who have genuine reasons for being granted a licence. The majority of firearm owners are responsible people who do the right thing in relation to storing their firearms, storing their ammunition and purchasing their ammunition.

Mr Greg Piper: He is struggling to keep a straight face.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I am not at all. I am happy to repeat that. The majority of firearm owners are responsible people who do the right thing in storing their firearms, storing their ammunition and purchasing their ammunition. This bill is not intended to inconvenience these responsible people but rather is aimed at those who have no regard for the law and those who do not take a responsible approach to firearm ownership. To address this, the bill provides for an exemption to this new requirement for ammunition sold by licensed club armourers to club members for use in firearms registered to the club. However, club armourers will still be required to maintain the same detailed transaction records as any other firearms dealer. Clearly, the majority of people will be members of firearms clubs.

Lately, drive-by shootings seem to be in our news daily and when there are up to six shootings in the space of four days this must be addressed. The Government is addressing this with the best policing available. The Government must support that policing, and one way of doing that is by ensuring that all ammunition sold is recorded. This is another way of supporting our extremely hard working Police Force. Currently it is not necessary that dealers must require an individual to possess a registered firearm for that type of ammunition before selling the individual ammunition. As a result, the ammunition sold could be purchased for any firearm of the same licence category and/or on-sold, possibly falling into the hands of criminals. Clearly, this is not acceptable and provides a potential means for criminals to access ammunition for use in illegally obtained firearms.

Licensed firearm owners are responsible. Recreational shooters and owners of firearms are highly skilled sports men and women. They own, maintain, transport and use firearms for recreation responsibly. Farmers on properties are also highly skilled and responsible users of firearms, and need firearms to support their land and the needs of its inhabitants. I make it very clear that neither I nor the Government has entertained for one minute that licensed shooters are responsible for the spate of drive-by shootings in Sydney. I do believe though that as members of a society that works together to achieve better outcomes for its citizens, we as a Government can implement this legislation to achieve better outcomes.

The public has had enough of the gun crime in New South Wales and it is our responsibility as the lawmakers to address it to make our streets safe again. This bill will mean that unless you are appropriately licensed and own a registered firearm of a particular category that takes a specific type of ammunition, you will not be able to purchase that ammunition from a licensed dealer. While the majority of firearms licensees in New South Wales also own a firearm, a minority do not and that must be addressed. This bill addresses the purchase of ammunition and provides for stricter conditions to address the gun crime that is concerning the communities in which we live. Members of our public should have the confidence that this Government is listening to their concerns.

When he introduced the bill in the upper House, the Minister for Police Emergency Services made some valid points. He said that the bill introduces more stringent measures surrounding the purchase of ammunition, clearly a benefit in combating gun crime. Under these changes only those who should be buying a particular type of ammunition will be able to do so, and a record will be available to assist police as they tackle organised and other gun-related crime. As the Minister stated, this legislation was introduced to assist police as they tackle those crimes. The Government is determined to work with police to limit the potential for criminals to come into possession of ammunition. This legislation will surely have an impact on that.

The police Minister made the point that the NSW Police Force will now work to educate firearms dealers in these changes and will make it a clear, easy process for licensed firearms users to access ammunition. The Government is aware of concerns regarding access to ammunition by primary producers and employees. That is why the Minister tabled a draft regulation to address such concerns and make it absolutely clear that this legislation is not about punishing legitimate shooters. I look forward to those on the other side acknowledging the draft regulation to address their concerns, which makes it abundantly clear that this is not about punishing legitimate shooters. I commend this bill to the House.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [3.46 p.m.]: The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 will require someone to display evidence that he or she owns a particular type of firearm before that person can buy ammunition for it. It also introduces new requirements for firearms dealers to keep records of details of all ammunition-related transactions. This bill is part of the Government's response to the spate of drive-by shootings in Sydney. It says the change will help stop ammunition ending up in the hands of criminals. I first got involved with gun law reform after five of my constituents were gunned down in their homes in Surry Hills at the Northcott estate in 1990. In 1991, I became the Independent representative on the Joint Select Committee upon Gun Law Reform that led to some reforms. I remember hearing dreadful stories of domestic violence involving husbands using guns to threaten their wives and children.

In 1994 Ken Marslew approached the Independents after his son was slain at Jannali and at his request I introduced a bill for a referendum at the 1995 election on the introduction of a registration system and on the banning of guns in homes in urban areas. After the election in 1996 and following the dreadful Port Arthur massacre, I introduced the Firearms Amendment (Community Safety) Bill, which included these reforms as well as a ban on all semiautomatic and military-type weapons in New South Wales. The reforms were consumed in a Government bill that passed and became law. Since then we have seen much watering down of gun control laws. The National Coalition for Gun Control believes that the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill is more a sidestep than a forward step in restoring the necessary controls. It points out that the Firearms Act already restricts the purchase of ammunition to people who hold a licence for that particular type of firearm.

The National Coalition for Gun Control believes that gun reform must urgently address the easy and legal access to semiautomatic handguns that are used in most drive-by shootings because they are easy to hide, and they are light, compact and have high-powered ammunition. I hope the Government looks at ways to do this as well as other reforms that will restrict the amount of ammunition any one person can purchase, and require dealers to notify police if a licence holder purchases a large amount of ammunition. While the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 introduces only a minor additional control, I support it because it will help improve police awareness about ammunition in the community. Firearm and ammunition possession is not a right of an individual; it is a privilege, and for the sake of the community it must be controlled and monitored closely. I point out that gun control is not about ensuring convenience for law abiding shooters, but about protecting the public from criminal and irresponsible firearm use and preventing bloodshed. I support the bill.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [3.49 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak in support of the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012. I acknowledge the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, for his leadership on the issue and note that the Government is taking real action to introduce more stringent measures surrounding the transfer and purchase of ammunition. The Coalition was elected to Government in March 2011 with a commitment to tackle crime. The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 will ensure that the sale of ammunition is better monitored and better controlled. This will make it more difficult for criminals to use illegal weapons. The Government is determined to tackle crime. Last month the Attorney General introduced bills that target organised crime. The Attorney General, and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services are working together closely to ensure that New South Wales residents, and residents in my electorate of Rockdale, not only feel safe and secure in their own homes, but also know that criminals will find it far more difficult to acquire ammunition.

This Government is dedicated to ensuring our law enforcement agencies are fully supported to fight crime. The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 seeks to amend the Firearms Act 1996 so that upon the sale and purchase of ammunition from a licensed firearms dealer, the purchaser must hold and produce a firearms licence and permit/notice of registration for a firearm that takes the ammunition, and the licensed dealer must witness the licence and permit/notice of registration. This ensures that the purchaser of ammunition not only is licensed to use a category of firearm for which the ammunition may be used, but also is the owner of such a firearm. This assists in reducing possible circulation of ammunition for criminal activities. Proposed section 65A in part states:

- (3) This section does not apply to a sale of ammunition by a licensed firearms dealer to another licensed firearms dealer.
- (4) This section does not apply to a sale of ammunition to a member of a shooting club by the club armourer for the club for use at the club in a firearm registered to the club (a *club firearm*).

The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 will ensure that licensed firearms dealers will still have access to the appropriate ammunition that is required for their firearm. Those dealers not licensed will not have access. Under the current Act, licensed firearm dealers are not required to record transactions associated with the sale of ammunition. The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 seeks to amend the Firearms Act 1996 to require firearm dealers to also record transactions in relation to the purchase of ammunition. I shall now outline proposed section 45A. The bill states that the transaction record must contain particulars for each sale of ammunition by the dealer. Proposed section 45A states:

45A Recording of ammunition transactions

- (1) A licensed firearms dealer must keep a record of all sales and purchases of ammunition by the firearms dealer.
- (2) The record must contain the following particulars for each sale of ammunition by the dealer:
 - (a) the name and address of the person (*the buyer*) to whom the ammunition was sold,
 - (b) the number of the buyer's licence or permit for a firearm that takes the ammunition or for a permit that authorises the buyer to purchase the ammunition,

- (c) in the case of a sale of ammunition that is subject to the requirements of section 65A—the number of the relevant notice of registration for a firearm or permit to acquire a firearm that was seen by the dealer at the time of the sale,
 - (d) in the case of a sale of ammunition to a member of a shooting club by the club armourer for the club for use in a club firearm (as referred to in section 65A)—the number of the relevant notice of registration for the club firearm concerned,
 - (e) such other particulars as may be prescribed by the regulations.
- (3) The record must contain the following particulars for each purchase of ammunition by the dealer:
- (a) the name and address of the person from whom the ammunition was purchased,
 - (b) such other particulars as may be prescribed by the regulations.

Proposed section 45A also stipulates that the record of a sale or purchase of ammunition must, subject to the regulations, be made within 24 hours after the sale or purchase. This record must be kept in the form approved by the commissioner. Proposed section 45A of the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 will amend the Firearms Act 1996 to ensure that records of transactions by firearms dealers are detailed and thorough. Further, proposed section 45A (7) states:

- (7) A licensed firearms dealer must, on demand made by a police officer at any time:
- (a) produce to that officer the record kept by the dealer under this section and permit that officer to inspect and make copies of any entries in it, and
 - (b) furnish to that officer any information in the dealer's possession with respect to any ammunition purchased or sold by the dealer.

These amendments are necessary and will ensure that police have much greater access to information relating to the transfer of ammunition. I am confident that the community wants to know that the police can see records of ammunition sales and purchases. I emphasise that this bill is not meant to disadvantage properly licensed individuals—for example, a member of a shooting club. The proposed measures are aimed at stopping criminals possessing ammunition for use in illegal activities. This Government remains committed to tackling crime. The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 achieves this. I know that my constituents in the Rockdale electorate, decent citizens who value law and order, and the security and safety of their families and loved ones, without reservation support this Government's legislation cracking down on crime across New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [3.58 p.m.]: The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 is an Act to amend the Firearms Act 1996 to make further provision for the purchase and sale of ammunition. This ammunition bill is designed to do one thing and one thing only: provide the O'Farrell Government with a 24-hour media headline to disguise its failure to deal with lawlessness in Sydney's suburbs. The desired outcome of this bill is that Barry O'Farrell is seen as doing something when in reality he is doing nothing. This bill is deliberate deceit. The fallout and carnage that will be left in the wake of this O'Farrell headline will be lawfully registered firearm owners and dealers left with thousands of hours of frustration, risk and red tape. When enacted, this bill will require that a person before purchasing ammunition will have to apply for and be granted an ammunition permit. The permit will carry a \$30 fee.

What is not clear from this bill is whether or not a firearms owner will require one permit listing all of the owner's guns or individual permits for individual guns. Given that it is not uncommon for a firearms owner to own 10 or more guns, will the owner be required to apply for a single permit at a cost of \$30 or 10 permits at a cost of \$300? If all the guns are listed on a single permit, will the owner be required to apply for a new permit when purchasing a new gun or disposing of an old one? Will this incur another \$30 fee? Has the Government done any cost projections to determine the extent and scope of gun trading on an annual basis? I would anticipate that the answer to the last question is no. When a person applies for a permit to purchase ammunition the completion of the forms will take the dealer at least 10 minutes—much longer if individual permits are required for each gun. In the Hunter there are 70,000 registered firearms.

If it takes 10 minutes to process each application for an ammunition permit, that equates to 700,000 minutes of work at the shopfront. What happens to the carefully recorded details at the point of application for an ammunition permit—the 700,000 minutes of work? The bill identifies that an ammunition permit can be issued only by the Commissioner of Police. Does the information stay on the premises or is it sent

to the Firearms Registry? If the details of gun owners and their ammunition stock fall into the hands of the criminal element, surely this poses a security risk for families and shop owners across the Hunter. In the Hunter 7,300 families will be at risk because their names, addresses and firearms details will be kept in dozens of stores across the Hunter that have varying levels of security and dealer integrity. What impacts will that have on the security needs of the various dealers and persons who work in these outlets?

Given the ammunition permit application process requires a permit to be authorised by the Commissioner of Police, it is logical to assume that a copy of the permit application will be sent to a central collation point. But that is not clear from the bill. Common sense would tell us that the carefully logged and recorded details at point of sale, the 700,000 minutes worth of work in the Hunter alone, must now be sent to the Firearms Registry. When seeking to solve a crime involving the use of a certain type of firearm, logic tells us that police will view the details from a central point rather than having to visit each and every firearms dealer across the State. The saying, "looking for a needle in a haystack" springs to mind. One problem with the bill is that the sale of individual ammunition—shells and cartridges—will not be recorded in a single place. When a crime is committed with a gun of any type, it will depend on the honesty, willingness and integrity of the dealers to offer that information to police or police will have to inspect the records on a door-to-door basis of every store across the State. Police have to know who purchased the ammunition if the bill is to be effective. But the bill does not provide for that.

If the application for and registration of permits are to take place at a single point, logic would deem that the Firearms Registry should be that single point. Let us recognise that the Firearms Registry has a mail centre, an internal distribution process, an administrative data entry point, a filing and tracking process and even a check and balance process. After it has taken 700,000 minutes at the point of sale in the Hunter alone, let us consider the 10 to 15 minutes of work required for each permit at the Firearms Registry—approximately 700,000 minutes. That equates to 310 weeks of full-time work per year and six full-time employees just to cope with ammunition permits from the Hunter. I pose several questions to the Coalition Government. Has the Government budgeted for this? Is the Government serious about this bill being anything other than a political headline? Can the Government identify an increase in the budget allocation for the Firearms Registry? Does the Government have a staffing recruitment process in place? Has the Government made plans for the installation of additional office infrastructure that reflects an intent to do anything other than make a headline?

Six full-time additional employees will be required to process the permits of the legally registered and law-abiding firearms owners in the Hunter. I must point out that, in fact, they comprise just 10 per cent of gun ownership in New South Wales. Therefore, in reality, 10 times the number of employees is needed: 60 new full-time employees, 60 new desks, 60 new computers and phones, not to mention support networks for staffing of this size, including human resources, occupational health and safety, management and cleaners. I do not believe the Premier can show evidence of this forward planning because I do not believe there is any. This bill is nothing more than a headline for the Government. This bill is a bureaucratic and security bungle that will affect thousands of everyday people for years to come. The impact on the lives of people and businesses will be counted as fallout by the Government and media as it moves beyond the headline of a single day. Premier O'Farrell should try being honest with the people of New South Wales for a change and acknowledge that the Government has no strategy at all.

The Government has no plan to support the small business owners that are faced with the implementation of this bill at the shopfront. The Government has no plan to support the Firearms Registry staff in the administration of this bill. The Government has no budget or understanding of the implications of this bill in any real or practical terms. Section 45A of the bill describes the procedures necessary at the point of sale: paperwork will be done, permits recorded and ammunition sold. As directed in section 45A the firearms dealer must keep a record, including the name and address of the purchaser. To apply this bill to the 70,000 registered firearms in the Hunter and accepting that the owners of the 70,000 firearms purchase ammunition only once per year—some will be more and some will be less—that will create 70,000 records of purchase.

Each record contains a name and address. The 70,000 transactions would take at least five minutes each, creating 350,000 minutes of work to sell ammunition for each firearm once a year. Who will pay small business owners for that time? The 350,000 minutes of work will be in addition to the 700,000 minutes of work they have already done to complete the ammunition permit, totalling more than one million minutes of work each year for the business owners in the Hunter to enact this bill. That is 16,667 hours of work. That raises further questions that need to be answered by the Government. Given that the details must be kept in a form approved by the commissioner, who will design and provide this format? Who will pay for this format development?

Will the business owner wear the cost of this new red tape? The work does not end there because there is no intent in this bill to send the ammunition sale details to any single central point. When there is a gun crime it will be up to the police to visit each point of sale or to put out a call to the general public asking for gun dealers to come forward with information. Will the police make a public plea to ammunition dealers? How will it work? Who will review and check the data? It seems that the Government expects the business owner to do it. On top of the one million minutes worth of work in selling the ammunition, the business owner will spend countless hours working through sales details to find the information required by police—if they can actually be bothered.

Surely the result of the thousands of hours of work, millions of minutes, would now be the ability to track and follow the use and disposal of the ammunition purchased? The answer is no. The owners of the ammunition have no means or method to register the use and disposal of ammunition. The Government has no means and no method to track the ammunition. The police have no means and no method to track the sale of the ammunition. What was achieved by the millions of minutes of work by the Hunter businesses? The answer is nothing was achieved. Let us be clear: there is absolutely no way to track the use of the bullets. Did the purchaser of the ammunition go shooting five times or 50 times? Did they hit the target with every shot or miss seven out of eight shots? Did they go shooting with friends and share the ammunition? Do they have a kangaroo plague on their property or do they shoot at cans and bottles?

There is no way to track the use of ammunition. The ammunition purchased may be 1,000 shells one day, followed by another 1,000 shells the next week, followed by 5,000 shells the next day and then nothing for nine months. Who has the ability, the means, the authority, the resources, the budget, the funds or even the technology to track it? The answer to all these questions is no-one. As a result of this legislation there is no way to measure, control or track the ammunition that has been painstakingly registered at the point of sale, at the expense of the small business owner. What does this bill achieve? The end result is this: Barry O'Farrell wants to be able to say to the media and the terrorized families of Sydney that he has done something about crime. The Premier may even claim, as he often does, to be tough on crime, when in reality this bill is nothing more than a hollow and empty headline. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

If protecting families is the desired outcome of this bill, how does that align with the families now at risk because they own a firearm and have their name and address registered with businesses across the State? What about their safety? The Premier will be aware of the hunt for Malcolm Naden in bushland to the north of the Hunter. Malcolm Naden was the State's "most wanted" fugitive with more than \$10 million spent on his pursuit and capture. In his bid to evade police, Malcolm Naden repeatedly broke into rural residences and stole firearms and ammunition. In the future, under this legislation, this same ammunition will be in much more plentiful supply if shooters buy in bulk. Why will shooters suddenly buy in bulk? They will buy ammunition in bulk because they will not want to be troubled with this whole process at the point of purchase. That is the direct feedback we have received from the law-abiding firearms fraternity.

The Government might move an amendment to alter the legislation so that ammunition cannot be purchased in bulk. Apart from frustrating everyone involved in this new process, as well as increasing security risk through the greater exchange of and access to personal details of firearms owners, the Government totally fails to recognise the legal and lawful uses of firearms by particular pistol shooters. Pistol shooting is a test of precision. Bullets vary in their response to being fired. At times pistol shooters will find a source of ammunition, a bullet, that suits their needs very nicely and reacts well with their weapon. When they do, they will buy in massive bulk an entire batch of bullets. I am certain that many members of this House would not realise that bullets are made in batches. In a new run or new batch of bullets there are minute differences, but those differences are significant enough to change the way a bullet fires from a gun. Buying an entire batch offers a pistol shooter predictability, and in competition that is essential.

I note in the regulation accompanying the bill an allowance for primary producers under clause 69A (2) (a). I have a newsflash for the Premier: bikie gangs, which are the source of much of the shooting problems in Sydney's south west, own and purchase rural properties and farms. They do so in order to conduct their business away from prying eyes. It is not the case that they might purchase rural properties to get around the legislation, it is the case that they already do. They have done so for decades and will do so in the future. Under this legislation, those in the business of primary production, that is, farmers, rural property owners and bikies, will be allowed permits to purchase ammunition, as will people from "the same household", as stated in the regulation. I ask with my tongue firmly in my cheek: Can any member of this House imagine a scenario where bikie gangs might share a residence and lodgings? The people whose behaviours the Government is hoping to address through this legislation will be given allowances and exemptions in the very same legislation. It is farcical.

Another consequence of the bill will be the heightened need for ammunition permits and firearms ownership to be accurately recorded. To that end, I offer the following account from a resident of Cessnock about an event that happened as recently as Anzac Day 2012 and is currently the subject of correspondence to the Minister for Police. Police arrived at this constituent's residence to check the storage and security of firearms, as per existing laws. The paperwork in the possession of the police contained 12 errors about the owner's firearms. I repeat: 12 errors. The constituent was able to show the police every single registration and acknowledgement of registration through all the correct processes. Yet the police paperwork, which was made available through the Firearms Registry, carried 12 errors—old guns had been sold, new guns had been purchased and the information was not right for a three-year period.

If the information stored and recorded by the Firearms Registry is not completely accurate, it will pose an incredible headache for all those attempting to work through this process in the sale and purchase of ammunition. What effect will this bill have on the manufacture of ammunition in homes and work sheds across the State? Nil. Thousands of law-abiding firearms owners manufacture their own ammunition because it is cheaper to do so. This bill does not contain any measures to deal with the sale and purchase of the necessary items to manufacture ammunition. As such, a vast array of home-made ammunition, on top of the legally purchased ammunition, on top of the illegally imported ammunition, will be untraceable.

If the Premier were serious—and by now we all know that he is not—this bill would include measures to ensure that every single bullet that was sold could be tracked. Every single bullet would have a fingerprint, barcode or nano identity. I agree that it would quadruple the work of the registry and the shopfront, it would increase to ridiculous levels the need for research and development and the production of ammunition, and it would increase enormously the cost of ammunition. But it would actually achieve something. This bill is deliberately deceitful. Every time the Premier speaks on this issue people know that he is not being honest with them. This bill will provide all the ammunition the people of New South Wales need to get rid of the O'Farrell Government.

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [4.15 p.m.]: During the past months drive-by shootings and gun-related violence have dominated the news. Indeed, gun-related violence has, on occasions, dominated question time in this House. Based upon reports, it would appear that in most instances this type of crime has been undertaken by persons using illegally obtained guns and ammunition. The community is rightly concerned about the apparent escalation in gun-related violence. The community and average mums and dads rightly expect this Government to do all within its power to restrict the availability of illegal guns and ammunition. The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 has been introduced in this House on behalf of the Hon. Michael Gallacher, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, to restrict the availability of ammunition by requiring, among other things, licensed firearms dealers to keep a record of all transactions involving ammunition.

The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 is an ambitious piece of legislation and the Government is to be applauded for taking steps to address crime within this State. The community rightly expects this Government to do all within its power to restrict the availability of illegal guns and ammunition. However, it must be borne in mind that our community is not just made up of average mums and dads. Our community is not just made up of criminals, people who use guns and ammunition for illegal purposes. Our community is diverse and is made up of many different groups. Our community includes legitimate gun users such as members of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia, farmers, hunters and target shooters. Those members of our community are licensed, law-abiding shooters who also have an expectation that they can go about their legitimate business just as all other law-abiding citizens do.

While it is right for this Government to take steps to ensure the peace, safety and wellbeing of its citizens, the harsh reality is that criminals do not care about the law. Criminals do not obey the law. Criminals do not, as a general rule, use registered firearms when committing crimes. Criminals are not interested in public safety and criminals will not be deterred by the provisions of the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012. Notwithstanding the best intentions of this Government, I fear that this bill will miss its target and gun-related crime will continue unaffected and undeterred. During the past month I have received many emails, letters and telephone calls from constituents about this bill. I also have received letters from the executive director and president of the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia.

Everyone who has written to me has expressed the same concerns regarding the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012. For the sake of brevity, I will not recite chapter and verse what they said because I am sure that all members of this Chamber have received similar correspondence. I have written to the

Hon. Michael Gallacher to express the concerns of my constituents. Within that letter I asked the Minister to give consideration to introducing legislation that will get illegal guns and ammunition off our streets. I want to make it very clear that I support Minister Gallacher and the police officers of New South Wales. I sincerely believe that under the direction of the Minister great strides have been made over the past 12 months to address the community's concerns about violent crime, and I have no doubt that during the next three years even greater strides will be made.

I look forward to discussing my concerns directly with the Minister. In saying that, I acknowledge that in the past 18 months many gun-related crimes and shootings have occurred. I listened to the member for Cessnock express concern about the cost of this measure; he said it completely missed the target. Something more must be done to address gun crime. I think the Minister and the Government are trying to address the problem. We can do without this lawlessness. I believe tougher measures are required. We read only a month or so ago that guns were being imported into Australia through post offices. Guns are not the whole problem; without ammunition they do not work. So licensing controls on ammunition will help. Some target shooters buy component parts to make their own ammunition. The Government needs to do more to get the guns off the streets, and placing controls on ammunition sales is a step in the right direction. Many members have spoken about guns, and I hope they know what they are talking about. However, many guns are of a different calibre and the bullets for them must be of that same calibre. There is a specific bullet for a specific gun, whether that is a .38 or .45, or, in rifles, a .22, .272, .303, .308 or .30-30. There are guns all over the place.

Mr Greg Piper: If I see you in a dark alley, I'm running; you know your numbers.

Mr GLENN BROOKES: I also know my guns. Laws must be in place to stop criminals from making or getting hold of ammunition. This bill is one step forward, but a lot more needs to be done to get guns off our streets. Shooters, people who use guns for recreation and farmers need these weapons because things happen in the bush. If a cow or a horse breaks its leg, it is quicker and more humane for a farmer or shooter to put a bullet in it. I am sorry, but that is the reality; it is best to put the animal down there and then. People in the bush need to have a gun for their protection. This country has a lot of deadly snakes. It is usually quicker and safer to shoot a snake, and a lot of people in the bush do that. This Government is taking good steps to address gun crimes and shootings by controlling the sale of ammunition. I believe it will find further ways to get guns off our streets.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [4.23 p.m.]: I speak against the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012. Let me say at the outset that I feel I am out of my comfort zone in doing so because my opposition to the bill might be taken as ostensible support for shooters per se. I am probably about as comfortable in speaking against the bill as a member of The Nationals would be attending a fundraiser held by The Greens. But sometimes, when presented with a bit of legislation such as this—which is really just abject nonsense—you have to stand up and say something about it. The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 is abject nonsense. The bill needs to be denounced because it is a piece of troublesome trivia. It will do nothing except annoy the law-abiding shooters that members on the Government side have been speaking in favour of. Yet those members have no problem supporting this piece of nuisance legislation.

The member for Drummoyne probably would be interested in a more significant piece of legislation—a bill that I commend to the Government as being just as effective. It is a bill that I was talking to the member for Keira about: the navel fluff regulation bill 2012. That would be just about as useful in controlling crime as will the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012. This bill confuses the issue. I give credit to the Government for the good work that it has done to improve law and order—up until this point. This bill fails the test and diminishes the good work that the Government has been doing in law and order. Its new laws on consorting and gun controls, and its crackdown on organised crime and outlaw motorcycle gangs are all supportable. This bill does not deserve support. My office has received numerous complaints about the bill. I suspect there are fewer shooters in my electorate than there are in the electorates of the member for Cessnock and the members of The Nationals in this House.

Mr Gareth Ward: Good members.

Mr GREG PIPER: Good members of The Nationals in this House.

Mr Gareth Ward: Name them.

Mr GREG PIPER: The member for Murray-Darling. If you want a good one, that is it. Some of my constituents have raised very valid concerns about this bill. I have always passed on to the relevant Minister the

concerns raised by my constituents, and I passed on to the Minister constituent complaints about this bill. I have received replies to those representations. I am not sure whether it is by design—maybe they were honest attempts to answer the questions—but the responses appear to be evasive. Without argument, they are abject nonsense. I asked a direct question about how ammunition can be traced. The reply I got clarified absolutely nothing; it said the sale would be recorded. That sounds great. But whatever sales records are required to be kept—whether handwritten or typed—police checks of those records will not help officers one iota in trying to establish who bought the ammunition that forensic evidence says was fired from a weapon. On the other hand, sales records when brought together produce a wonderful catalogue of ammunition purchases that would be useful to criminals who might be planning to rob a gun store—heaven forbid! I mean, that has never happened before.

Mr Tim Owen: If they rob a gun store, wouldn't they take a gun, not just bullets?

Mr GREG PIPER: If these ammunition sales records fall into the hands of criminal elements, they will then have a shopping catalogue showing them where law-abiding constituents keep their weapons. Perhaps that catalogue will be a tradeable commodity. But knowing where people purchased ammunition will not help police solve gun crimes. The reality is that ammunition sales would be helpful only if the bullet fired from a gun used in a crime could be identified as having been obtained from a particular source. This bill is a major impost on shooters who have a category of shooters licence that enables them to borrow from others weapons of different calibres but within the shooter's licence category.

If the shooter is not licensed to have that particular weapon, under this bill he or she will not be able to acquire ammunition for it. This really is nonsensical legislation. As was suggested by the member for Cessnock, I believe people will be stockpiling ammunition to avoid the difficulties posed by this bill in acquiring ammunition. I listened to what Government members said in debate and I have to say their contributions were most uninspiring. Their hearts were not in what they said. If they did believe what they were saying, they are sadly deluded about the benefits of this bill. The Commissioner for Police was quoted in the press as having said:

I could never understand why if you owned a shotgun, you could go and buy ammunition for a pistol.

I agree with the commissioner. I have been advised that because shotguns are category A firearms, or in some special cases category B firearms, it is not possible for an owner to buy pistol ammunition anyway. One must have a category H licence to do that. If that is true, it brings into question any perceived benefits of this bill. The Government has had a good record over the past few months of addressing violent crime and drive-by shootings. The criticisms voiced by the Opposition have been most unfair because it had 16 years to address this issue but did not. However, the Government does itself no credit with this piece of legislative fluff.

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

TAMWORTH CRIME AND ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [4.31 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to lead in this discussion about a petition signed by 18,600 people dealing with crime and antisocial behaviour in the Tamworth community. I sincerely thank those who took the time to sign the petition and who triggered this discussion. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Tamworth Regional Council Deputy Mayor Russell Webb, Councillor Juanita Wilson, Councillor Helen Tickle, Councillor Warren Woodley and Councillor Phil Betts, and I have an apology from Mayor Col Murray. I also acknowledge those following the discussion in Tamworth this afternoon.

The petition covers eight areas of concern. I will address those relating to the portfolio of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, MLC, and the member for Penrith will address the issues that relate to the Attorney General's portfolio. The first point in the petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to take immediate action to increase permanent police numbers in Tamworth. Since December last year 21 new police officers have been allocated to the Oxley Local Area Command, which is a record allocation. The latest batch of probationary constables, who arrived on Monday, are now on the beat with their colleagues and driving down crime. Consideration is also being given to transferring more officers to permanent status.

The petition also calls on the Legislative Assembly to release immediately the "Parsons Report into Policing Resources in the Western Region". The New South Wales Government will respond to the recommendations in that report following consideration and advice from the Commissioner of Police, which is due later this month. Work has been done already on a workforce allocation model to ensure that police officers are allocated to the areas of most need—that is, regional New South Wales. Crime prevention strategies are also being developed with Housing NSW and the Homes North Community Housing Company to address relocation issues. A proactive approach is also being taken to utilising the dog squad and the air wing, and engaging in selected operations to target drugs and firearms. I am pleased to say that bicycle patrols have also been reinstated. I witnessed that firsthand one Friday night recently when I joined police officers on a shift.

The NSW Police Force has a statewide strategy to convert its radio network to digital. I take this opportunity to announce that in the interim it will roll out mobile computer-aided despatch capability to the Oxley Local Area Command. That new technology will reduce voice traffic and the ability to monitor information using digital scanners. The expected time frame for that rollout is August this year. I thank the Tamworth community, the 18,600 people who took the time to sign the petition and the 1,000-odd people who attended the Tamworth Town Hall meeting in December last year. That was people power at work. I am proud to say that the community of Tamworth has rallied against antisocial behaviour and alcohol-related crime.

I firmly believe that the law and order issues we face can be solved. However, we must work together as a community, and we will. This is not only about police numbers. Tamworth, like any other great regional city in this great State, is suffering. Wagga Wagga, Albury, Orange, Dubbo, Bathurst and Armidale are confronting similar problems. We need to do more than lock up people or move them on. Our communities and the Government must stand together and support each other to make the changes that will ensure that our streets and homes are safe again. This petition signed by 18,600 people is testament that something must be done, and this Government is doing it. The allocation of 21 new police officers to the local area command is a good start, and the Government will increase that number. I again thank the great community of Tamworth, which I am very proud to represent. We stand together as one in our efforts to decrease crime and to make our streets safe again. Our local police officers are continuing the good work of the late Senior Constable David Rixon.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [4.36 p.m.]: I join the member for Tamworth in congratulating the people of his electorate who signed this petition. His passion about this issue was evident in his contribution and many members share his frustration. As well intentioned as he is, the member for Tamworth failed to mention one of the key reasons that crime is a problem in New South Wales. When this Government came to power in March last year 17 out of 17 crime category incident levels were stable or falling. Today, only 12 of those categories are stable—that is, five categories are worsening. The Attorney General has released 1,500 people from jail in the past 12 months. So there are now 1,500 fewer people in jail than when the Coalition came to power.

We have an Attorney General who, as quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* earlier this year, "wants to encourage the use of more noncustodial and community-based sentences as a viable alternative to incarceration." According to that article, on this Attorney General's watch the jail population has fallen from about 11,000 to about 9,500. As well motivated as the member for Tamworth is, unless crooks are caught and incarcerated they will remain on the streets causing havoc, whether they are in Tamworth or anywhere else in New South Wales. The Government has made great play of the 550 police officers it intends to put into the community over the next four years. The problem is that that number does not keep pace with population growth. To do so, we would need another 800 police officers. Therefore, in real terms we will have fewer police officers per head of population at the end of this Government's term in office.

In addition, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services said recently that the NSW Police Force, which is the fourth largest force in the world, will be utilised at only 90 per cent of its operational strength. Of course, this Government inherited that force from the Labor Government. The methodology for reporting police numbers in local area commands will also be changed. The people of Tamworth who are concerned about crime will no longer be able to establish how many police officers they have or whether the number is over or under establishment. That is a death strike to transparency with regard to police numbers and reporting in New South Wales. The petition calls on the Legislative Assembly to take immediate action to increase the permanent police numbers in Tamworth. Of course the Opposition supports that call.

The petition also calls on the House to develop and enact a victims compensation scheme funded by offenders. I would be happy to hear from the people of Tamworth their views on the inadequacies or otherwise of the extinct victims compensation scheme. The petition also calls on the House to provide legislative

protection for home occupiers who defend their property. We all have sympathy with the motivation behind that call. The law does provide some protection for victims using reasonable force, and that issue needs to be tested. We would be happy to discuss that issue. I have received representations from other residents of Tamworth urging me to avoid going down that path. One such representation states:

By amending the current standards in criminal and tort law relating to defending one's property this could lead to offenders being unnecessarily injured when victims take the law into their own hands.

That is a fair and valid point and a balance needs to be struck. The fourth request in the petition is to immediately release the Parson's report. No-one could argue with that. The fifth request in the petition is to review the Young Offenders Act and the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act to include penalties for parents of young offenders. All members are disturbed when young children wander the streets at night and we wonder what their parents are doing. The difficulty arises in the practical application of that penalty. Which parent is arrested, with what are the parents charged, and would that have a deleterious effect on the kids, many of whom are faced with complex and difficult circumstances? I would approach such a provision with some trepidation.

The correspondence I have received from some of the locals in Tamworth suggests that charging the parents of young offenders is unrealistic as children come from a number of backgrounds. Many children who come into contact with the juvenile justice system have been placed in foster care from a young age as a consequence of abuse or other issues and clearly there would be practical implications if we were to apply such penalties. However, I do not think anyone questions the motivation behind the suggestion. The sixth request in the petition is that magistrates be held accountable for sentences. On occasions we all become frustrated with the perceived inadequacies of sentencing. I simply note that there are appropriate appeal mechanisms in the event that people believe a magistrate did not get it right. [*Time expired.*]

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [4.41 p.m.]: I support my colleague the member for Tamworth who presented a petition from more than 18,000 people in the Tamworth electorate. Issues relating to antisocial behaviour exist right across this State. In my electorate of Penrith some of the concerns that have been raised in the petition are raised with me on a regular basis. It is fair to say that Government members are united in addressing antisocial behaviour. Touching on some of the points that are listed in the petition, it is worth noting that a victim compensation scheme funded by offenders, as noted by the member for Toongabbie, currently exists. Section 78 of the Victims Support and Rehabilitation Act imposes a compensation levy on people who are convicted by New South Wales courts. The New South Wales Victims Compensation Tribunal recovers up to \$4 million a year in restitution from convicted offenders. The third point in the petition relates to providing protection under the legislation for home occupiers to rightly defend their property. A number of sections in existing legislation address that issue and, given the time constraints, I will refer to only a few. Section 418 (1) of the Crimes Act provides:

- (1) A person is not criminally responsible for an offence if the person carries out the conduct constituting the offence in self-defence.

That is a relevant point. If there are other matters that petitioners would like to raise concerning that issue I strongly encourage them to engage with the member for Tamworth and the Attorney General. The review of the Young Offenders Act is currently underway. More than 55 submissions have been received—a number from regional New South Wales—and I note that a submission from Tamworth Regional Council is included in that number. One of the issues raised in the submissions is whether penalties should be imposed on the parents of young offenders—an issue that is being considered as part of the review. The report on the review is being finalised and is due to be released in the coming months. I am sure that many people in Tamworth and right across New South Wales will be interested in the findings of that review and in how this Government will implement those findings.

Earlier today in question time a question was asked about the introduction of night patrol bus services to assist in transporting people to their homes. Moving people out of locations late at night is an issue of concern to many people. Tamworth Regional Council has the option of working in partnership with the Department of the Attorney General and Justice to develop a crime prevention plan and, most importantly, it is eligible to apply for up to \$50,000 per annum to implement such strategies. I strongly encourage Tamworth Regional Council to take up that option and to work with the Attorney General to develop such strategies, including a strategy for removing people from locations late at night.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [4.44 p.m.]: I am pleased to join my colleague the member for Tamworth in acknowledging the community concern that has been expressed in a petition

containing the signatures of 18,600 petitioners, which is a significant number. I acknowledge and welcome the leadership of Tamworth Regional Council and the member for Tamworth in bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I also acknowledge and welcome the comments of the member for Tamworth relating to increased police numbers in Tamworth, which was recently announced. Police numbers and resources are important in the New England area. I do not think any regional command should ever be short of numbers as it reduces high visibility policing in the community. Given that the member for Tamworth and I share a police command, it also takes police away from smaller communities such as Walcha. We want to ensure that every community has a significant police presence.

The broader community welcomes the increased police strength in Tamworth as no-one should have to live in fear. It is necessary for the Government to keep local area commands, in particular in the western region, at authorised strength or above. I acknowledge that the member for Dubbo, a former serving police officer in the New England area, was a sergeant at Tenterfield. Police in regional areas do not have the back-up services that are available in metropolitan areas and they are always called upon to perform additional duties—an issue to which the member for Dubbo referred this morning—which brings to the fore the whole question of managing juvenile crime. It is widely acknowledged that early intervention strategies are most effective at preventing antisocial behaviour and criminality when young people are engaged at high school—at a time when they are most likely to drop out of the education system.

It is clear that we must deal firmly with repeat offenders. In communities such as Armidale we are particularly fortunate as a number of initiatives such as circle sentencing, youth conduct orders and the review of the Young Offenders Act are making a difference and have proved effective in pre-empting the flow of young people into the criminal justice system. The BackTrack program won support because Bernie Shakeshaft and those who run that youth program ensure that young people who have been on the wrong side of the law gain the confidence to participate once again in their communities. Those are the sorts of initiatives that are needed in the New England area. I commend the member for Tamworth and his constituents for standing up and for addressing this issue.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I take this opportunity to congratulate the Tamworth Regional Council on being here today and pursuing this issue along with the very hardworking member for Tamworth. Thank you for bringing this petition to the attention of the House.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GUNNING AND DALTON WATER SUPPLY

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [4.50 p.m.]: I am delighted to be able to advise the House today that the Gunning and Dalton water supply is to be secured thanks to funding to the tune of \$10.8 million made up of funding from the Commonwealth of \$5.4 million—and we are very grateful to the Commonwealth for that funding—\$1.1 million from the Upper Lachlan Council and \$4.3 million from the New South Wales Government. The residents of Gunning and Dalton have not had a good quality water supply for many years and over the past few months the residents of Gunning have had to endure water which could only be described as a thin, brown sludge. Gunning is a small village located just off the Hume Highway, about half an hour's drive from Yass and half an hour's drive from Goulburn—a little bit longer from Canberra but easily commutable. It has a population of around 500 and it is growing gradually as more people seek to enjoy the fantastic country lifestyle that the area offers.

Dalton is an even smaller village with a population of less than 200, located just to the north-west of Gunning. Gunning and Dalton have a strong sense of community and offer a perfect country lifestyle, with one notable exception: Both communities have had problems with the quality of their water supply stretching back several decades. Gunning's water supply is drawn from the bed of the nearby Lachlan River. Its drinking water has never been particularly palatable, but usually it meets the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. The Dalton water supply comes from two groundwater bores located in the village. The water hardly ever complies with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines. The council has sought to address these water quality issues for some time, but was working also on water supplies for Taralga, Gunning, Crookwell and Dalton, bores for the villages of Bigga and Binda, the Collector water and sewerage strategy and the Gunning sewer extension.

Each of these projects was of roughly equal priority for the council. By February 2010 the council had started preliminary work on the construction of an off-stream storage dam to address Gunning's problem. It also began preparing an application for funding support from the New South Wales Government. This application was submitted in October 2010 and included a 14-kilometre pipeline to Dalton to address the water quality problems. At that time I wrote and spoke to the former Minister for Water, Mr Phil Costa, and strongly urged him to support council's application. I also arranged and attended an early December meeting between council and Minister Costa. The Minister undertook to consider favourably the council's request, as he did with many things but, sadly, as was so often the case, the funding never eventuated.

In early 2011 council sought a Strengthening Basin Communities grant from the Federal Government. The Federal member for Hume supported council's request and wrote a letter of support and a commitment for \$7.3 million was obtained from Federal water Minister Tony Burke. This funding was contingent, however, on the New South Wales Government providing 50 per cent of the project cost. The Federal funding was approved based on a widerranging proposal by council, including upgrades for the Crookwell water supply and irrigation improvements. This project proved too expensive because of the poor state in which the New South Wales finances, and in particular the water budget, had been left by the former Government. The offer of Federal funding was to expire on 30 June 2011, but council obtained an extension of this deadline to 31 December 2011.

The Country Towns Water Supply and Sewerage Program would normally fund this project but, sadly, the former Government closed the scheme to new applications in 2004, so 123 projects were left unfunded. The good mayor of the Upper Lachlan council, John Shaw, and his good general manager, John Bell, asked for a meeting with me and we met on 4 June. They wanted to discuss the State funding for this project in my capacity as the Minister for Water. Funding proved quite difficult. On 19 December I wrote to Minister Burke asking for a further extension of the deadline for Commonwealth funding. I also wrote to and met with AGL, which is proposing to build a gas-fired power station near Dalton, seeking a community contribution towards this project, but that contribution was not forthcoming.

I am grateful to Minister Burke, who was very understanding and who kindly agreed to a further deadline extension to 30 April 2012. Then nature intervened and massively increased the urgency of finding a solution to this problem. Heavy rains significantly increased the flow of water in the Lachlan River, scouring away a layer of sand that had acted as a natural filter. The long and short of it all is that eventually, on Tuesday 24 April, an expenditure review committee meeting of the New South Wales Cabinet approved the State Government's contribution. Shortly after, on 26 April, the Deputy Premier formally announced the funding. It is a great relief to the communities of Gunning and Dalton and I express my deep gratitude to all those who made this funding possible. [*Time expired.*]

ISRAEL INDEPENDENCE DAY

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.55 p.m.]: As chair of the New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Israel, co-chair of the New South Wales Government Jewish Ministerial Consultative Committee and the member of Parliament proudly representing the electorate with the largest Jewish community in New South Wales, today I acknowledge the important occasion of Israel's sixty-fourth Independence Day celebrated on 26 April 2012. Yom Ha'atzmaut, which means Independence Day, is celebrated annually on the anniversary of the establishment of the State of Israel. It is a celebration of the renewal of the Jewish state in the land of Israel—the birthplace of the Jewish people. Yom Ha'atzmaut, which is a national holiday in Israel, is celebrated by the Jewish community around the world. Sixty-four years ago, on 14 May 1948, Israel proclaimed its independence and the new Jewish state—the State of Israel—was formally established. In 1948 there were just 800,000 people living in Israel.

Today the population stands at over 7.8 million, according to the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. In 1948 there was only one city in Israel with more than 100,000 residents—Tel Aviv-Yafo. Today 14 cities have more than 100,000 residents, and six of those cities have more than 200,000 residents. Israel is a recognised commercial and intellectual powerhouse. It also is an economic innovator from which we have much to learn in New South Wales. The day preceding Israel's Independence Day—Remembrance Day—is devoted to the memory of those who gave their lives for the achievement of Israel's independence and its continued existence. On this day, the people of Israel remember and express gratitude to their sons and daughters who made the ultimate sacrifice with their lives. Having these two days together is intended to remind people of the price paid for their precious independence. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's message this year reminded us of the link between the two days. He said:

... it underscores the fact that our dear ones who fell in Israel's wars did not fall in vain. Thanks to them, the State arose. Thanks to them, the State of Israel will continue to develop and prosper, and thanks to them the members of the younger generation will also be able to live their lives in security and tranquillity.

The people of Australia and Israel share a deep historical bond, which perhaps is not widely understood. At least eight Jewish petty criminals were amongst those on the convict cargo of the First Fleet to New South Wales. Jewish people were among the first to arrive in Australia, which means that the community integrated in this State from that first landing all those years ago. Our continued close relations remain strong because of the very active Jewish community in Australia and the considerable people-to-people, industry, academic and cultural links that we share.

In 1949 Australia formally established diplomatic relations with Israel. The Australian Embassy in Tel Aviv and the Israeli Embassy in Canberra opened that same year and Australia was the first country to vote in favour of the 1947 United Nations partition resolution. The recent turmoil in the Middle East has left Israel as the only true democracy in the region in a very difficult environment. I first visited Israel when I was 23 years of age, which was a long time ago. I stayed just outside Tel Aviv in Petach Tikva with an Israeli family and I vividly remember looking out from the apartment towards the West Bank and only then really appreciating how close some of the threats were to the security of Israel.

First and foremost, Israel has the right to live in peace and security and to get on with the task of long-term economic development, as indeed peace and security should be extended to its neighbours. The cultural, spiritual, intellectual and professional life of communities across New South Wales, and indeed across Australia, is far richer because of the significant contribution that the Jewish community offers in all aspects of its community. In my electorate of Vacluse, where the largest and most diverse Jewish community of New South Wales resides, I see this contribution daily. I acknowledge the work of the community, including the work of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies—the official elected representative body of the community—under the dedicated leadership of the President, Yair Miller, and Chief Executive Officer, Vic Alhadeff, who are well known to members of Parliament. I believe that the Jewish community punches above its weight in its broad contribution to community—it is an exemplar in that regard.

I look forward to working alongside all the members of the community in my roles as member for Vacluse, the chair of the New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Israel, which was established in March and launched by the Israeli ambassador, and as co-chair of the New South Wales Government Jewish Ministerial Consultative Committee. The re-establishment of the consultative committee is important. Ultimately, Australia and New South Wales will stand together alongside democratic nations such as Israel. We are close friends; we have a shared history and the same goals for a prosperous and safe future. Mazel Tov to the Israeli and Jewish community. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

TRIBUTE TO KATHRYN GAZZARD

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.00 p.m.]: I pay tribute to the life of Kathryn Gazzard who passed away on 3 April 2012. Kath fought a tough battle with cancer and was only 65 years old when she died. Her loss is felt by many in our community. Kath was a vital, courageous, generous person whose life was characterised by service to others. She followed in her mother's footsteps and completed her general nursing certificate at St Joseph's in Auburn where she made lifelong friends. She had a lifelong association with the Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of Mercy, starting as a five-year-old at a boarding school with the Sisters of Mercy in the lovely little town of Carcour in Central West New South Wales and completing her schooling with the Sisters of Mercy in Parramatta and Bathurst. She had a strong faith, which was her source of sustenance and propelled her into action and the service of others.

In 2003, when working in palliative care with the St Joseph's Aged Care Assessment Team, Kath came up with the concept of Pets of Older Persons, or POOPs as it is better known. She realised how important pets were to the elderly due to the companionship and impetus to exercise they provided and the way they enabled the elderly to stay in their own homes for longer. She recognised that pets are particularly important for those who are socially isolated. Kath approached St Joseph's and the RSPCA. A partnership was established and Pets of Older Persons was born. Kath was the key to its success and was known for her hard work and commitment to the cause.

The program assists the elderly in caring for their pets in their homes and also provides emergency boarding and home stays for pets when their elderly owners are admitted to hospital. This allows owners to focus on their medical needs without fretting about their much-loved pets. It is a practical and important service. As Kath used to point out, Pets of Older Persons was as much about human welfare as it was of animal welfare. I am glad that she was recognised for her work when she won the Dr Mags Award from the RSPCA. The Pets of

Older Persons program is not government funded and relies on donations and fundraising. Kath spent a lot of time fundraising and ensuring the program got the support it needed. I know that much will be given to Pets of Older Persons through Kath's will.

It is testament to Kath's commitment that only a few days after she was diagnosed with cancer she came to my office not for my commiserations but because she was so concerned to ensure that the work of Pets of Older Persons would go on after she left us. I have known Kath for many years. I recall the deep sadness I felt on the day she came to my office, but I also remember the incredible inspiration that she gave to me. She wanted to make sure that Pets of Older Persons lived on. Most of all, she wanted to make sure not only that the pets of the elderly and frail were cared for but also that her humanity would be remembered. It was not about her but that is the effect of what was happening. I do not think she realised that.

I saw Kath the day she died. I went to St Joseph's. She was unconscious. I saw her last breaths. She was a fighter to the end. She was selfless and focused on others. I miss Kath greatly. As the chief veterinarian of the RSPCA of New South Wales, Dr Magdolne Awad, has said, the Pets of Older Persons program has lost a very special person but Kath's legacy will always live on. Pets of Older Persons will continue to provide an important service to those in our community who benefit most from pet ownership. I know that Kath would want me to thank everyone who cared for and loved her, particularly those who took care of her at the St Joseph's palliative care unit in her last few days. On her behalf I thank all those people: You know who you are and you know what you did for Kath throughout her time. She touched us all and we will miss her. Rest in peace, Kath.

YOUNG DRIVER ROAD SAFETY

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 p.m.]: Learner driver requirements are an important issue. It is a topic that is close to the hearts of many families and young people within my community and other communities across the State. Obtaining a drivers licence is somewhat of a rite of passage in a young person's life. It is an opportunity to gain freedom and independence and a chance to engage in new experiences and responsibilities. Anyone who lives in my town of Pittwater will know that a car is a necessity in order to get around because it is a long way from other parts of the metropolitan area. The tragic reality is, however, that young people are consistently overrepresented in road accidents and fatalities, and there is widespread concern that learner drivers are not developing the necessary skills and knowledge prior to taking to the road by themselves.

Over the past five years we have seen a number of changes to the State's learner driver system, the most significant of which was the increase in supervised driving hours from 50 to 120. Whilst this initiative has assisted in encouraging learner drivers to spend more time behind the wheel, it has unfortunately failed to quell the concern that learner drivers are not receiving appropriate guidance—particularly in relation to dangerous conditions and emergency situations. Almost three years ago today I stood in this place and echoed the comments being made by families throughout my community that we need a learner driver system "that incorporates programs to ensure that skills are learnt, instead of simply hoping that learners pick up skills in 120 hours of driving." This comment was made in recognition of the significant pressures families are under not only to ensure their children complete 120 hours of supervised driving, but also to ensure they are conveying the right information to their children on all aspects of driving in the most constructive and effective way. I have heard for many years that parents, grandparents, older siblings and friends simply are not confident about being able to provide this type of guidance.

Fortunately we now have a roads Minister in New South Wales who has listened to this feedback, understands the issues being faced and is introducing innovative changes to help ensure that learner drivers are better equipped with advanced driving knowledge prior to undertaking the provisional driving test. As part of reforms announced last month, learner drivers who undertake a specifically designed five-hour learner driver course will be eligible to have their logbook requirement reduced from 120 hours to 100 hours. The course will be designed by a board of independent road safety experts. It is anticipated to comprise a combination of classroom and in-vehicle activities aimed at providing learner drivers with advanced driving knowledge and experience that is not able to be learnt in normal driving conditions with family members, such as with a big brother in a car park.

This initiative is also significantly different from the previously announced "3 for 1" Professional Driving Instructor Scheme, which allows learner drivers to record one hour of professional driver training as three hours in their logbook. I acknowledge Julie Hegarty who is one of my local councillors and a driving instructor in my community. She has provided me with a lot of advice on this issue. While the "3 for 1" scheme

has proved to be beneficial, and is anticipated to continue, the new course will seek to counter the concerns that exist with the costs of professional lessons and focus on those skills unable to be taught under normal conditions. In 2010 I distributed a survey to all young drivers throughout Pittwater in which I asked them for their feedback on the effectiveness of the State's learner driver system and any areas where improvements could be made. I was delighted by the level of the response I received; however, I was not surprised by the feedback.

Only around 70 per cent of respondents who were required to complete 120 hours of supervised driving actually met this requirement, whilst over half believed the requirement was unreasonable. However, the most interesting feedback was that an overwhelming number of respondents believed learner drivers should be required to complete professional driver training before undertaking the provisional driving exam and that more opportunities should be available for learners to earn extra credit for undertaking professional tuition. Along with families throughout my community, I am delighted we are now seeing these suggestions put into policy and that a much higher value is being placed on professional tuition. It is too big a gamble simply to hope that our kids pick up essential skills just by completing the mandatory 120 hours of driving.

Obtaining a drivers licence must be achievable, but it is essential that we promote safety and ensure that learner drivers are prepared as best as possible before taking to the road by themselves. Importantly, we must also see a shift in attitude towards the learner driver system from simply being a task that has to be overcome as quickly as possible to an important and significant experience in a young person's life. The engagement of families in this experience is obvious as driving with family and friends will always make up the bulk of a learner driver's hours. However, the missing piece of the puzzle in learner driver training is clearly visible and it is great that through these important reforms we will ensure that young people have the skills necessary to drive not just in ordinary situations but also in emergency situations.

ARABIC SPRING AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.10 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House about a function I attended on Friday 27 April 2012, which attracted a number of my constituents—indeed, some of my constituents had a role in organising the event. The function was organised by the Australian Iraqi Organisation for Justice and Freedom Inc. I attended the opening of what was to be a three-day event entitled the "Arabic Spring and Human Rights" program. The first day featured a photographic exhibition, documentaries and films, particularly focused on opposition to the Arab Spring and the democratic movement that has been encountered in Bahrain. The second day was to feature a seminar on human rights, and the third day planned to incorporate similar themes. One of the groups helping to organise the event was the Bahraini Australian Youth Movement.

In Bahrain there has been a significant non-violent struggle for freedom and democracy, the history of which was explained to me and other members of parliament who attended this event. On 14 February 2011 there was a day of rage against the government in Bahrain. One protestor was killed that day. Not surprisingly, it had been inspired by the popular upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia. On the day and at the place of that person's funeral police clashed with mourners, and another person was killed. On 17 February further clashes occurred at a well-known landmark in Bahrain's capital of Manama known as the Pearl Roundabout. This site had become a focal point for anti-government protestors, with protestors camped out there. On 17 February Bahrain police stormed the site to clear activists from the location.

It was explained to us that in March troops from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were invited into Bahrain by the Government under the guise of a regional force of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Their aim was to clamp down on any further unrest and protests. Demonstrations were, and are, officially banned. Despite this, protests continued, although the Government demolished the monument at the Pearl Roundabout—as though demolishing a monument can destroy a movement for democracy and freedom. Pro-democracy activists continue to be arrested and tortured by the Bahraini authorities. Some of the most confronting aspects on that Friday night were graphic photographs showing the human consequences of oppressive government activity. Credible reports talk of 60 people having been killed by pro-government forces.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is an island off Saudi-Arabia in the Persian Gulf. It has a population of 1.2 million in 760 square kilometres—about half the geographical size of Sydney. It is a monarchy with 89 per cent of the population resident in urban areas. At that function we also found out something about Abdulhadi Alkhwaja, a prominent human rights activist and co-founder and former president of the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights. In April 2011 he was arrested in Bahrain. Following his arrest he appears to have been assaulted and tortured. His injuries required significant surgery—his jaw was broken in three places. He was tried following the pro-democracy protests that started in February before a military court under recently

introduced emergency legislation that prevents defendants from accessing legal counsel. In June that year he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Several other pro-democracy activists were sentenced at the same time. On 8 February this year he commenced a hunger strike, and grave fears are held for his wellbeing.

Abdulhadi has been recognised as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International and serious concerns have been expressed by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights. He is 51 years old. Press reports state that his wife has accused Bahraini authorities of using feeding tubes and other means on her husband against his will. I note that since attending this function the Bahraini Government has conceded a review by a civil court of the military tribunal convictions—clearly a step in the right direction. The monarchy is one of Western-aligned Sunni rulers and the majority of the population is Shia—the Government seems to have attacked mainly Shia mosques. An independent panel of human rights experts has been appointed. The report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry was a scathing indictment on the regime. Despite government promises of reform, nothing much changed. I understand that protests and arrests continue.

International focus on the Bahrain Grand Prix in April helped focus European attention on the island. Supporters in Australia of Bahrain's pro-democracy uprising whom I met at the function refer to it as the "forgotten revolution". Even Arab news networks are reported not to feature significant coverage of protests in Bahrain because of the interests of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, where networks such as Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera are based. Bahrain is also the station for the United States Navy Fifth Fleet, which leads to various suspicions about the interest of the West in maintaining the monarchy. It certainly raises issues about the very different and contrasting reactions of the West to events in Syria and Bahrain. It is to overcome the lack of notice that events such as this are organised. To some extent the functions of the event of 27 April have been fulfilled by my drawing this matter to the attention of the House.

CROWN LAND DEVELOPMENT

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.15 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about Crown lands on the North Coast. Under the previous Labor Government far too many Crown reserves had their trusts or boards of management removed. As a result, many Crown reserves on the North Coast—and I suspect across the State—were handed over to council management. Vast incomes have been generated in the management of those reserves, including the Sawtell Beach Caravan Park, Park Beach Holiday Park and Woolgoolga Beach Caravan Park. But apart from the 5 per cent of the gross that is paid to the Government fund—established when the Coalition was last in government—the income has gone into council general revenue. The reserves that those caravan parks were set up to manage have suffered and, while money has been spent to improve them, the income generated from those improvements has gone to the council.

The Government needs to look hard at where it is heading with Crown land reserves. For example, there is a Crown land lease on the Coffs Harbour marina. The licensees of that reserve want to spend tens of millions of dollars to maintain and upgrade the marina—which is in the only safe harbour between Sydney and Brisbane—but the reality is they will not spend that money because they have only a 10-year lease. Not only would a bank not advance them the money on such a short-term lease but also the licensees would not do it for business reasons. The Government should reinstate locally controlled trusts or boards of management; it should not be up to councils to make the decisions. For example, on the foreshores of Coffs Harbour the community flatly refused the council's proposal—it was developed in what I refer to as the "Star Chamber".

The council came back with yet another plan of management, which was also developed in the Star Chamber and supported by the government of the day because it could see a way of making millions, if not tens of millions, of dollars from developing the foreshore to a standard that no-one within the electorate of Coffs Harbour wanted. I would like to see the Coffs Harbour jetty area improved and private business making money from it. I would also like to see the reserve upgraded, but that can be done only with a plan of management. The Government should draw up lease conditions for private industry that, in return, would build tourism infrastructure for the people of the North Coast. But private industry needs long-term leases—perhaps up to 99 years. Strict key performance indicators would need to be in place so that if the lessor of a property did not meet the key performance indicator the Government would have a board of management step in to regain control of the property and then look to other business interests to improve it.

Such an attitude could lead not only to an improved marina at Coffs Harbour but also perhaps to a cruise ship terminal. We could look at providing amenities in the harbour area that neither the Government nor the council can afford but in a way that allows the Government to retain control in conjunction with the local

community. On Beach Street, Woolgoolga, there is a magnificent reserve that is currently occupied by a Crown land caravan park. That could be an absolutely fantastic amenity for the people of Woolgoolga. At holiday time it is probably the best positioned caravan park in New South Wales—it is literally waterfront.

I would like to see a management plan for the outside that will provide for better public access, improved parking and an improved return to Government. Perhaps we will be able to get the Crown lands management fund back into surplus so that funds are relayed to small trusts that cannot afford to maintain Crown lands. I believe that can only be done with the support of the community, and we should bring them with us. Some councils on the North Coast, probably unlike the Lake Macquarie City Council, have not taken the community with them; rather, they have been in conflict with the community. I implore the Government to examine a new model that will provide the energy and infrastructure the North Coast needs.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [5.20 p.m.]: Climate change is a pressing international issue that impacts upon each and every one of us. We all understand the necessity of global environmentally sustainable action as the costs of inaction to our environment, local communities and generations to come will be far higher than any short-term costs of acting now. Recognising this and the particular vulnerability of Australians to the impacts of climate change with the variable, hot and dry nature of our climate, the imperative grows ever stronger to take action and enable our communities to make more sustainable choices. In South Australia particularly, implementation of a can and bottle deposit recycling scheme is an extremely effective way of achieving the goal. The scheme operates by charging consumers 10¢ more for bottles and cans covered under the scheme. However, I emphasise that there is no real price increase because the added 10¢ cost is returned to the consumer when he or she deposits the can or bottle at a deposit centre or reverse vending payment machine.

The scheme is an important way in which to positively influence environmental action in our communities by creating the idea of a financial gain. Effectively that creates incentives for individuals to act sustainably by recycling the bottles and cans that they use. The scheme was implemented in 1977 and has been extremely successful. The 2010-11 return of beverage container litter increased to 80.1 per cent. South Australia is now leading the nation in litter reduction, recovering 85 per cent of non-refillable glass soft drink bottles compared to 36 per cent nationally and recovering 84 per cent of cans marketed in the State compared to 63 per cent nationally. The impact has become particularly apparent to me. Over the years I have participated in various community-wide environmental initiatives, such as Clean Up Australia. I have firsthand understanding of how the Oatley area could be improved by incentives and initiatives such as that and effectively reduce its environmental footprint.

Local and national community groups and volunteer organisations also have taken notice, with Clean Up Australia noting only 8.4 per cent of South Australia's collected litter on Clean Up Australia Day comprised cans and bottles compared to 40 per cent nationally. The scheme was overwhelmingly supported by South Australians due to its clear benefits. Container deposits provide enough water savings to supply more than 16,000 homes and improve air quality by the equivalent of taking 141,000 cars off the road. The scheme benefits us by generating green jobs, improving our environment and allowing the community to make choices that are environmentally sustainable and assist them in both the short and long term. Furthermore, evidence shows that placing a value on bottles and cans actually increases the productivity of kerbside recycling, thereby ensuring none of our resources goes to waste.

In the light of those numerous benefits, on 3 January this year the Northern Territory Government introduced the scheme with the support of its community. As a State, New South Wales always has been at the forefront of innovation and positive reform, so we should consider taking the opportunity to again be at the forefront of beneficial and environmentally sustainable change. Australians overwhelmingly support environmentally sustainable action. I believe the scheme will allow us to work together with businesses to manage their waste and ensure that packaging is as environmentally friendly as the product itself. It also provides us with an opportunity to involve young people in preserving our environment, and gives community groups and charities an effective way to raise funds. That can be done by running collection drives and using the returns to fund their programs.

Groups such as the Hope Valley Scouts in South Australia already have successfully fundraised this way for various causes and charities, including World Vision and the Lions Club, and have benefited our environment at the same time. By introducing the ideal recycling program of recycling beverage container litter into more glass bottles and aluminium cans, we no longer need to exploit further resources, and we have a new

way to partner with businesses, community groups and young people to ensure that as a State we enable concerned communities to engage in practices that benefit our environment and benefit their community in the long term. I believe that by considering the implementation of such a scheme we can achieve far better outcomes than we are achieving currently. We could join the ranks of States such as South Australia as leaders in managing our waste, preserving resources and protecting the environment. I very much look forward to being a part of the process and involved in achieving this goal in New South Wales in years to come.

KURNELL

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [5.25 p.m.]: I am extraordinarily privileged to represent such a special place as Kurnell, which is unique in its geography, its history and its community. The Kurnell peninsula's unique geography includes the spectacular coastal scenery of the Kamay Botany Bay National Park, Sydney's longest beach, and wetlands, particularly Towra Point, which is not only the Sydney region's most significant wetland, but also contains the internationally recognised Ramsar site. Kurnell's unique history is as the meeting place of two cultures. Two weekends ago I attended the annual meeting of two cultures ceremony, which commemorated not only the 242nd anniversary of Lieutenant James Cook's landing at Kurnell but also the first meeting of Europeans and Australia's Indigenous people. Across Australia, nowhere else can claim to be such an important part of Australia's history. The official proceedings of the ceremony commenced with a didgeridoo performance at Commemoration Flat, remembering the importance of honouring our Indigenous customs, stories and traditions as well as a unique community.

Nowhere else in Sydney has the unique village atmosphere and strong community ties of Kurnell. Two weekends ago I attended the annual Kurnell Festival, with more than 60 stalls, an art show, performing artists, and up to 10,000 people, which demonstrates the strong community spirit that is alive and well in Kurnell. But Kurnell is at something of a crossroads. It faces numerous challenges—too many to deal with in a five-minute statement—and I will deal only with a few: aircraft noise, job losses and development pressure. I will deal first with aircraft noise. Kurnell residents are among the worst affected in Sydney by aircraft noise. Equitable solutions to Sydney's future airport requirements cannot include action or inaction that dumps more noise on Kurnell.

I support my Federal colleague, the member for Cook, Scott Morrison, in opposing any removal of the curfew or the cap on hourly movements. I will deal now with prospective serious job losses. Continental Carbon closed in March. Today at the annual general meeting of Caltex the chairman indicated that the future of the Kurnell refinery is under serious review. I will deal next with development pressure. The most recent development concerns the 178-hectare site owned by Besmaw Pty Limited. The Government commenced a review of potential housing opportunities on sites nominated by landowners that followed the general invitation to landowners by the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to submit expressions of interest if they are interested in developing their land for housing. The Besmaw site is one of the 31 sites. There are proposals for up to 2,000 homes on the site, a hotel and an employment zone.

The Government was elected on a five-point plan. One of the points is to restore accountability to government by giving people a say on issues that affect their lives. I will be looking forward to our Government honouring that commitment and providing my constituents with the absolute maximum opportunity to have their say on any proposed rezoning. For my own part, I doubt that we can simply lock the gate. The site is no longer the pristine wonderland that it once was. Development proposals for the Australand and Breen sites show the possibility of outcomes that most people would be happy with. But the Besmaw land is much more affected than those sites by aircraft noise. Any relocation of flight paths in a way that affects my existing constituents in Kurnell or North Cronulla to deal with redevelopment of the Besmaw land will be totally and utterly unacceptable. The Besmaw site represents a threat and an opportunity. In forthcoming weeks and months, I will be scrutinising the proposals very carefully to make sure that the Kurnell peninsula enjoys the best possible outcome.

I have spoken about Kurnell's uniqueness and about some of the threats and challenges that Kurnell faces. Finally, there are opportunities. Kurnell, and in particular the Kamay Botany Bay National Park, has come a long way since I was a child going there on Sunday School picnics. The year 2020 will be the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook's landing at Kurnell—a great milestone in Australia's modern history. It is a great opportunity to bring Kurnell up to speed and, as I said in my inaugural speech, give Kurnell the funding and recognition it deserves as the birthplace of modern Australia. As I have said before, we will need a whole-of-government approach across different tiers of government—Federal, State and local—to ensure that we capitalise on the potential that the 250th anniversary of Captain Cook's landing brings to Kurnell.

REAL FILM FESTIVAL

TRIBUTE TO MARGARET GOUMAS

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [5.30 p.m.]: The inaugural Real Film Festival took place in Newcastle recently, a wonderful initiative of Screen Hunter Central Coast. It was a great success, attracting more than 700 people over three days from Friday 27 April to Sunday 29 April. The Real Film Festival was created with the aim of fostering and developing the art of storytelling. The theme of the festival centred on the telling of real events through different film formats and included screenings of 12 feature films, 15 short films, documentaries, 14 industry workshops, a short film competition and an industry networking event. I take this opportunity to congratulate Screen Hunter Central Coast on its conception and execution of the Real Film Festival.

By way of background, Screen Hunter Central Coast is a division of Hunter Councils. Screen Hunter Central Coast currently holds a service agreement with Screen New South Wales. Its aim is to capitalise on the unique qualities of the Hunter and Central Coast regions by increasing film production in the region. Screen Hunter Central Coast is committed to local industry development and to creating initiatives that connect industry practitioners with the greater community across our two regions. I commend Screen Hunter Central Coast for its commitment to promoting the wonderful region that I have been elected to represent in this Parliament, and for its ambition to create such great opportunities for the people who live and work in the area.

The Real Film Festival has the potential to become an event of national significance that will help position the Hunter and Central Coast regions as strong film and arts communities, and an innovator and facilitator of fresh and exciting initiatives. Not only did it showcase the region's extraordinary range of potential film locations; it also provided the local community with an arts connection and appreciation. Newcastle is also home to specialist film practitioners and moving forward I understand that they will become increasingly involved in the Real Film Festival. It is hoped that the festival will continue to grow and develop over the coming years and provide the Hunter and Central Coast region and its businesses with significant increased economic and tourism benefits.

I had the pleasure of attending the opening night of the Real Film Festival with my fellow parliamentary colleague the Minister for the Arts. They were enthused by the amount of support given to the festival by local organisations. I congratulate the Minister on his great opening on the night. I must make special mention of the very talented Annette Hubber, the Manager of Screen Hunter Central Coast, and her talented team of assistants, including Camille, Tracey and Alan, her husband. When asked by the *Newcastle Herald* to reflect on the three-day event, Mrs Hubber said that public participation had been overwhelming. She went on to say:

We want to foster the art of story-telling, and make people look around at themselves and their own backyard for inspiration.

I attended the three days of the event, and the short films and the workshops initiated during that period were fantastic. I offer my most sincere congratulations to Annette because it was clear, after speaking with people who attended the inaugural event, that this objective was achieved with flying colours and the participants, like me, look forward to participating in the next Real Film Festival in 2013. Finally, I make special mention of a very extraordinary lady, Margaret Goumas, who passed away on 3 May 2012. Not only was Margaret a great supporter of Screen Hunter Central Coast and the Real Film Festival she was also deeply passionate about the industry and cinema in Newcastle. I am told that Margaret and her husband, Theo, were still dancing at 10.00 p.m. on the closing night of the Real Film Festival, just days before she entered eternal life. Additionally, Margaret served as a Newcastle City Councillor in the 1980s and the 1990s and gave much of her time to volunteer work. She was a wonderful lady with a great spirit and I am assured that she will be sorely missed by the Newcastle community.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.35 p.m.]: Today I praise the great work of volunteers in Bankstown and throughout New South Wales. I do so as both the member for Bankstown and the shadow Minister for Volunteering and Youth. National Volunteer Week is next week, from 14 to 20 May. It is an opportunity for our communities to express gratitude for the great work of our volunteers. Thirty-four per cent of Australian adults, or six million Australians, volunteer; 1.67 million New South Wales residents volunteer. Yet the demand for volunteers only increases, with Volunteering Australia reporting that 68.3 per cent of respondents to a recent survey had informed them that their organisations needed more volunteers. Bankstown

residents are particularly generous, and I know of many people in my community who give up their time to volunteer. We have some great local organisations such as Bankstown City Council's Meals on Wheels, St John Ambulance, Bushcare and the Bankstown State Emergency Service, where many people volunteer on a weekly basis. As Lynne Dalton of Volunteers Australia said:

Without the commitment of the time, knowledge, expertise and skills that volunteers bring, our communities would not be the safe and healthy places they are.

As members of Parliament we should encourage our communities to become involved in volunteering. Volunteering is not only beneficial to the community, it can be beneficial to the individual as well. The Government's volunteering portal advises that:

... volunteering can improve health, lower stress, reduce social isolation and raise self esteem.

This year's National Volunteer Week theme is Volunteers—Every One Counts. This theme recognises that every volunteer, regardless of the size of his or her contribution, makes a valued contribution. Next week I will visit the Bankstown State Emergency Service, where I will have the honour of presenting awards to outstanding volunteers. Many members of this House have spoken in praise of their local State Emergency Service commands, and I am delighted to continue my association with this great organisation. State Emergency Service volunteers provide an invaluable service in some of the most trying conditions. I congratulate Bankstown State Emergency Service, and in particular local controller David Niven, on its great work.

The Government is currently developing a New South Wales volunteering strategy. I know that many volunteers and organisations in the sector are anticipating the completion of the volunteering strategy: The Minister has confirmed that it will be completed at some stage this year. One ongoing issue that has been raised with me in my capacity as shadow Minister is the lack of protection from dismissal afforded to volunteers. Many volunteers contribute a significant part of their time and energy to their volunteering work. In some cases volunteering can become a vocation requiring a similar commitment to full-time paid work. It is unsurprising that these individuals develop a strong attachment to their work as volunteers. This is a complex area and one that I acknowledge does not have a simple solution. In response to queries I have raised in Parliament, the Minister said this about the New South Wales volunteering strategy:

[The strategy] will contribute to a range of initiatives that support volunteer organisations in developing their volunteer management practices, including complaints and grievance handling processes. The strategy will support the sector to highlight instances of best practice in volunteer management.

With reference to unfair dismissal, the Minister said:

Resources developed through the Strategy will provide volunteer organisations with the necessary tools to prevent these issues from occurring.

In addition to recommendations for grievance handling, I ask the Government to consider carefully the potential to provide opportunities for recourse for dismissed volunteers unfairly or some system of protection for volunteers. Members on both sides of this Chamber respect the work that volunteers do and I am sure there is a lot of common ground for reform in this sector. I reiterate my support of the outstanding work that New South Wales volunteers do and in particular the many organisations that rely on volunteers. I pay tribute to the thousands of volunteers who deliver Meals on Wheels, which is an invaluable service. I look forward to the many activities next week and the opportunity to acknowledge the wonderful work of volunteers in our community.

WATER POLO PLAYER NICOLA ZAGAME

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY (Miranda—Minister for Sport and Recreation) [5.40 p.m.]: Every four years the eyes of the world are well and truly focused on the Olympic Games. The setting for the 2012 Games, this year, is London, and I am certain many Australians will shortly be making the trip to the United Kingdom to witness firsthand the Australian team in action and to experience the magic of the Olympics. For the athletes it is their holy grail—years of preparation resulting in countless personal sacrifices, all for the chance to be the best of the best. It is also a very special time for relatives and friends of competing athletes, particularly mums and dads, who moonlight as chauffeurs, dieticians, therapists, and bankers in the hope of seeing their son or daughter represent Australia on the world stage of the Olympic Games.

The truly amazing thing about sport is that champions come from all walks of life, and in all shapes and sizes. Nicola Zagame from Gympie Bay, in my electorate of Miranda, is one such champion who is now eyeing a

spot in the Australian women's Olympic water polo team. Her proud parents, John and Joanne, informed me that even before Nicola learned to walk she had begun Learn to Swim classes with her older brother, Luke, at the Cronulla Indoor Sports Complex and then at Sutherland Leisure Centre. With all younger siblings there is the added incentive to match or better your older brother or sister and Nicola was always determined to emulate her brother, whether it was tying her shoelaces first or learning how to whistle. Swimming presented the same challenge but she was determined to master it. I am reliably informed that Nicola is an enthusiastic trainer and in her early years had no trouble jumping out of bed at 5.00 a.m. most mornings and then backing up each night to train. It was a real family affair with mum, dad, Luke and Nicola all training together.

In her early years Nicola was also an enthusiastic member of the nippers at the Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club and later, under the coaching of Olympic silver medallist, Greg Rogers, she developed her surf lifesaving skills competing at club, regional, State and national championship level. Through her teenage years Nicola was a member of the Kirrawee water polo team, winning many regional, district and State school titles. In her final year at Kirrawee High School Nicola was selected for the Australian All Schools tour of New Zealand. Nicola received many awards throughout her school years including a New South Wales Blues award for her outstanding achievement in water polo—the highest sporting award for New South Wales students. She is very much a home-grown success story, training at Sydney Olympic Park every morning and Sutherland Leisure Centre most evenings. Nicola is currently studying for a bachelor of medical radiation science degree at the University of Sydney and in her spare time she works at her mother's shop, making sandwiches.

Now, at the age of 21, Nicola's hard work and dedication have earned her a chance to chase her Olympic dream. Last month Nicola played a leading role in securing the National Water Polo League title for her team, the Cronulla Sharks, scoring three goals in the side's 6 to 3 victory over the Brisbane Barracudas, bringing to an end the Barracudas' three-year reign as national champions—a positive omen for New South Wales with the State of Origin series just around the corner. She has represented Australia at both junior and senior levels, and last weekend was a member of the Australian women's team, which won the Visa Water Polo International, beating the United States of America 6 to 5 in the final.

I am very pleased to say Nicola bagged a double in that match. The Olympic team will be announced early in June and I will be hoping Nicola's name is read out. For the trivia buffs in the House, it is interesting to note that the first games of water polo for both men and women were held in England, with the sport being the longest-standing team sport in Olympic history, having been introduced at the Paris Olympics in 1900. It would be fitting if the Australian women's team could duplicate its Olympic gold medal success of the Sydney 2000 Games, hopefully with Nicola Zagame scoring the winning goal.

BORDER MEDICAL RECRUITMENT TASKFORCE

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.45 p.m.]: The good news for today is that Albury-Wodonga has found a way to grow its medical population. Our method has been so successful that it is now being exported to regional centres such as Tamworth and Bendigo. The active recruitment of doctors has seen the arrival of 67 specialists and 20 general practitioners in just four years. This comes after many years of unsuccessful attempts to attract doctors to our region. An Albury-Wodonga resident now has access to more than 120 medical specialists, while around 90 doctors are in general practice. Just a few years ago the skills shortage was so acute that a new resident would have had great difficulty getting onto the books of a general practitioner. Only three general practices were accepting new patients. Now the position has reversed, and all but three general practices are welcoming new patients.

So what is happening in Albury-Wodonga? Rather than look to Sydney, Melbourne or Canberra for help, in 2007 then president of the Border Medical Association, Dr Scott Giltrap, put together funding from a variety of private and public organisational donors to form the Border Medical Recruitment Taskforce. This facilitated the employment of a recruitment manager and active promotional work. Members of the taskforce knew that Albury-Wodonga had a number of strong attractions for doctors. There were snowfields, wineries, theatres, good schools and two universities. We have two major public hospitals, two active private hospitals and numerous clinics. On top of this, since 2000 we have had an Albury campus of the University of New South Wales Rural Clinical School.

The taskforce's initial recruitment drive seemed obvious: to place advertisements in the *Age* and the *Australian* newspapers offering medical practitioners the opportunity to bring the family to the Albury-Wodonga region for an all-expenses paid familiarisation weekend. This enterprise garnered much media attention both locally and at State level, yet it was a failure. Some inquired, but no-one moved. If we wanted

doctors we would have to do more than just attract them; we would have to help make them. The taskforce refocused on medical students, interns, medical registrars and overseas-trained doctors. We understand that if a doctor grows up in the country, or has a partner with a love of the rural lifestyle, it is more likely they might return to rural practice. We want to be involved in their medical training. City-based trainees recognise the benefits of coming to Albury-Wodonga, where they receive more face-to-face time with their instructors or more time in surgery.

The taskforce works with real estate agents, schools, universities, employers and so on to develop solutions for individual doctors and their families. It is very much a tailored process which is private, informal, relationship-centred, and not bogged down in red tape. And it works. Of the 61 doctors who finished their general practitioner training in the Albury-Wodonga area by 2009, 42 per cent are still in rural general practice in southern New South Wales and Victoria. A further 32 per cent are still general practitioners in this region. The taskforce is looking into infrastructure projects such as the development of a residential medical precinct. A feasibility study proposes a 15-house residential development in East Albury, a short walk to the central business district, Albury hospital and the Rural Clinical School.

This could be an ideal way to provide not simply accommodation for new doctors but also a community to welcome their families and to help them settle into new homes, jobs, schools and the regional lifestyle. A longer-term aspect of the work of the taskforce is to engage in lobbying to streamline barriers such as medical registration for cross-border work. This outdated disincentive must be ripped away. The border approach of encouragement and development goes right back to the start of a person's medical career. The Border Medical Association Scholarship, an initiative of local doctors, was first offered in 1991. Since then 90 first-year medical students have received the benefit of financial support and the assurance that the local medical community is interested in their progress. Additionally, scholarship recipients are encouraged to select a local doctor as a personal mentor.

Not only will this help improve their studies but it also provides an ongoing link for professional development: when students return home to the border they may be invited to sit in at their mentor's practice, seeing patients and attending operating theatres or maternity procedures. There is more. Each year the Rotary Club of Albury Foundation provides \$7,000 to assist fifth-year medical students in their elective term: the Graham Turner Bursary Award. The Hume Building Society gives \$2,500 each year, shared between the top two fifth-year students in their biomedical exam. A fourth scheme, provided by Albury City Council, offers two \$5,000 scholarships to local high school graduates leaving to study medicine. Scholarship recipient Gemma Goodwin was quoted in the local newspaper as saying:

The most important thing about the medical scholarship is that it provides an incentive to give back to the community which has supported my studies, this is the reason I was attracted to study medicine in the first instance.

I congratulate the Border Medical Association, Denise Klemm and the Border Medical Recruitment Taskforce on their outstanding effort and achievement. We are privileged to have them working so hard and effectively for our border community.

BANGLADESH CULTURAL SCHOOL, ROCKDALE, SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.50 p.m.]: It is a privilege for me to speak about a school in my electorate of Rockdale that contributes significantly to our local community. On Sunday 6 May I had the pleasure of attending the seventh anniversary of the Bangladesh Cultural School at Rockdale. For the past seven years children from the Bangladeshi community have been receiving quality education from the teachers at the Bangladesh Cultural School. I acknowledge the principal, Dr Mohammed Habib Ullah, who has been a tireless worker for the Bangladesh and wider Bengali-speaking community. I acknowledge also the founding members: the president of the Bangladesh Society of Sydney, Shahid Uz-Zaman Alo; vice president, Nazmul Huda; and Hayat Mahmud. These three men have made considerable contributions to the school. They do not do this for recognition but, rather, out of love for their community, their culture and for their traditions.

The classes taught by the Bangladesh Cultural School Rockdale have enabled the rich culture of the Bangladeshi people to be shared with parents and students alike. The Bangladesh Cultural School ensures that every Sunday from 10.00 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. at the Rockdale Public School students are educated in the ancestry and language of Bangladesh. The school draws students from across Sydney. It has 50 students and the numbers are increasing each year. Classes are divided into subjects that reflect the many facets of Bengali culture,

religion, language, music and art. Last Sunday it was magnificent to see beautifully attired children as young as three proudly displaying their cultural traditions. The classes are taught by highly educated individuals who pass on their extensive knowledge to the young students.

While there is no doubt that they are proud Australians, it is important that these values are shared and passed on to the younger members of the Bengali-speaking community. Celebrations such as the one I attended on Sunday remind us that Rockdale is a diverse and multicultural community. We are fortunate to have people from a wide variety of cultures living in the Rockdale electorate. There are many occasions on which we celebrate the multicultural customs and languages that enrich our lives. I acknowledge the valuable work performed by the St George Migrant Resource Centre, which is located very close to my Rockdale office. I recognise also the work of Imtiaz Ahmed of the Bangladesh Society of Sydney Incorporated. He has been helpful in the organisation and promotion of the anniversary celebrations.

Imtiaz Ahmed is a young man who is extremely proud of his Bengali culture and passionate about his community. Over the years the Bengali community in Sydney has grown, and I have no doubt that members in this place have witnessed the contributions the Bengali community makes in their electorates. Members of the Bengali community share a deep love of their families and also a love of the Australian way of life, which they participate in fully. I was happy to be part of the Bangladesh Cultural School's celebrations on Sunday and I look forward to attending celebrations there in the future. I have no doubt that the Bangladesh Cultural School will continue to grow, and I wish the school all the best for the year ahead.

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [5.55 p.m.]: Every night of the week 32,000 young Australians are homeless: 14,000 of these young people will couch surf every night of the week—they are the lucky ones. On 18 April I attended the launch of the Salvation Army Couch Project, where I gained a thorough understanding of youth homelessness. I was representing the Hon. Victor Dominello, the Minister responsible for youth affairs. The Couch Project was launched at the Salvation Army Oasis Youth Support Network's inaugural awareness and fund-raising campaign in Surry Hills, Sydney. The Couch Project aims to raise awareness of youth homelessness and couch surfing. In a nationwide survey recently conducted by Pureprofile it was found that 64 per cent of Australians do not consider couch surfing to be a form of homelessness. Being homeless does not imply that one lives on the streets. Couch surfing affects the lives of thousands of young people—many are vulnerable—and it is an unsustainable form of accommodation.

Fortunately, though, there are services such as Oasis available to these young people in need. At the launch I was humbled by the dedication and service shown by Major Robyn Moulds of Oasis, as well as Oasis's other staff and volunteers. Their commitment to social justice and equality reflects the values that we should all aspire to embody. Despite the numerous challenges and hardships they face along the way, the staff and volunteers see the goodness in the young people with whom they work and they never lose hope. Their strong faith and energy warm those around them and should provide all citizens with a sense of optimism. I was inspired by their courageous efforts. Youth homelessness is not an issue exclusive to the inner-city suburbs of Sydney. In my community of Hornsby youth homelessness is also a major issue.

On 27 April I hosted an inter-faith morning tea bringing together religious leaders from across the Hornsby community. The leaders identified youth homelessness as the number one social justice issue affecting Hornsby. Hornsby, in Sydney's north, is an area regarded by many people as an affluent area of Sydney. Julia Gillard made comments in Parliament yesterday to that effect. The reality is that many people in that part of Sydney are also doing it tough. There are many people living on the streets, including young people. I applaud the work currently being undertaken in my electorate of Hornsby by organisations dedicated to alleviating the problem of youth homelessness. I acknowledge the work of Mission Australia in its efforts to alleviate youth homelessness in the Hornsby area. But more must be done.

It worries me that, despite living in one of the world's most developed and affluent advanced countries, thousands of young people are at risk on the streets or on someone's couch each night. It is not the role of government or of the community to solve this problem. We must all work together to find a solution to youth homelessness. We must ensure that young people who are living on the streets are accommodated. We need to help these young people to get the education and opportunities that the rest of us take for granted. It is only through sustainable and cooperative partnerships between the Government and the community that we will be able to speak about youth homelessness in the past tense some day.

I hope to be a member of this place that contributes to making that a reality. I encourage New South Wales residents to support the Couch Project and the important work of the Salvation Army in addressing the needs of homeless youth across our community and raise awareness of youth homelessness by spending the night of Friday 8 June 2012 on the couch. All donations will go towards the Salvation Army Oasis Youth Support Network youth homelessness shelter. More important than raising funds to tackle this issue, we will be doing an important thing by raising awareness of the issue of youth homelessness so that we can encourage many more people, not just in this Chamber but outside in the community, not just in our church networks, to tackle this problem once and for all.

DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [5.59 p.m.]: Since being elected the member for Drummoyne last year I am delighted to report that the electorate has received nearly \$15.3 million in funding for a variety of important projects, including major projects such as \$1.6 million for the dialysis unit at Concord hospital and \$62,300 for a wheelchair accessibility pontoon at Dobroyd Point. Sailability Dobroyd makes it possible for 85 disabled children from Holroyd and Karonga special schools to enjoy the pleasure of sailing. It gave me enormous pleasure to open the pontoon in March and to meet some pupils from Holroyd school who now will be able to enjoy a weekend sail. Other projects include the \$50,000 upgrade of the Five Dock Leisure Centre received from Minister Annesley as part of a sports and recreation grant, and \$339 for a new boat ramp at Bayview Park.

Under the Community Building Partnership Program \$300,000 was announced recently for 19 projects, including \$30,000 for the further enhancement of Livvi's Place at Timbrel Park—an all-abilities playground. I was thrilled that this funding came through and I made a special trip to the park to tell the director of the Touched by Olivia Foundation, John Perkins. The money will go towards erecting a shade sail above the carousel and an educational mural. I continue to lobby the New South Wales Government for a new school on the Rhodes Peninsula. In a speech to Parliament earlier this year I pointed out that the previous Government permitted unfettered high-density housing development in the Rhodes area and since then all schools in the Drummoyne electorate have been stretched to breaking point. We now urgently need a school to cater for the Rhodes area and I continue to press the Minister for Education on that urgency. This level of high-density development makes it essential for Rhodes to have its own school.

I have been active also in leading the protest "Take Action on the M4". The M4 continues to frustrate motorists in my electorate who face being stuck endlessly in a parking lot when travelling to and from work. Last year the Federal Government removed \$270 million earmarked for the M4 East project from its 2011 budget. Federal Labor has further changed the 80:20 funding mix to a 50:50 model for the M4. This is not enough. The people of the inner west deserve better. I urge my constituents to contact their Federal member to complain. The Community Building Partnership Program has been a great success and last month it was wonderful to learn that 19 projects in my electorate were successful in receiving funding under this year's grants. This vital New South Wales Government initiative delivers much-needed funding to community-based projects and boasts opportunities for local jobs and Drummoyne businesses.

I was particularly pleased to see that through this funding a much-needed safety fence will be built around Concord West Public School. This was brought to our attention by the local mayor. Although it is a local council issue, I was more than happy to fund its construction to ensure the safety of our local children. Other projects included a new outdoor play equipment area at Abbotsford Public School; a learning centre and garden at New Hollows Catholic Parish in Five Dock; replacement of a church hall floor at Holy Trinity Church; play facilities at a community centre at St Albans in Five Dock; shade cloths at McIllwaine Park in Rhodes; a public art space celebrating the contribution of the Eolian community in the Five Dock area; and a men's locker room and outdoor amenity upgrade at Concord Recreation and Bowling Club.

Further projects include practice golf nets at Massey Park Golf Club; shade sails at St Mary's, Concord; development of recreational and educational areas at St Mark's school in Drummoyne; new netting and turf practice facilities at Drummoyne oval for the Sydney Cricket Club; and many more projects. I had the delight also to be part of the commemorative festivities for the sixtieth anniversary of the iconic Victa mower. This mower was the brainchild of Mervyn Victor Richardson and was built not far from beautiful Goddard Park where the anniversary picnic was held. Interestingly, the original mower prototype was created using a peach tin for the fuel tank. This proves the adage, "necessity is the mother of invention". The Victa mower is marketed worldwide and I am proud that it started in my electorate.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I call the member for Lake Macquarie to order.

BLUE MOUNTAINS ROTARY PRIDE OF WORKMANSHIP AWARDS

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.04 p.m.]: Tonight I bring to the attention of the House the Rotary Pride of Workmanship Awards in the Blue Mountains. Each year the Rotary clubs of the upper Blue Mountains host a Pride of Workmanship Awards night, which honours those individuals in the local community who have provided exceptional service and dedication in their chosen fields of employment. The Rotary clubs of Blackheath, Katoomba, Upper Blue Mountains Sunrise and Central Blue, of which I am a member, came together at Blackheath Golf Club with the winners, their sponsors, family and friends. The Blackheath club hosted the event and, overall, 124 members and guests from many other areas also attended. These awards are highly regarded in the Blue Mountains community, as evidenced by the number and quality of entrants. Attendees were welcomed by Blackheath Golf Club President, Mina Howard, who is a very active member and a great teacher at the local Blackheath Public School. The atmosphere in the room was warm and friendly, with many excited winners and their supporters, some with family members and others with work colleagues.

The Rotary Pride of Workmanship Awards recognise those in the local community who go above and beyond the set benchmark for customer and delivery service for their particular employment. The recipients are the outstanding performers who excel at what they do and set an example for others. The Rotary clubs invite all businesses and organisations in the area to nominate an outstanding employee by summarising the employee's achievements in a written citation. The nominations are then collected and the winner is chosen. Each club chooses a maximum of four winners. Many winners were caught by surprise. There was the story of one winner being told to come to a staff meeting at the golf club, and another of going for a quiet night out with their spouse. The surprises made the awards night all the more special.

Blackheath Golf Club began the presentations, with President Mina Howard presenting the winners. Fiona Huddleston, former assistant principal at Blackheath school, was nominated by the school's principal, Mark Rudd. Fiona emotionally explained that she had just retired from teaching due to challenges with her health. I was privileged to know Fiona as the teacher of one of my children when she taught at another school in the Blue Mountains. Barry Simpson, an employee of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the Blue Mountains for 35 years, was sponsored by Richard Kingswood, one of the managers at the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Karen Zorz was also a recipient. Central Blue Rotary Club President Steve Gillett presented an award to Sophie Campbell from Century 21 Real Estate at Wentworth Falls. Sophie is an incredible young woman who contributes her time, skills and money to many worthwhile charitable organisations. She organised her own charity day to raise over \$1,000 for the children's burns unit.

Jonathon Fitz, who is the fourth generation in the family tyre business at Katoomba Tyres, also received an award from Central Blue Rotary Club. Jonathon provides exemplary service and lives by the motto his grandfather taught him: "By what you give in business and life you reap tenfold." Di Kipp and Catriona Swan of Leura Public School were also nominated by Central Blue Rotary Club. Catriona's enthusiasm and creative energy as organiser has led to the expansion of the Leura First Sunday Markets at Leura Public School, which our Rotary club attends. Finally, Elaine Kirby was nominated by Richard Wadick, Manager of Leura Westpac bank. Elaine, as Richard quipped, is such an effective and popular employee she almost runs the bank herself. Katoomba Rotary winners were announced by President George Bubalo and Kerry McGill. They were Kerry Bolton from Chef's market, Katoomba, Christine Lambert from Greenwell and Thomas Pharmacy, and Carol Crowther from Megalong Positioning Services, one of the business arms of Greystanes Disability Services—a fine organisation I have visited on many occasions.

The Upper Blue Mountains Sunrise Club finished the evening by presenting its winners: Katherine Kay, Elise Mann, Fiona Whitehead of Wall to Wall Real Estate, and Michael Pankhurst, a locksmith from Lock Logic in Katoomba. Michael is a very courageous young man, as he recently overcame the ravages of leukaemia. He still manages to smile and provide exemplary service. He was a great inspiration. It was a great night and demonstrated that people in the Blue Mountains community live a life of excellence and are not willing to settle for mediocrity.

LAKE MACQUARIE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [6.09 p.m.]: I speak tonight about transport in Lake Macquarie generally, including road transport and public transport infrastructure. Infrastructure and services in fast-growing areas of Lake Macquarie fail to meet existing demand, with no real prospect of keeping pace with population growth. I have raised related matters in this House numerous times and more recently referred them to the Government's long-term transport planning process. Lake Macquarie is not well served by public

transport and the growing problem is becoming increasingly evident. Poor public transport infrastructure is a region-wide issue, with the Lake Macquarie transport interchange at Glendale being a key element in driving improvements in the Lower Hunter.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Hear! Hear!

Mr GREG PIPER: I note that the member for Wallsend is in the Chamber and I note also that there is strong support for this infrastructure across the spectrum of members representing the Lower Hunter. I congratulate the Government on its commitment to the transport interchange but, frustratingly, the missing ingredient is Commonwealth funding. It remains to be seen whether the Regional Development Fund application that has been made by Lake Macquarie City Council for the first stage of the project will be approved. Hopefully we will know soon. Important as the interchange is, there are many other improvements needed for rail services, bus services and indeed roads in our area. I have raised these matters in this House before and will reiterate some of them now.

The rail service from the Lower Hunter is a significant intercity link increasingly used by commuters, albeit many reluctantly. Current journey times in particular are a disincentive to travellers. I reminded this House in December 2007, November 2009 and again in May 2010 that in 1937 the *Newcastle Flyer*, a steam train, took two hours and 26 minutes to do the run—eight minutes less than current journeys. That is amazing. In 1937 the *Newcastle Flyer* was visionary, but today's service delivers an average speed of a little over 60 kilometres an hour and is an embarrassment by comparison. Stations in Lake Macquarie are increasingly important to commuters yet have a level of facilities generally below that of metropolitan stations. Signage, indicators, staffing and station facilities are inadequate in my view.

That is not to say nothing has happened. Last year RailCorp and Lake Macquarie City Council jointly delivered a much-needed bus/rail interchange at Morisset, increasing its importance as a transport node. Travellers from a broad area would be better served if the CountryLink stop were relocated to Morisset because the current location at Fassifern is less than ideal in many ways. Morisset is the destination for bus services from Belmont and Swansea to the east and from Cessnock and Kurri Kurri in the north-west. There is a modest level of service on these routes and Morisset is a logical location for connectivity to the broader region. Relocating the CountryLink stop there would foster growth in the use of public transport overall. Morisset has the advantage of being on both the F3 and State Route 133, making it more easily accessible by road for more people. Morisset's commercial centre also makes more services available to travellers waiting for trains.

Main Road 217, which is signposted as Route 133, is the major State road servicing residents in the Lake Macquarie electorate. It connects more than 30 suburbs in the Lake Macquarie electorate and is the only alternative to the limited-access F3. It is the only direct connection between many suburbs and the major route for many commuters. Parts of this road are hopelessly inadequate for the volumes of traffic choking it, in particular Cary Street in central Toronto. On 2 June last year this House supported a motion calling on the Government to expedite improvements to Cary Street. Would anyone be surprised if I said that there has been not one jot of communication from the Minister's office or from Roads and Maritime Services in this regard? No.

Returning to the issue of public transport, there remains the problem that local private bus operators, and indeed Newcastle buses, are largely hamstrung in improving services because of the constraints of funding limitations for route kilometres. Here is an obvious way to improve services and provide routes that will encourage patronage. I request that these matters be brought to the attention of the relevant Ministers and that they ensure consideration of the issues raised, and possibly even request that Roads and Maritime Services communicate with my staff or me as to plans for Lake Macquarie.

PUBLIC SWIMMING POOLS

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [6.14 p.m.]: Local council pools have held a special place in the hearts and memories of people for generations. Local pools have typified the childhoods of many Australians, from spending Christmas holidays by the pool with friends and family to training for an upcoming school carnival. I am sure that all members have fond memories, as I do, of fun times when they had the opportunity to go to the local pool for a swim. It is a sign of the times that growing operational costs and increasing electricity and water bills, coupled with a reduction in admissions in recent years has led to local community centres struggling to stay afloat. These growing costs have required councils to raise admission fees in order to combat

costs that were much less difficult to grapple with decades ago. For instance, a single admission fee for the swimming centres at Wallsend, Beresfield, Mayfield and Stockton now costs \$4.60, which is a significant increase in comparison with the fees from yesteryear.

I acknowledge that the cost of going for a swim has risen but it still represents excellent value for money. For example, going to the movies as a family of four or more will cost far more than spending the day at the local pool, and swimming is so much healthier and more fun. Fortunately, families have cottoned on to this fact, with Wallsend Swimming Centre lifeguard Gordon Bender stating that most of the clientele at the local swimming pool are young families and school students. Mr Bender says that each year the swimming centre hosts between 15 and 18 school carnivals as well as the Wallsend Warriors Swimming Club, which caters for children from as young as five to adults in their early 20s. Wallsend High School holds a fantastic one-week program at the Wallsend Swimming Centre that involves year 9 students instructing year 7 pupils on lifesaving skills and swimming techniques.

That is why I was surprised when very early last Friday morning at West Wallsend pool, standing at the pool edge as I donned my swimming cap and goggles, I was assailed by a group of pool walkers and lap swimmers who told me they were very concerned with Lake Macquarie City Council's latest plan to lease our council pool—privatise the pool. Westy pool, like other council pools, is renowned for its high standards, clean water, generous opening hours, well-qualified staff and reasonable admission costs. Councils and their staff know that they are much more accountable to their community than their privatised counterparts. That is why, as a long-term lap swimmer, I choose to swim at council pools. When it is cooler I swim at Westy pool, which is heated and open all year long, and when the weather heats up I swim at Wallsend and Lambton pools. I admit I am a sook; I enjoy the warm water.

Back in the office that day I spoke to council officers at Lake Macquarie City Council, who as always were very accommodating, and to councillors. While I appreciate their arguments about the increasing cost of maintenance and the many competing demands on council's resources, I do not agree that privatising assets and shedding staff is the answer. Some council facilities cost councils money to operate and will continue to do so. I ask them to balance that with the enormous benefits to our community. It is clear that the value of public pools in the community cannot be underestimated. As well as being part of the education process for students, local public pools can be sources of entertainment and fitness for everyone.

The Chief Executive Officer of the City of Greater Bendigo, Craig Niemann, has said that the proposed pool in Bendigo is "a facility that would be used by everyone in the community. There is something in it for everyone". This is a key point that should be expanded upon and emphasised as council pools cater to everyone from young children learning to swim to elderly members of the community undergoing rehabilitation for injuries, and those whom I see regularly walking in Westy pool. Hopefully, if our communities are reminded of the social and personal benefits related to using public pools, these facilities will retain their previously held position as a source of entertainment and fitness throughout society. I know I certainly will continue to use public pools for years to come.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.18 p.m.]: I commend the member for Wallsend for her support for local pools. They are a very important part of each and every local community. I suggest that the member is not a sook. She needs to take a leaf out of my book and eat more because nothing insulates like a layer of blubber.

Private members' statements concluded.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Government Response to Report

Mr Brad Hazzard, on behalf of Mr Barry O'Farrell, by leave, tabled the Government's response to report No. 2/55, entitled "Report on Recommendations of the Public Accounts Committee of the 54th Parliament", dated November 2011.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.19 p.m. until
Tuesday 22 May 2012 at 12 noon.**
