

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 24 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.

WARATAH ADVISORY AND ANDREW HUMPHERSON

Ministerial Statement

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [10.00 a.m.], by leave: I wish to make a short statement about claims made by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to my chief of staff, Andrew Humpherson. Yesterday I informed the House that Mr Humpherson worked in his own government relations consultancy business for seven months until March 211. I said:

His website has been dormant and was not switched off due to an administrative oversight. He transferred his mobile phone number when he commenced as my chief of staff. His LinkedIn profile confirms that his government relations business discontinued in March 2011.

That statement about LinkedIn was correct at the time I said it. However, I did not know at that time that the profile had only just been corrected by Mr Humpherson to reflect the reality; that is, that Mr Humpherson has not worked in government relations since he commenced employment in my office on 4 April 2011. He has received no requests to do such work, has undertaken no such work and has received no payment for such work since starting in my office. Anyone who looked at the Waratah Advisory website would have seen that it had been dormant since before the election. It contained out-of-date information and had not been updated since the election. It has now been closed.

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA

The SPEAKER: I remind members that at 10.30 a.m. in the Speaker's Garden we will be holding Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. The Premier and the Leader of the Opposition will be in attendance. I encourage all members to attend and to make a donation to this very worthy cause. The chief executive officer of the Cancer Council, Dr Andrew Penman, will also be in attendance. I encourage all members and their staff to attend this morning and to bring some cash because a great deal of merchandise will be available to be purchased as gifts for members' families and friends. We want to make a lot of money.

BIOFUELS AMENDMENT BILL 2012

TATTOO PARLOURS BILL 2012.

Messages received from the Legislative Council returning the bills without amendment.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

[During the giving of notices of motions]

Mr Daryl Maguire: Madam Speaker, I draw your attention to the length of notices of motions. There are standing orders with which members must comply. The motions that have been put on the record are far too long and I ask that you have them edited by the Clerk and reduced in size.

The SPEAKER: I will seek advice from the Clerk about the length of motions. There is no specific number of words that can be disallowed or allowed in a motion. Given the passion members feel about this subject, I will allow motions to proceed. I certainly do not want to curtail the number of words that members include. However, the Clerk and I will discuss the length of that motion and any other motions of which members give notice because time is limited on Thursday mornings.

[Later during the giving of notices of motions.]

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: Madam Speaker, I seek your ruling on the issue of members giving notice of motions on a bill that does not exist before the Parliament and, by imputation, making suggestions about a government policy that does not exist. There is the potential for misleading the House. I ask you to comment and provide a ruling on whether members can move a motion on appropriation bills that have not been laid on the table, and whether that is a permissible motion to be proposed for debate in this place.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members are entitled to move motions as they see fit. I do not think there were any personal imputations. I understand why members are giving notice of these motions, and they are entitled to do so. All sorts of motions have been moved during my nine years in this place. If I had thought they were inappropriate I would have ruled them out of order.

[Later during the giving of notices of motions.]

The SPEAKER: Time has expired for the giving of notices of motions. Given the points of order that were raised, I advise members to think about the length of the motions of which they are giving notice. The time taken this morning by some members to give their notices of motions has prevented others from giving their notices of motions. Members should consider the length of the motions of which they are giving notice so that all members have the opportunity to give notice of their motion.

ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING AND ASSESSMENT AMENDMENT (DEMOLITION ORDERS) BILL 2012

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Sonia Hornery, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [10.19 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Demolition Orders) Bill 2012. The bill seeks to address the problem of unoccupied derelict buildings that dot the main streets and business districts of cities and towns across New South Wales. I acknowledge the right of landowners to determine how their properties are utilised but it is important to balance that right by considering the interests of the community. The situation where a building can be left in such a state of neglect that it affects the amenity and enjoyment of its immediate neighbours and the safety of the community as a whole needs to be rectified. In January 2008, in my first year in Parliament, constituents in my electorate raised concerns with me about the site of the former Salvation Army Citadel at 22 Council Street, Wallsend.

The old Citadel was situated right in the centre of Wallsend's central business district. In 2005 it was sold to a consortium from Sydney. Sadly, it did nothing with it. In June 2007 floods struck the Hunter and Wallsend was hit hard by the storm and tempest. Stormwater ravaged Wallsend's central business district and many businesses were wrecked. As a result of the flooding the former Salvation Army building became increasingly run-down. By 2008 I understood the effect of this derelict building on the safety of the community. I worked with Newcastle City Council to address the issues relating to absentee landlord neglect that had left this unsecured building to become a venue for drug abuse, vandalism, squatters, rubbish and vermin. One of the local newspapers, the *Post*, described what had become of the site in a report on 5 May 2010:

Drug dealers are plying their trade in an abandoned Wallsend building which is also being used as a smoking haven for children who are wagging school When *The Post* visited the site last week, the former religious meeting hall was littered with mattresses, empty and smashed alcohol bottles, used syringes and rubbish. Fires have been lit and walls smashed and sprayed with graffiti.

Newcastle City Council attempted to have the building secured, cleaned or demolished no less than four times but it lacked the power to act. Eventually a major fire caused the building to be so structurally damaged that Fire and Rescue NSW declared the building unsafe and it was demolished. This saga demonstrates why this bill is needed. Many communities across New South Wales are afflicted by derelict buildings. Councils lack sufficient power to hold recalcitrant landlords accountable. Residents and small businesses should not have to wait until a fire before a derelict building is demolished. I made a commitment to my community before the last election that I would introduce a private member's bill to address this issue. This bill delivers on my commitment.

The Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment (Demolition Orders) Bill 2012 will amend the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to enable a local council or other relevant consent authority to give an order to demolish or remove an unoccupied building if it is unsightly and significantly detracts from the quality of the amenity of the neighbourhood. The bill will also provide that representations in relation to a proposed demolition order are to be made within the period of 10 working days following the date on which notice of the order is given. The bill will also provide that a demolition order may specify a compliance period of not less than 10 working days. Under the current Act a council may issue an order to the owners of such land to demolish unsightly buildings only if those buildings become a danger to the public or "prejudicial to occupants or persons or property in the neighbourhood." This bill will expand the powers for New South Wales councils by adopting provisions similar to those in the South Australian Local Government Act. The South Australian Local Government Act enables councils to:

Issue a demolition order where the building is unoccupied and the building is unsightly and detracts significantly from the amenity of the locality in which it is located.

This bill will also clarify and strengthen provisions relating to how councils take action. Presently, if a council wants to issue a demolition order it must first undertake several procedures, including giving reasonable notice. However, the definition of what is "reasonable notice" is unclear and is not defined in the Act. As a result issuing a demolition order can become time consuming and can further delay the removal of derelict buildings. This bill adds a definition of what constitutes a reasonable period for representations to be made by property owners once a demolition order has been given. A reasonable period is set at not less than 10 working days. This period has been taken from last year's Land and Environment Court case, *Euro Sweets (NSW) Pty Ltd v Pittwater Council*. In that case, Justice Craig stated that:

...it seems to me that ten working days in which to make some representations ... was a reasonable period of time.

This bill provides a period of not less than 10 working days for representations to be made once a demolition order is made, and not less than 10 working days before a demolition order can be executed. If a council or other relevant consent authority wanted to set a longer period for representations to be made it could do so. The provisions relating to how a council or other relevant consent authority considers those representations would remain unchanged. This bill is necessary because the problems that my community and I are facing in seeking to deal with derelict buildings are not limited to the electorate of Wallsend.

This is a problem throughout the Hunter in areas such as Hunter Street in Newcastle, High Street in Maitland and the Maitland Mall. Indeed, this is a problem throughout the State. Many members will be aware of abandoned, derelict buildings in communities that become epicentres of antisocial behaviour. Derelict buildings have a negative impact on residents, businesses and the community overall. Derelict buildings can also have a negative impact on the economy. When I was dealing with the former Salvation Army site in Wallsend one local property owner, Ms Alison Nix, said she was fearful when leaving her business at night. Another local businessman, Ty Brennock, wrote to me to say:

The old Salvation Army building in Council Street, Wallsend is a hazard, an eyesore, and a detriment to Wallsend. The owner's neglect and carelessness is disgusting.

I also note that in 2008 delegates to the Local Government Association voted to ask the New South Wales Government for more powers to deal with vacant, derelict buildings that fall into disrepair, are defaced or are inhabited by squatters. It is not good enough to maintain the status quo. Too many of our communities are suffering stagnation, when action is needed. We see the empty, run-down buildings. We want local councils to act, and councils want the power to act. This bill will give local councils the power to take on special interests outside their communities to restore a measure of local control over local communities. The Coalition went to the last election promising to return planning powers to local communities. That is what this bill is about. If the Coalition is serious about local decision-making, about creating economic opportunities and about making New South Wales number one then it should support this bill and give local communities across this State the power to renew themselves.

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

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

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

KATE SULLIVAN GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

LAUREN KAYLA FARQUHAR GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

TAYLAH DOOSEY GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

LAURA RUTLEDGE-ROBB GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

EMILY CAUNT GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

MYKENNA COLLIER GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

MEGAN FIELD GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

JOHN TURNBULL BAKING PRIZE

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates John Turnbull, of Gerringong, on receiving the award for the best sandwich sponge cake at the 2012 Sydney Royal Easter Show.
- (2) Notes that John is following in the footsteps of his late mother Norma Turnbull who was a multi award-winning show cook for many years.

MOIRA ETHERIDGE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution of Moira Etheridge in her role as Secretary of the South Precinct Committee of Kiama Municipal Council.
- (2) Thanks Moira for her dedicated service to the local Gerringong community.

JAY SEENEY MUSICAL PROJECTS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jay Seeney, of Appin, for his two musical projects and recently signing an endorsement deal with the international guitar company, Schecter Guitar Research.
- (2) Acknowledges the rest of the three local band members who all performed at the recent Sydney Royal Easter Show.
- (3) Notes the importance that music has on society and the efforts of Jay Seeney and the rest of his band.

BUXTON NETBALL CLUB THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Buxton Netball Club on celebrating its 30th anniversary at the beginning of this netball season.
- (2) Acknowledges club president Gillian O'Riordan who has led the club to many achievements during her association with the club.

WILTON PUBLIC SCHOOL WATER SAFETY INFORMATION SESSION

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Lend Lease and Surf Lifesaving who provided students of Wilton Public School an information session on water safety skills.
- (2) Notes the students learned the importance of water safety at beaches, lakes, rivers, dams and pools and were taught to avoid dangerous situations while at the beach.
- (3) Acknowledges the Principal Debra Gray's commitment to the safety of the students and for supporting the safety awareness in the community.

WOLLONDILLY ROAD SAFETY FORUM

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Macarthur Chronicle and Wollondilly Shire Council for their joint initiative in holding a road safety forum at Picton High School.
- (2) Acknowledges the commitment that the local newspaper, Macarthur Chronicle and Wollondilly Shire Council have dedicated to the awareness of road safety in Wollondilly.

TRAINWORKS THOMAS THE TANK ENGINE EVENT

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Trainworks on its successful event with Thomas the Tank Engine steam train at Thirlmere on 5 and 6 May 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the work that Chief Executive Officer Rob Austin and his team to create and manage such successful events for the community.
- (3) Notes that such events create tourism for the people of Wollondilly and over 2,700 people visited the attraction throughout the day.

WOLLONDILLY ARTS GROUP

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Wollondilly Arts Group which held its annual members' exhibition in Thirlmere recently.
- (2) Acknowledges Sue Southwood, Julie Phillips, Janet Dalton, Julie Hodges, Ester Kaserpuu and Marjorie Kay who form part of this arts group.
- (3) Notes that the arts group painted a new "Jungle Book" mural on the wall of the local scout hall.

ELDERS OLYMPICS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges Elders from the Wollondilly, Wingecarribee, Camden and Campbelltown areas who showed their sporting talent at the inaugural Elders Olympics which was held in Picton.
- (2) Notes that the event raises awareness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture while also celebrating seniors week.

LAKESLAND RURAL FIRE SERVICE AND BLAIR BRIGGS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Blair Briggs on his recent election as captain of the Lakesland Rural Fire Service.
- (2) acknowledges the dedication that all volunteers make to their local community by protecting and serving the Wollondilly community.
- (3) notes that Mr Briggs has previously served as the captain of the Picton brigade from 2005-2011.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH GOLD AWARD RECIPIENT KARLA HORN

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Karla Horn, of Billabong High School, on achieving the Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award, the highest level of the internationally recognised Duke of Edinburgh's personal development program for young people.
- (2) recognises Karla's dedication in volunteering with local community organisations for the past 12 months, hiking in Nepal and developing skills in photography and physical fitness to meet the high standards required for this award.

MIMI KINDERGARTEN SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Mimi Kindergarten, at Cronulla, on its sixtieth anniversary.
- (2) congratulates Judith Hewision on her 50 years as owner and operator of the kindergarten.
- (3) thanks Miss Hewision for her dedicated service to the local community over such a long period.

COME IN YOUTH RESOURCE CENTRE

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON—That this House:

- (1) notes the important work of the Come In Youth Resource Centre, run by St Francis Social Services in Paddington, in providing adolescent counselling and community support service to disadvantaged young people in the inner city and eastern suburbs of Sydney.
- (2) Commends law firm Freehills and the centre's Father Nick Lucas and director Ms Carol Ashmore for assisting young people with scholarships to further their education, employment and training prospects.
- (3) notes that the 2012 scholarship winners are highly dedicated to furthering their education despite their challenging personal circumstances.

NSW WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS NOMINEE JULIE SUTTON

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Julie Sutton on being named the NSW Woman of the Year 2012 nominee for the Davidson electorate.
- (2) notes Julie Sutton's long and dedicated service on Warringah Council over more than 30 years.
- (3) wishes Julie well in retirement as a Warringah councillor and thanks her for her contribution to the community.

ST IVES FESTIVAL ON THE GREEN

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA—That this House:

- (1) notes the successful annual Festival on the Green held in St Ives on 6 May 2012.
- (2) congratulates Ku-ring-gai Council and all those who were involved in its organisation or participated.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) commends the work of Chameleon, an initiative of the University of Newcastle's School of Medicine and Public Health, which provides clinical skills training for medical students.
- (2) notes the initiative is based at John Hunter Hospital Campus and comprises seminar and consulting rooms to provide students opportunities to gain strong clinical skills and rehearse in simulated clinical situations.
- (3) notes that this initiative will lead to students developing skills to better diagnose, troubleshoot and adapt to rapidly changing medical situations.

ELERMORE VALE PUBLIC SCHOOL PARENTS AND CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) notes Elermore Vale Public School's Parents and Citizens Association have supported the quality of education at the school through monthly meetings and its close relationship with school staff.
- (2) commends its objective to provide equipment and facilities for children that are not covered by funding from the Department of Education.
- (3) commends the Parents and Citizens Association for its activities.

ST JOHN AMBULANCE BICYCLE EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) notes the Hunter's St John Ambulance volunteers will be the first outside Sydney to use bicycles at major events, which will allow officers to move through crowds faster than on foot and cover greater areas.
- (2) commends the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation who provided the funds to establish the Bicycle Emergency Response Team.
- (3) praises the efforts of ambulance officers who regularly treat injuries at events.

CANTERBURY PUBLIC SCHOOL MORAN ARTS FOUNDATION WORKSHOP

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Canterbury Public School on being selected to host a 2012 Moran Arts Foundation photography workshop.
- (2) notes that Canterbury Public School was selected from over 1,000 applicants.
- (3) notes that all Australian students can enter the Moran Contemporary Photographic competition, with entries closing on 21 May 2012.

CAMPSIE EYEWATCH PROJECT

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Campsie Police on their participation in Project Eyewatch, which is an internet-based update on the Neighbourhood Watch program.
- (2) encourages the community to participate on this policing initiative by visiting www.facebook.com/campsieLAC.

CANTERBURY NATIONAL TRUST HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Canterbury City Council on hosting a free exhibition to celebrate the 2012 National Trust Heritage Festival.
- (2) notes the festival, with the theme "Amazing Stories: Innovation and Invention", was held from 14 to 29 April at Campsie Library.

GOUGH WHITLAM PARK SALTMARSH REGENERATION PROJECT

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Canterbury City Council on organising community working bees on 5 May and 2 June to fight the invasion of weeds, plant native vegetation and remove trees to regenerate and maintain the saltmarsh in Gough Whitlam Park, Undercliffe.
- (2) notes that council will provide all training, tools and equipment to volunteers.
- (3) urges the local community to volunteer and participate in the working bee to ensure this ecosystem continues its important environmental role.

TAREE POLICE AND COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUB GYMAROOS TEAM

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Bryce Fisher, Chelsea Riley, Ebony Jennings and Zoe O'Byran members of Taree PCYC on their selection in the New South Wales team to participate at the 2012 Australian Gymaroo Acrobat Championships.
- (2) notes these gymnasts qualified at the NSW Acrobatic Gymnastic Championships in April and that the sport of gymaroo involves strength, agility, flexibility and grace.
- (3) notes that Taree PCYC Gymaroos is well known in Australia and overseas for its Gymaroo and Gymjoey performance teams.

MANNING GREAT LAKES RIDING FOR THE DISABLED

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Tara Copp, Vicki Harris, Ryan McNeil and Patrick Bulbert, of Manning Great Lakes Riding for the Disabled, on their participation in the 2012 Sydney Royal Easter Show and on winning ribbons.

- (2) notes that each rider competed against 30 other riders in the mounted games, which involved bending, flags, barrel racing and key hole events.
- (3) notes that each rider qualified for the Sydney Show by achieving outstanding results in the mounted games held at Riding for the Disabled Association centres throughout New South Wales.

PARACYCLING CHAMPION MATT FORMSTON

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Matt Formston, a former Nabiac resident, on winning two gold medals at the 2012 Paracycling National Road Championships.
- (2) notes that Matt won the 96 kilometre tandem road race in the blind class and won the 24 kilometre tandem national time trial.
- (3) notes that Matt is unable to attend the 2012 London Para Olympics and is instead aiming to participate in the 2013 Paracycling World Cup in Canada.
- (4) notes that Matt has suffered from macular degeneration and only started to ride four years ago.

MANNING RIVER DRAGON BOAT CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Tara Manahan, Manning Dragon Boating Club, on winning a bronze medal at the Australian Dragon Boat Championships held in Melbourne in April.
- (2) notes that Sean Page, Emily Thompson and Sam Thompson were members of a junior crew known as the Torpedoes.
- (3) notes that the Torpedoes will travel to the World Club Crew Championships in Hong Kong in June 2012.

CUNDLETOWN MUSEUM

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Cundletown and Lower Manning Historical Society on the opening of the Cundletown Museum at the Cundletown Hall in Main Street.
- (2) commends Margaret Love and the committee on their work for the society and preparing the museum for its opening on 29 April 2012.

WINGHAM RIFLE CLUB OPEN DAY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Wingham Rifle Club on organising its recent open day.
- (2) notes that more than 185 people, including families and children, attended the day.
- (3) congratulates Dennis Ruprecht and the committee on a well-organised day.

KILLABAKH GARDEN CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Killabakh Garden Club for its recent open gardens day held on 29 April 2012.
- (2) notes that six members of the club opened their private gardens to the public and that more than 950 people attended and raised \$10,000 for Ronald McDonald House.
- (3) congratulates George Hoad and the committee on their work in preparing their gardens and promoting the district.

BOWELSCAN PROGRAM

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) congratulates the members of the Rotary Club of Myall Coast and the Myall Pharmacy Tea Gardens on their participation and promotion of the Bowelscan program.
- (2) notes the Bowelscan project is helping increase awareness and community knowledge of bowel cancer.

CIVIL ENGINEER KEVIN SCOTT HUNT

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Civil Engineer Kevin Scott Hunt, of Kenthurst, on celebrating his sixtieth birthday on 1 May 2012.
- (2) notes his contribution to engineering and wishes him continued good health and happiness.

GRAFTON SHOW

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Clarence Pastoral and Agricultural Society for staging the 146th annual Grafton Show held on 4 and 5 May 2012.
- (2) acknowledges the commitment and dedication of its current President, Alan Morgan, Show Secretary, Sue Patricks, and other members of the Show Society Committee.
- (3) congratulates Lisa Green on being named Miss Grafton Showgirl and Ashleigh Griffin on being runner-up, and acknowledges the hard work in preparing the showgirl entrants by co-ordinator, Katrina Norton.
- (4) acknowledges the contribution made by outgoing Showgirl, Madeline McDonald, in representing Grafton throughout 2011.

MACLEAN SHOW

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Maclean Show Society on staging a successful 121st annual Maclean Show held on 1 and 2 May 2012.
- (2) acknowledges the commitment and dedication of its current President, Brian Ferrie, Show Secretary, Dawn Stewart, Chief Ring Steward, Robbie Sutherland, Co-ordinator of the pavilions and fine arts displays, Fay Johnson, and all other members of the Show Society Committee.
- (3) congratulates Allira Farlow on being crowned Maclean Showgirl 2012, and acknowledges the hard work put in preparing the showgirl entrants by co-ordinator, Nancy Brown.
- (4) acknowledges the contribution made by outgoing Showgirl, Laura Towell, in representing Maclean throughout 2011.

CASINO RESCUE SQUAD

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) acknowledges the work the Casino Rescue Squad does in the Richmond Valley council area, particularly over the past month dealing with road fatalities in the area.
- (2) pays tribute to the squad executive: Philip Cornish, President; Lynda Cole, Secretary; Barry O'Connell, Treasurer; Brian Boyd, Squad Captain; and original members Brian Boyd, Bill Evans, Eric Box and Noel Ball who have been active members of the squad since its establishment in 1979.
- (3) congratulates these unsung heroes on their professionalism in carrying out their duties under difficult circumstances.

BELMONT CRICKET CLUB

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) notes the Belmont Cricket Club has been playing in the Newcastle District Cricket competition since 1945, and encompasses a large junior base from under 8s to senior first grade.
- (2) congratulates Jace Lawson on his appointment as a life member of the club.
- (3) congratulates Mark Littlewood on being awarded Cricketer of the Year and Jonathan Laverick, Junior Cricketer of the Year.
- (4) acknowledge the achievement of Daniel Russell who was named Clubman of the Year for his co-ordination of the lower grades.

GALGABBA LEARNING COMMUNITY

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) notes the Galgabba Learning Community is made up of Swansea High School, Marks Point Public School, Blacksmiths Public School, Nords Wharf Public School, Swansea Public School, Pelican Flats Public School and Caves Beach Public School.

- (2) congratulates the Galgabba Learning Community on the unveiling of the big picture project, a mural which encompasses the unique landmarks and features of the local area on 4 April 2012.
- (3) acknowledges the work of Lauren Coburn who co-ordinated the project as well as Art Teacher Penelope Buckley, Swansea High School Principal Greg Smith, Aboriginal Artist Buddy Gibson, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer Lynn Brown and over 80 high school and primary school students, parents, teachers and community members.

LAKE MACQUARIE SUPPORT SERVICES INC. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND HIGH TEA EVENT

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) congratulates Lake Macquarie Support Services Inc staff Cheryl Flett, Tracey Guthrie, Ruth Peacock, Belinda Cunningham, Val Suska and Peta McGrath and volunteers Mike Vorucinski, Janice Matthews, Rosana Hopkins, Val Johns and Heather Peacock on their organisation of the information technology and high tea event held on 21 March 2012.
- (2) notes that the event was very well received by a large number of elderly local residents.
- (3) acknowledges the Swansea Mens Shed, the Swansea RSL Club and Fassi Computing for volunteering support for the event.

MANNERING PARK JEWEL BY THE LAKE FESTIVAL

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) notes the success of the Jewel by the Lake Festival, held on 25 March 2012, at Mannering Park in attracting an estimated 3,000 visitors.
- (2) congratulates Event Manager Julez Smith, Mannering Park Community Inc. President Bruce Wall, Secretary Jennifer Petersen and Public Officer Rob Regnis on organising the event.

MANNERING PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) notes Mannering Park Public School celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in September 2011.
- (2) recognises that Mannering Park Public School provides quality education programs for all students and that all students are encouraged to excel and reach their full potential.
- (3) acknowledges the work of Mannering Park Public School principal Annette Parrey, teachers, staff and the Parents and Citizens Association executive.
- (4) thanks the reunion organising committee consisting of Jennifer Peterson, Lorna Tomkins, Esther Dean and Ailsa Graham.

RIDE FOR THE FALLEN

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) notes that 18 New South Wales police officers left Sydney on Monday 30 April 2012 to join the Combined Law Enforcement Agencies of Texas in the 11th annual "Ride for the Fallen" in Austin, Texas, United States of America.
- (2) congratulates Superintendent Craig Rae and Inspector Bruce McGregor of the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command on their participation in the ride.
- (3) notes Australian participants in the ride will be raising money for Police Legacy in Australia.

BELMONT SENIORS INDOOR BOWLS DAY

Mr GARRY EDWARDS—That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Belmont Senior Citizen Wednesday Indoor Bowls and Coastal Lakes Indoor Bowls Association on organising the seniors indoor bowls day held at the Belmont Seniors Hall on 21 March 2012.
- (2) notes that more than 70 bowlers participated in the event.
- (3) Acknowledges Belmont Senior Citizen Wednesday Indoor Bowls Secretary/Treasurer Ron McCreeth, Coastal Lakes Indoor Bowls Association President Bill Mason, Treasurer Peter Yates and Secretary Tony Bergin for coordinating this successful event.

AUSTRALIAN SMALL BUSINESS CHAMPION AWARDS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Advantage Psychology and Go Bananas, of St Marys, and Wild Ride Australia, of Colyton, for being named finalists for the 2012 Australian Small Business Champion Awards.
- (2) Recognises the hard work of these small businesses and the contribution they make to the local economy and community.

MISS DEAF AUSTRALIA RUNNER-UP LAUREN PATRICK

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulate Lauren Patrick, of Colyton, on being the runner up Miss Deaf Australia.
- (2) Wishes Lauren the best of luck in the Miss Deaf International in Turkey later this year.

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND BOXING TITLES MEDALLISTS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 14-year-old Ryan Fletcher-Smith, of St Clair, on winning a silver medal, 10-year-old Jarrod Kosorukow, of Colyton, on winning a silver medal and 12-year-old Jordan Hogan, of St Clair, on winning a gold medal at the South East Queensland Boxing Titles.
- (2) Congratulates St Marys Youth Club, at Neil's Gym, for its fantastic results.

BATTER AND WICKETKEEPER OF THE YEAR KATHERINE WONG

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates Katherine Wong, of Orchard Hills, on being named the under 17 years Batter of the Year and under 17 years Wicketkeeper of the Year at the Sydney Women's Cricket Association annual awards.

ROTARY PRIDE OF WORKMANSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT GARY WARRICK

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Gary Warrick, a photographer with the Penrith Star, on being awarded the Rotary Pride in Workmanship award.
- (2) Notes the commitment of the Rotary Club of the Lower Blue Mountains to encouraging pride in personal performance in the workplace.

ST MARYS LOCAL AREA COMMAND

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Notes the good work of Senior Constables Linda Thomas and Kelly Paton, of St Marys Local Area Command, to encourage the reporting of domestic violence.
- (2) Supports the strong stance of St Marys Police against domestic violence in the community.

PAPAL KNIGHTHOOD ORDER OF ST SYLVESTER RECIPIENT JOHN THOMAS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates John Thomas, of St Clair, on being awarded a Papal Knighthood Order of Saint Sylvester for meritorious service to the community.
- (2) Notes Mr Thomas' contribution to the Catholic Diocese of Parramatta over the last 30 years, including 20 years as chairman of the Diocesan Finance Council, and his involvement in rebuilding St Paul's Cathedral in Parramatta.

CANTERBURY BANKSTOWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION

Mr GLENN BROOKES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Roger Pitt, President, and Mr Paul Burgess, General Secretary, of the Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association for their tireless efforts in promoting tennis within the community.
- (2) Acknowledges all committee members, volunteers and players of the Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association for their commitment to the sport of tennis and its development within the Bankstown local government area.
- (3) Wishes the Canterbury Bankstown Tennis Association, its committee members, volunteers and players every success during the 2012 tennis season.

MISS LEBANON AUSTRALIA BEAUTY PAGEANT

Mr GLENN BROOKES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Joseph Khoury, OAM, Director of the Miss Lebanon Australia Charitable Association and the committee of the Lebanese business associates for presenting the 2012 Miss Lebanon Australia Beauty Pageant.
- (2) Acknowledges the support of The Future (Lebanese Arabic newspaper) in organising the event.
- (3) Congratulates the winners and all participants.
- (4) Recognises that the Miss Lebanon Australia Beauty Pageant has been successfully running for 12 consecutive years.
- (5) Praises the Lebanese community for bringing to Australia cultural events that can be enjoyed by all within the community regardless of their nationality.

PITTWATER LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ROB STOKES—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the 20th anniversary of the proclamation of the Pittwater Local Government area in 2012.
- (2) Notes that Pittwater Council's historic succession was conceived following a people's referendum and was a defining moment in the formation of the Pittwater community.
- (3) Commends all those that have contributed to the establishment and success of Pittwater Council over the past 20 years.
- (4) Congratulates Pittwater Council on its ongoing and effective advocacy for the Pittwater community's unique lifestyle and diverse natural environment.

BANDAGED BEAR AMBASSADOR HOLLY SULTANA

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Holly Sultana, of Surveyors Creek Public School, on being named as an ambassador for the 2012 Bandaged Bear Appeal.
- (2) Notes Holly's determination in learning to write even though she has no movement in her fingers or wrists.

ANGEL FLIGHT PILOT MICHAEL SCARCE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that Michael Scarce has been a volunteer pilot for Angel Flight for 8 years.
- (2) Acknowledges that Angel Flight play an important role within the community and thanks Michael for his years of service to such a worthy organisation.
- (3) Notes that Michael's business Camden Hire donates time, equipment and money to many local charities.
- (4) Acknowledges Michael for his dedication and commitment to the local Camden community, through his role in Camden Rotary and through Camden Hire.

CAMDEN WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE EVENT

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the local schools, groups and individuals who participated in the Leukaemia Foundation World's Greatest Shave.
- (2) Notes Rebecca Franklin's effort raising \$8,000.
- (3) Notes the Princess Maddy group, headed by Nat and Phil Gornall, raised over \$11,000.
- (4) Notes Samantha Harkness who raised \$2,030 and cut 52 centimetres off her hair to donate to the Little Princess Trust in Britain, an organisation that turns human hair into wigs for children suffering hair loss from cancer treatment.
- (5) Acknowledges the hard work and dedication of all the volunteers and businesses that supported or donated to this event.

SQUASH CHAMPION VANESSA GRAHAM

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Vanessa Graham on becoming the first New South Wales player to be crowned the Australian under 13 years girls junior squash champion.

- (2) Notes Vanessa's commitment and dedication to her sport.
- (3) Wishes Vanessa well when she competes at the upcoming State age titles in Coffs Harbour.
- (4) Acknowledges what a wonderful ambassador she is for her school, team and community.

CAMDEN EEL-A-THON AND DAVID FUNNELL

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates David Funnell for running the annual Eel-a-thon at Harrington Park and notes that 16 eels and one carp were caught on the day.
- (2) Acknowledges the importance of such an event in the community and the balance it brings to the natural environment of Harrington Park Lake.
- (3) Acknowledges the 100 young chefs who participated in the under 15 years barbeque master chef competition held in conjunction with the Eel-a-thon.
- (4) Notes David Funnell's dedication to families and to the local area.

ORAN PARK ANGLICAN COLLEGE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Principal Ross Whelan on the official opening of Oran Park Anglican School.
- (2) Congratulates the children of the school for their wonderful performances at the official opening.
- (3) Acknowledges the impact this school will have on this new and growing community.

FOOTBALLER AKIEL RAFFIE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the achievements of Akiel Raffie who participated in the under 9 years age World Football Group tour.
- (2) Notes that Akiel has been invited to train with the Preston North End Club in England later this year.
- (3) Notes that Akiel currently trains with the South West Wanderers.
- (4) Wishes Akiel all the best in a promising football career.

CAMDEN LITTLE ATHLETICS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Camden Little Athletics who had 38 athletes compete in the recent State Championships at Sydney Olympic Park.
- (2) Congratulates Matilda Offord on winning a gold medal in the under 13 years girls 3,000 metres.
- (3) Congratulates Vincent Hreszczuk on winning silver in the under 12 years boys shot put.
- (4) Congratulate Renee Fassolis on winning dual bronze medals in the under 12 years girls discus and shot put.
- (5) Notes the efforts of Morgan Kitchener, representing her club at state level for 7 consecutive years and for making the finals in the under 15 years girls 1,500 metres race.
- (6) Acknowledges the above participants as wonderful ambassadors for their schools, team and community.

MACARTHUR HOCKEY PLAYERS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jackson Harrison, Nathanael Stewart and Paul Dawson on their selection to the Australian Institute of Sport emerging talent squad for hockey.
- (2) Notes that the trio play together for the Macarthur Skylarks Hockey Club.
- (3) Congratulates Nathanael on making the under 16 years Australian schoolboy team to tour Europe.
- (4) Wishes all the boys well in the upcoming State championships in May.
- (5) Acknowledges the players as wonderful ambassadors for their schools, team and community.

LIAM AND KIERAN O'LEARY AUSTRALIAN SOFTBALL TEAM SELECTION

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Liam and Kieran O'Leary on their selection in the Australian softball team.
- (2) Notes that Liam and Kieran are the first brothers to represent Australia in the same team.
- (3) Wishes Liam and Kieran all the best for their future in their representative softball careers.
- (4) Acknowledges Liam and Kieran as wonderful ambassadors for their school, teams and community.

COMMUNITY LINKS WOLLONDILLY

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends Joan Derks, of Thirlmere, who has launched the winter appeal to collect and distribute non-perishable food, first held three years ago.
- (2) Acknowledges the commitment that Community Links crisis worker Tracie Dalton makes to the community in assisting at least six families per week with food parcels.
- (3) Notes that for the last three years Mrs Derks has partnered with Community Links, Wollondilly, to collect canned food and distribute food parcels.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY HAWKESBURY CAMPUS ANZAC DAY COMMEMORATION

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Notes that UWS Hawkesbury commemorated Anzac day, with guest speaker retired Wing Commander Terence O'Brien.
- (2) Acknowledges the men and women who have served in our armed forces.
- (3) Recognises former students from UWS Hawkesbury (formerly the Hawkesbury Agricultural College Richmond) who served in World War I and World War II.
- (4) Thanks UWS Connect, students Amy Blaxenall and Daniel Twyford, from UWS Residential College, Father Walter Fogarty and Dr Richard Thomas and Dr Barry McGlasson from the Hawkesbury Alumni Chapter.

HAWKESBURY RIDING CLUB

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Hawkesbury Riding Club held a showjumping and training day at the Hawkesbury Showground in March 2012.
- (2) Thanks the President Wendy Pike, Vice Presidents Helen Mackay and Peter Snitch and other committee members for the work they do for the equine industry in New South Wales.

ST GEORGE ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT RETIREES

Mr MARK COURE—That this House notes the work of the St George Branch of the Association of Independent Retirees, a volunteer organisation that works to advance the lifestyle of Australians in or approaching retirement.

OATLEY ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the sacrifices of the Anzacs in World War I and of all servicemen and women since.
- (2) Reflects on the deeper meaning of Anzac day, and the sacrifice that it represents.
- (3) Notes the Anzac day services held at the Mortdale and Oatley RSL, the Riverwood Australian Legion of Ex servicemen and Women and the St George Masonic Club.

PEAKHURST BOWLING AND RECREATION CLUB

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Commends the efforts of Peakhurst Bowling Club for raising much needed funds for charity groups in the local area.
- (2) Applauds the donors and the work of volunteers for assisting at the charity function on 23 April 2012.

LUGARNO PUBLIC SCHOOL ANZAC DAY ASSEMBLY

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes Lugarno Public School held an Anzac day assembly on 26 April 2012.
- (2) Recognises the students of Lugarno Public School for their maturity and recognition of the great sacrifices made by Australia's ex-servicemen and women.

CHINESE PARENTS ASSOCIATION—CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES INC.

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the launch of the Chinese Parents Association brochure, Children with Disabilities, held at the at Club Central Hurstville on 28 April 2012.
- (2) Applauds the association's tireless advocacy for children with disabilities and their families.
- (3) Commends the work of volunteers who offer their time and skills to assist the association in providing services to people with disabilities and their families.

MORTDALE FIRE STATION OPEN DAY

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the recent open day at Mortdale Fire Station, which gave the station the opportunity to showcase its new fire truck to the community.
- (2) Commends the outstanding work of local fire fighters.

DHARAWAL NATIONAL PARK

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the establishment of Dharawal National Park, the State's newest national park, on 5 May 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the work of activists who have campaigned since the 1980s for Dharawal to become a national park.

ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA MEMORY WALK AND JOG

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes Alzheimer's Australia memory walk and jog was held at Leichhardt Park on 6 May 2012.
- (2) Applauds Alzheimer's Australia for its leadership in dementia advocacy, awareness and understanding.
- (3) Congratulates the efforts of all who participated in the events.

AUSTRALIA-CHINA RELATIONS

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Australia Chinese diplomatic ties.
- (2) Recognises the mutual benefits that these ties have brought both nations, particularly noting that China has become one of Australia's largest trading partners.
- (3) Further recognises the substantial cultural enrichment that Chinese migrants have brought to our local communities.

PORT MACQUARIE FEMALE TRIATHLETES

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS—That this House congratulates Kate Lister, Melinda Cockshutt and Belinda Johnson on their qualification to represent Australia in the Triathlon World Championships to be held in New Zealand in October.

LIL BANDITZ KREW

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Lil Banditz Krew, from Menai, won the 2012 Channel Ten series of Young Talent Time.
- (2) Congratulates the members of the dance group, aged 8 to 15 years, on winning the talent competition and the \$100,000 prize.
- (3) Congratulates their local dance studio Planet Dance at Menai on this achievement.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH GOLD AWARD RECIPIENT WILLIAM PARISH

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates William Parish, a student at James Sheehan Catholic High School in Orange, on successfully achieving his goal of a Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.
- (2) Notes this achievement and the inspiration that his success will have on other young people.
- (3) Wishes William Parish success in his future studies and career ambitions.

TRIBUTE TO JANE BRAY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the passing of well known Mudgee resident Jane Bray on 29 March 2012.
- (2) Notes that Ms Bray was wheelchair bound due to multiple sclerosis and was instrumental in the formation of the Mudgee Access Committee.
- (3) Notes the significant voluntary service that Ms Bray gave to the Mudgee Access Committee, which was recognised with a Mudgee Shire Council Award in 2004.
- (4) Offers condolences to Jane Bray's family.

MUDGEE RACE CLUB LIFE MEMBER RAY GOOLEY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ray Gooley on being bestowed with life membership of the very successful Mudgee Race Club.
- (2) Recognises the outstanding service that Mr Gooley has given to the Mudgee Race Club including a number of years as chairman of the club and as a member of the committee for more than 20 years.
- (3) Notes Mr Gooley, a veterinarian by profession has also provided his services as club veterinarian during many race meetings in Mudgee.
- (4) Wish Mr Gooley good health in the future and further enjoyment from his involvement with Mudgee Race Club.

SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARD RECIPIENT CHRISTINE WESTON

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Christine Weston, of Cumnock, on winning the 2012 Spirit of Community Leadership Award at the Women and Leadership Australian Conference held in Sydney on 3 May 2012.
- (2) Notes Christine Weston organised the Rent a Farmhouse project that re-vitalised the Cumnock community and has been adopted in other rural centres.
- (3) Notes Christine Weston has been instrumental in promoting Cumnock's Animals on Bikes sculptures and the local She-Art groups.
- (4) Thanks Christine Weston for her community involvement and wishes her every success in her future endeavours.

BAULKHAM HILLS AUSTRALIAN RULES FOOTBALL CLUB FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House acknowledges and commends the fundraising efforts of the Baulkham Hills Australian Rules Football Club in support of breast cancer research and the McGrath Foundation.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH GOLD AWARD RECIPIENT THERESE CANTY

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House commends and congratulates Therese Canty for being awarded the gold Duke of Edinburgh Award by the Governor of New South Wales.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH GOLD AWARD RECIPIENT TREVOR WILLIAMS

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT—That this House commends and congratulates Trevor Williams for being awarded the gold Duke of Edinburgh Award by the Governor of New South Wales.

REFUGEE CHILDREN SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAM

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acclaims Dale Christian School which has commenced a new pilot program for refugee children who have little or no formal education.

- (2) Notes the refugees have migrated from war-torn countries in Africa and have been unable to have an education due to political instability in their countries.
- (3) Commends refugee support provider Sister Di Santleben who instigated the scheme.

HUNTER UNITED NETBALL TEAM

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates former national netball league players Kelly Pepper, Tiffany Lincoln and Bronwyn Denham for forming the successful Hunter United team, which is now placed in the top division in the New South Wales State League.
- (2) Commends the importance of local sport as it encourages participation in sporting activities and a sense of belonging within the community.

LAMBTON-NEW LAMBTON LIONESSE CLUB

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Lioness Club of Lambton-New Lambton on the organisation of fundraising activities and its continued donations to the Samaritans, Stockton Hospital Welfare Association, Australian Lions Foundation disaster appeal, Lions NSW-ACT Save Sight and Public Health Care Foundation, Sister Annie Laure "Make Today Count" charity and to those disadvantaged in the community.
- (2) Recognises the great commitment to the continued activities by President and Secretary of the Lioness Club, Elizabeth McHugh and her committee.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.

Community recognition notices agreed to.

UNIVERSAL PRESCHOOL EDUCATION

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.30 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that Australia is moving towards providing universal access to one year of preschool education whereas most OECD countries offer universal preschool education for two years;
- (2) notes that the benefits of two years of preschool education are well established;
- (3) calls on the Government to introduce a scheme for an additional year of public preschool for two days per week for all children in New South Wales;
- (4) calls on the Government to introduce a first stage of the scheme that offers an additional year of preschool to 10,000 children from Aboriginal families and disadvantaged communities; and
- (5) calls on the Government to work with the Commonwealth to provide all children with access to two years of preschool by 2018.

The Greens believe preschool education should be free and accessible to all. This is an issue of utmost importance in my electorate of Balmain and, I am sure, in all other electorates. There is a significant body of international research supporting the enormous developmental benefits for children of quality preschool education. The benefits of early childhood education are particularly significant for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Benefits include important learning and educational outcomes in addition to the improved development of social skills such as communication, teamwork and friendship building. Professor Tony Vinson, an authority on education, conducted research on the benefits of free preschool classes in public schools and the inadequacy of the current provision.

Professor Vinson argued that the cost of preschool education must be weighed against the potential savings in other areas—that is, expenditure in preschool education can save in other areas in the long term. Providing children with a better grounding in their social and academic education means that there is less chance they will end up unemployed, have contact with the criminal justice system or suffer from preventable ill health. The Greens took to the election a preschool initiative that would offer two years of free preschool education for two days a week for all children in New South Wales. We understand that financial constraints exist, so our view is that there should be a first stage of a policy that will offer 10,000 children the chance to enter a

government preschool for an additional year. Places will be targeted to Indigenous families and disadvantaged communities. Of course, the Government must work with the Commonwealth to extend access then to two years of preschool for all children by 2018.

The estimated additional cost of this first stage is \$28 million per year for additional teachers and \$100 million capital work in the first year to build additional classrooms. The flow-on benefits from government investment in two years of preschool far outweigh the costs. A strong and clear commitment to equitable access to at least two years of quality preschool education for every child is the key to investing in the next generation and building a fair, successful and cohesive society. On 29 November 2008 the Council of Australian Governments endorsed the major National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. Under this national partnership the Australian Government has now entered into bilateral agreements with all State and Territory governments. These agreements outline how each jurisdiction is to achieve universal access. The 2010 annual report on the national partnership stated:

A major priority for the preschool funding reforms and funding increases in NSW under both the PIRP and UA has been to put downward pressure on preschool fees. A particular priority has been to reduce fees for Aboriginal children and children from low income families for whom fees are recognised as a significant barrier to preschool access.

Despite this, the Government has introduced a policy that is impacting significantly on the accessibility of preschools. Indeed, New South Wales is already falling below our benchmark target for "the proportion of children in the preschool age group who are enrolled in ... an early childhood education program". In 2009 the benchmark result was only 81.1 per cent; the target in 2010 was 94.6 per cent, yet the benchmark result was only 86.2 per cent. The overwhelming majority of public schools in Western Australia, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory provide free preschool. According to the "Report on Government Services 2012", New South Wales has the highest proportion of private fee-paying preschools of any State, which is 40 per cent. In a press release last year the Minister for Education said:

We lag behind other States and Territories in both participation rates and affordability. The situation is unacceptable, with considerable research showing quality early childhood education can significantly improve a child's later life and economic prospects.

In 2006 the Productivity Commission noted that New South Wales has the highest fees for preschool and the lowest rates of participation. The Government's decision to impose fees on preschools and free public schools is incompatible with the Council of Australian Governments' agenda on increasing affordability of access to preschool, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Participation in preschool has been strongly linked to the availability of free preschool education. Researchers Andrew Dowling and Kate O'Malley of the Australian Council for Educational Research, on page 6 of the "Preschool education in Australia" paper, concluded:

It remains the case that the states with relatively high rates of preschool participation in Australia are those that provide effectively free, government funded preschool services that are largely stand alone and integrated with schools.

The decision to introduce fees for public preschools has impacted on enrolments in my electorate, as I am sure it has in many other electorates. The New South Wales Teachers Federation is undertaking a survey of public preschool teachers and principals to look at the impact of the introduction of these fees. I will carefully review this data as soon as it is available, and I call on the Minister to do the same. I also note that the New South Wales Government's submission to the Australian Government's review of funding in 2011 stated that the gap in educational achievement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children was due in part to lower levels of attendance at preschools. That is a critical issue because we know that the significance of this is compounded by the fact that many public preschools in which fees have now been introduced are located in disadvantaged areas.

From reports that many preschools are suffering falling enrolments we can deduce the potential impacts of the introduction of these fees on the long-term development and educational outcomes of Aboriginal students, in addition to the many other social and economic indicators to which the achievement of quality education is linked. As we know, equitable access to preschool education can have transformational impacts for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby contributing significantly to breaking the cycle of intergenerational poverty and disadvantage. This issue strikes at the heart of what we as a community mean when we say that we are committed to equity. The New South Wales Government has stated clearly in its education commitments as part of the national partnership that we are committed to equity as a community. So there can be no more substantial and proven action than providing at least two years of free and accessible quality preschool education for our children. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyong) [10.37 a.m.]: I thank the member for Balmain for drawing to the attention of the House the important topic of early childhood education. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the shadow Minister for Education and Training, who intends to talk on the issue. The New South Wales Government has committed to a significant reform agenda in this area—one which cannot be underestimated in terms of its size, scope and the changes required of the sector. This Government believes that to get the best start in life all children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, need access to quality early childhood education before they commence formal schooling. We believe early childhood education is vital to building strong foundations for lifelong learning, and that is why we moved responsibility for early childhood education and care into the Education and Communities portfolio.

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education governments across Australia have agreed to improve the availability and accessibility of early childhood education. Under this agreement we are committed to ensuring that by 2013 all children in New South Wales have access to preschool programs in the year before they start school. This universal access target means that New South Wales will need to further increase its preschool participation rates. The target has been confirmed in NSW 2021, which is our 10-year plan to rebuild the economy, return quality services, renovate infrastructure, strengthen our local environment and communities, and restore accountability to government. We are making sound progress towards that target and the Government is determined to achieve it.

Many of our long day care centres have qualified early childhood teachers—indeed, New South Wales led the way nationally in this regard long before national targets were set to lift the qualification levels of workers in this sector. Many children get access to quality early childhood education programs through their long day care centre before they reach the minimum school starting age in New South Wales, which is 4½. Families in New South Wales then have further choices for their children. They can stay with a long day care program if they feel the quality is right, or they can enrol their child in a preschool or in school. The early childhood education sector in New South Wales is a lot better integrated and richer in opportunity than some might suggest. Of course there are problems that need to be dealt with.

The biggest were created by the previous Government, and we are moving to fix them. If one asks any parent what the biggest obstacle to preschool participation is, one is likely to get a one-word answer: affordability. Affordability is the key to access. Under the previous Labor Government, New South Wales families were saddled with the highest preschool fees in the country, and we have been left with a funding system that is complicated, inefficient and does not deliver fundamental outcomes. This is why the Government ordered a re-examination of funding of early childhood education in New South Wales, which has looked at issues of affordability, participation, and the needs of children and their families.

This review's recommendations for a more efficient, equitable and transparent funding system will be released later this year. In this financial year alone the Government has allocated more than \$140 million in funding for early childhood education and care. This significant investment is supported by additional Commonwealth funding of \$279 million over five years to support progress towards universal access to preschool programs in New South Wales. This funding is currently being invested in a number of important initiatives that aim to increase not just preschool affordability but also accessibility and quality. The review will recommend ways of increasing the effectiveness of these investments. In order to achieve the universal access target we need to keep our eyes on the ball and focus our efforts and our investment. We need to address the barriers to preschool participation. We also need to support the early childhood sector to build the capacity required to achieve our goal.

New South Wales already has a lot to be proud of in terms of progress towards our shared universal access goals. Compared with other States and Territories we are in front in a number of areas. We have made excellent progress towards increasing participation rates for Aboriginal children and children from low-income families; we have the best-qualified early childhood workforce in the country; families looking for preschool programs can choose from a variety of settings—community preschools, government preschools and long day care centres—and we are one of the top performers on the Australian Early Development Index, which measures children's development as they enter school. This result reflects the strength of our early childhood sector. As I have already stated, the Government believes we need to focus our efforts and our funding in order to achieve the goal of universal access to preschool programs for children in the year before they start school. I am pleased that early childhood education remains of significant interest and a subject of discussion within our community and this House. Again I thank the member for Balmain for bringing this matter to the attention of the House and acknowledge the presence of the shadow Minister for Education and Training. I hope that Labor, Liberal and The Greens members support the motion.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [10.42 a.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I speak on the motion moved by the member for Balmain. The benefits of high-quality, early childhood care and education are well known, and previous speakers have alluded to them. Many studies have demonstrated this. Probably one of the most well known and most often quoted is the HighScope Perry Preschool Study, a landmark long-term study that examined the effects of high-quality care and education on low-income three- and four-year-olds. That study showed that adults at age 40 who participated in a preschool program in the early years have higher earnings, are more literate, have committed fewer crimes and are more likely to have graduated from high school. The study documented a return to society of more than \$16 for every tax dollar invested in high-quality care and education.

The study, which was undertaken in the United States, clearly demonstrates that investing in high-quality preschool and early childhood education makes good sense economically and socially. Other studies have been done in Australia to demonstrate the benefits of high-quality early childhood education experience, including the work done by Professor Tony Vinson. For some time there has been a strong reform agenda in early childhood education and this was given a significant boost in 2007 when the Council of Australian Governments under Labor identified that early childhood education and care was a key issue. I am proud that when we were in government we significantly increased funding for community preschools to improve access through the Preschool Investment and Reform Plan. It was pleasing to hear the Government, through the member for Wyong, acknowledge some of the great strengths of the early childhood care and education sector in New South Wales.

Even the member for Wyong would have to acknowledge that those strengths have not just occurred in the past 12 months but are due to the hard work and investment of Labor governments over successive terms to make this a priority. In 2009 New South Wales entered into the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. The objectives of this partnership, which have already been commented upon, are closely aligned to the objectives implemented in New South Wales through the Preschool Investment and Reform Plan. The objectives include providing universal access to 15 hours a week education and care for all children in the year before school by 2013; increasing participation rates to 95 per cent, particularly for Indigenous and disadvantaged children; and ensuring that cost is not a barrier to access for families.

It is important to note that New South Wales, unlike other States, has had a strong regulatory standard for early childhood services. This has meant that children access high-quality preschool programs when they attend a long day care centre. When one considers the data for participation rates in New South Wales it is important to look at participation rates not just in preschools but also in long day care because many long day care centres in New South Wales offer a preschool program, as they are required to do under the regulations. We have always been proud of that in New South Wales because it is quite different from childcare and preschool systems in other States. It is important that the House debate this issue at this time because we know that action taken by the O'Farrell Government in its first budget to increase fees for public preschools has impacted on access levels. So this is an important issue for the member for Balmain to highlight. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [10.46 a.m.]: Before I commence my contribution in support of the motion I draw to the attention of the House the presence in the public gallery of Ian Braund and Beau Braund, grandson and great-grandson of Lieutenant-Colonel George Frederick Braund. I am very proud to have them in the gallery. They are respected members of my electorate. I thank the member for Balmain for highlighting a topic that is very important to this Government. The Government recognises that there is an extensive body of research showing that early childhood education is important for children's social and intellectual development and is especially beneficial to disadvantaged children. There is also a body of research indicating that it is the quality of early childhood education that is important rather than the quantity.

That is why the Government is implementing the national quality framework and is committed to achieving the national goal of universal access to early childhood education under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education. Under this agreement we are committed to ensuring that by 2013 all children in New South Wales have access to preschool programs in the year before they start school. Importantly, these preschool programs are to be delivered by university-qualified early childhood teachers. This target is confirmed in NSW 2021, our 10-year plan to rebuild the economy, return quality services, renovate infrastructure, strengthen our local environment and communities, and restore accountability to government.

The New South Wales Government is pleased to see a focus on quality within national reforms of early childhood education and care. For many years, families and children in New South Wales have enjoyed strong regulatory standards that require early childhood teachers to be employed in any centre-based services with 30 children or more regardless of whether the service is a preschool or a long day care centre. There are already

more than 4,000 degree-qualified early childhood teachers working in preschools and long day care centres across New South Wales. Currently this requirement is unique to New South Wales but it will be adopted by all other States and Territories under the national quality framework.

The member for Balmain noted how important early childhood education is for disadvantaged children. I could not agree more. The New South Wales Government is making concerted efforts to improve access to early childhood education for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. In fact, the member for Balmain may be unaware that we are already leading nationally in this area. For example, between 2005 and 2010 there was a 67 per cent increase in the number of Aboriginal children enrolled in a preschool program. I am advised that the preliminary 2011 results show further improvement in participation rates for Aboriginal children and children from low-income families. Disadvantaged children are also given priority access to early childhood education services that are funded and operated by the New South Wales Government.

In addition, community preschools receive special per-child payments for Aboriginal children and children from low-income families enrolled in their service that are higher than funding rates for other children. I should point out that these per-child payments are provided to services irrespective of whether a child is three, four or five years old. These targeted investments are producing results. We know that in New South Wales a significant number of three-year-old Aboriginal children and children from low-income families are accessing preschool programs. We can also see good results for the education of children. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.50 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Wyong, the member for Marrickville and the member for Clarence for speaking on the motion. I acknowledge the positive approach that members from both the Government and the Opposition have taken to this issue. There are quite a few elements on which we can all agree. First, early childhood education is important for the community and particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The member for Clarence outlined the particular importance of quality in the provision of this service, which is absolutely critical. I note that the member for Clarence referred especially to Indigenous children and the excellent increase in participation from that sector of our community. It is also important to note, as was raised by the member for Wyong, that affordability is a key issue. I will return to that matter shortly.

Finally, the member for Marrickville outlined the role of the previous Government and indicated that it had taken some positive steps in this area. I understand that the current Government is following through to make sure the commitment from the Council of Australian Governments process continues. I refer now to the issue of affordability. As I mentioned when moving the motion, according to the "Report on Government Services 2012", New South Wales has the highest proportion of private fee-paying preschools of any State, at 40 per cent. We know that affordability is a critical issue, so this is a major challenge for this State. The member for Marrickville mentioned, as I did, that the announcement in 2011 that fees of up to \$40 per day, depending on the status of the community, would be charged in Department of Education schools based on their Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage [ICSEA] rating has had a significant impact, including in the publicly provided preschools in my community.

However, it has also had a perverse impact because a tenant living in social housing in my community and who is on some form of benefit may pay a higher fee than a person in exactly the same situation who lives in an area with a lower advantage index rating. There is no connection to a person's income or status; it depends on the index rating. A person living in the Glebe estate in my electorate will pay more than someone in exactly the same financial situation living in social housing in a different community that has a lower index rating. That is an anomaly the Minister needs to address. I understand that the NSW Teachers Federation is doing a survey, as I said earlier, and I hope—I say this with goodwill—that the Minister will address the impact of these fees if there is a significant reduction in preschool participation.

I understand that at a meeting held recently in the Jubilee Room when this scheme was introduced the Minister told the federation he would be looking at its impact and at the data. I take him at his word; I know he will do that. I encourage him to look at the details very closely to see whether this policy decision has had a negative impact. I thank members who made a contribution to this debate. It is an issue of critical importance not just to my electorate but to the future of the New South Wales community. I look forward to positive engagement with the Minister for Education on this matter. I hope that the issues of quality and accessibility in relation to preschool education will be taken seriously but, most importantly, that the Government examines the research that indicates that affordability is a key factor. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

GLENDALE POLICE STATION

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [10.55 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes a site is yet to be chosen for the proposed Glendale Police Station Local Area Command in the Lake Macquarie precinct;
- (2) notes that there is \$1 million in funding from the 2010-11 budget to purchase the land; and
- (3) notes that the Police Force in the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command needs the local area command centre to be built and staffed as soon as possible.

The Wallsend community has been abandoned time and again when it comes to justice and law enforcement. The first blow was delivered 10 years ago on 30 May with the closure of the Wallsend police station, the local area command at the time, which was in a derelict condition after years of neglect. We were told at the time that the station was closed because the police deserved better facilities than were being provided. This is indisputable as our hardworking police officers deserve the best facilities possible—although, just as importantly, our community needs to feel safe and sufficiently protected. No police station has been built in the electorate to replace the Wallsend police station.

It is fair to say that everyone feels safest knowing they have a police station near them. In 2008 the then State Government allocated \$250,000 in the budget to commence planning a police station in Glendale. Four years later, the Glendale police station as budgeted for both by the previous and current governments has been scrapped in favour of revamped police stations in other electorates represented by Liberal members and Independents. Yet again, the western suburbs of Newcastle will continue to suffer from decision-making that may have disastrous consequences. The previous Labor Government allocated \$12.822 million to this project in addition to the \$3.822 million also designated by the current Government in the 2011-12 budget. Land was set aside to be purchased with \$1 million from the previous budget.

In addition, the Minister for Police, and Minister for the Hunter, Mike Gallacher, said on ABC Radio on 24 November 2010, "The proposed police hub at Glendale is crucial given the expected population growth in the region." How the situation has altered within a year. Instead, the police stations at Belmont, Toronto and Morisset will be revamped with \$21 million of funding, though this will unfortunately have little effect on areas such as Glendale, Cardiff, Argenton and Edgeworth, to name a few. Without a regional headquarters at Glendale the community will continue to suffer delayed response times from local area commands located too far away to be able to service the homes and business in my electorate sufficiently. The Newcastle Local Area Command covers the north of the electorate while the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command services the southern area from New Lambton Heights to Argenton.

Residents of the Wallsend electorate live on the very edge of both local area commands and consequently experience problems with response times. For instance, Belmont police station is located approximately 15 to 20 kilometres away on a single, often congested road from Edgeworth. The route between Toronto and Wallsend takes approximately 20 minutes, depending on traffic. The response times are simply not fast enough to meet the needs of residents, who are rightly concerned. As reported recently by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in the NSW Recorded Crime Statistics Report 2011, the Hunter region experienced an increase in thefts from motor vehicles of 26.4 per cent during 2011. In addition to this worrying statistic, the Newcastle area saw a 34.1 per cent increase in indecent assaults, acts of indecency and other sexual offences compared with the previous year.

Those alarming statistics justify the importance of having a larger police presence in our area. Some may argue that this issue has been addressed by the refurbishment of the stations at Toronto, Belmont and Morisset, although those living in the western suburbs will continue to be exposed to outbreaks of violence. Kel Graham, a prominent member of the Police Association of NSW and branch official, told me that dumping this project will result in the communities of Wallsend, Glendale and the Western Suburbs losing a contemporary, progressive police presence in a fast-growing area. Unfortunately, that is what has happened and it is my constituents who will suffer. A local resident told me that it was good to know the community would have a local police presence in the near future and that "citizens will feel they can sleep easier in their beds at night knowing they are protected".

How do the locals feel now that the Government has broken its promise to deliver police to Glendale? Many of my constituents and the wider community have urged me to continue lobbying for an essential police station manned in Glendale. I have assured them that I will continue to do just that. It is important to note that it

is not just those in my electorate who maintain Glendale deserves a police presence. In a private member's statement I gave some time ago I referred to an interesting survey that was conducted on 10 February 2012 by the *Sydney Morning Herald* in which readers were asked to nominate the best location for the Lake Macquarie police headquarters—Cardiff, Glendale, Swansea and Charlestown were listed as the options. Almost half the respondents—47.5 per cent—said that each suburb should retain its own police station. This is important and is most definitely worth discussing again. It is clear that residents of each suburb would feel safe if they knew support would arrive promptly when needed.

Unfortunately, the Liberal-Nationals Government has ignored the majority of people who believe a station should be manned at Glendale. I fear that without a police station at Glendale the consequences for those residing in the area will be severe. I acknowledge that Lake Macquarie and local area commands do the best they can with their limited resources. This motion is directed to the Government and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services who must address the unacceptably slow response times in the lower Hunter. Renovating existing police stations will not solve this problem and, unfortunately, it may take only one delayed response to result in what could otherwise be a preventable incident. Establishing more police stations and increasing police numbers in the region appear to be the only solution. I sincerely hope that those with authority will take this on board.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [11.02 a.m.]: I thank my colleague the member for Wallsend for moving this motion. It is indeed most timely that this matter be raised, given that the former Government's proposal was to base the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command at Glendale. This proposal was indicative of Labor's politics-over-policy approach whilst in government. The member for Wallsend referred to Newcastle crime statistics, which relate to the Newcastle Local Area Command and have nothing to do with the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command. The two commands are adjoining local area commands. The Government has listened to police officers, their command management and to the community, and it is delivering improved policing for my electorate of Swansea and for the Lake Macquarie community. Labor first announced the Glendale command in the 2008 State budget. However, the NSW Police Force experienced great difficulty in identifying a suitable site at Glendale to build the specialist facility.

We agree that the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command needs a command centre built and staffed as soon as possible. I advise the House that on 30 March 2012 the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, announced the Government's commitment to the tune of \$21.5 million to a major redevelopment of Belmont police station, and major upgrades to police stations at Morisset and Toronto. That commitment represents in excess of \$4 million that was banded about loosely by the former Government. I acknowledge the work of police officers from the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command, which is indeed fortunate to have 22 new probationary constables who graduated from the academy in the past 12 months, and who have started their service to our community. Those officers are led by the very capable and charismatic Superintendent Craig Rae and in his absence by Acting Commander Murray Lundberg.

Mr Greg Piper: Charismatic? You don't know him, do you?

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: I acknowledge the comment from my colleague the member for Lake Macquarie. The 22 additional police officers have given the local area command far greater capacity to undertake widespread police operations, boost our local intelligence capabilities, establish a number of specialty units that target crime categories such as drug distribution networks, and respond to domestic violence incidents. I am advised that as at March this year, the local area command had implemented a four-person drug team targeting mid-level drug activity across the Lake Macquarie command. This unit has already conducted a number of successful investigations and operations including Strike Force Misima, which resulted in the arrest of a male offender who was subsequently charged with supplying a large commercial quantity of prohibited drugs. Police officers seized three kilograms of amphetamine, \$416,000 cash and a pistol.

Strike Force Bunny resulted in the execution of five search warrants, the arrest of a male offender who was later charged with drug and fraud offences, and seizure of drugs and other restricted substances. A further search warrant executed at Morisset resulted in the seizure of amphetamines. Over the past three months police officers in the local area command have been involved in a total of 80 drug detection incidents. In March this year the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command was able to establish a five-person domestic and family violence team as a result of the additional probationary constables attached to that command. The team comprises a team leader, two domestic violence liaison officers and two domestic violence operatives, who are constables targeting high-risk domestic violence offenders.

The local area command has been undertaking Operation Sweep, which also commenced during March 2012. This operation involves general duties police, detectives, special operations group and the crime management unit proactively patrolling hotspot crime areas, targeting high-risk offenders and conducting bail

compliance checks late at night and into the early hours of the morning. This operation has already resulted in numerous offenders being charged with a range of property offences, traffic offences and offences relating to breach of bail conditions. Lake Macquarie Local Area Command has also begun rapid response operations, which are designed to increase intelligence and provide a more highly visible policing presence in crime hotspots as identified by the Lake Macquarie intelligence unit.

All available operational staff are used to saturate areas across the command during the day or night. Operations have been conducted recently in the central business districts of Charlestown, Belmont, Swansea, Cardiff and Toronto. Lake Macquarie Local Area Commander Craig Rae told me that the additional police numbers have not only assisted in improving operational capability generally across the Lake Macquarie command but also assisted specifically in the general duties, criminal investigation, special operations group, highway patrol and crime management units. This has not only enabled the command to improve its capacity for proactive operations but also provided the command with opportunities to increase and improve staff training and development. I applaud the investment in police numbers the O'Farrell Government has made.

I pay credit to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Minister for the Hunter, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, who has been diligent in ensuring the new command centre is not delayed. He has worked with Commander Craig Rae in developing plans for the new command centre. Meetings with representatives from Lake Macquarie City Council have already taken place, prior to the lodgement of development applications. Coalition members have listened to police officers and their command management. We have listened to the community and we are delivering improved policing for my electorate of Swansea and for the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command. This Government is about action. It has begun the mammoth task of putting right the 16 years of neglect of the former Government and it is doing all within its power to improve the lives of people across New South Wales to make it easier, safer and happier for them and this, of course, includes providing a better trained and stronger Police Force.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [11.09 a.m.]: Officers at the Glendale police station are responsible for policing an area that borders the eastern end of my electorate—Edgeworth, Cameron Park, West Wallsend and Holmesville. The police station is certainly a topical issue in that area. Members do a great deal of doorknocking during election campaigns—or at least some of us do. One of the main issues raised with me during the last election campaign was policing and the community's desire to feel safer. At the time I could tell the people of that area that a new police station would be delivered. The Labor Government had allocated funding for the identification and purchase of land, and the police station would be built. I was buoyed by the comment made by the current Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for the Hunter, in late 2010 on ABC Radio that a police station at the north-west of Lake Macquarie was essential.

Some members might be familiar with a document that is floating around called the "Lower Hunter Regional Strategy", which identifies that growth in Newcastle will be to the west. Indeed, everything from Newcastle out to the F3 will be cleared and developed for housing to address projected population growth. That growing population could and should be made secure by police officers working from a police station at Glendale. The Lake Macquarie Local Area Command has a topographical impediment; that is, the lake. There is no bridge over it or tunnel under it. Therefore, servicing the area requires a number of police stations to be based on its perimeter. The stations at Belmont in the east, at Morisset in the south and at Toronto to the south-west are important pieces of infrastructure, and I welcome the announcement that money will be spent on upgrading them. However, I do not welcome the fact that that money will be expended to the detriment of policing to the north-west of the lake; that is, in Glendale.

We have had debates about the Glendale interchange and the need for investment in that infrastructure, and the Government and Lake Macquarie City Council have made a commitment to undertake that work. The Lake Macquarie City Council and the Federal Government are also in negotiations about investment in that area. However, all of that will happen in the absence of a police station. It is bizarre. I note that notice of this motion was given on 30 May 2011. Since that time the landscape has changed. The member for Wallsend gave notice of this motion because she was concerned that the new Government would change its mind and its plans—as it has done in many areas. What foresight she had. The Government said one thing in the lead-up to the election and now it is doing something completely different. I remind members of the commitment made by the current Minister for Police and Emergency Services in late 2010.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Cessnock will be heard in silence. The member for Wollongong will come to order. The Minister will come to order.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I appreciate the foresight of the member for Wallsend in giving notice of this motion on 30 May last year and I condemn the Coalition Government for changing its tune since the election. Glendale police station is important infrastructure and the Government must deliver it. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [11.14 a.m.]: I have heard it all.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Opposition members will come to order. The member for Wollongong will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: Members opposite had 16 years in which to improve policing in the Lake Macquarie area but they failed to do so. We have been in government for just over 12 months and during that time we have delivered—

Mr Andrew Constance: An extra 22 police officers.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Cabramatta will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: I acknowledge the Minister's interjection—this Government has delivered an extra 22 police officers—

Ms Noreen Hay: That's not true.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Wollongong will come to order.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: The strength of the command has increased over and above the establishment because of other policy changes. The Lake Macquarie police never wanted the police station at Glendale because it was always going to be a white elephant at one end of the command; they always wanted a three-station solution. They wanted improvements at Morisset, Toronto and Belmont. Members opposite seem to think they are dealing with something out of an episode of *Hill Street Blues* and that police officers are sitting around all night drinking cheap coffee out of plastic cups and waiting for the phone to ring. That is not what they do: they spend their time on the road.

Response time is a non-issue and will be improved because stations will be dispersed more evenly around the lake. The member for Cessnock identified the lake as a topographical barrier to policing. He is correct, and that is why we should not build a white elephant at one of end of the command at the expense of the other stations. I note that notice of this motion was given in May last year and that the Parsons review has been released subsequently. If members felt strongly about policing in their electorate, they had the opportunity to make a submission to that review.

Mr Greg Piper: I did.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: I note the interjection from the member for Lake Macquarie. However, the member who moved the motion did not bother to make a submission to that review. If the project were so important, the Parsons review was the forum in which to argue for it. But one submission from the review is notably lacking—the submission from the member for Wallsend. As I said, the Police Force never wanted a police station at Glendale. This Government will make its decisions based on advice from the Police Force not from spin doctors.

[*Interruption*]

I am being as frank as I can be. I came into the Chamber with notes to make my contribution to this debate, but I feel so passionate about it that I am not using them. This issue is being dealt with correctly by this Government. Response times will be improved by having three police stations around the lake rather than a white elephant at one end. The only broken promise in this area is the promise broken by the Labor Government. It promised to build the station in 2008, but it did not purchase any land or lay one brick. It simply had a line item in the budget that was never delivered. This Government will make a \$21.5 million investment in police facilities in the region.

The member for Wallsend identified one important issue, and it relates to the Parsons review. Glendale lies at the edge of the commands and that is another reason that the review is examining the local area command

structure. Police stations will be built at the best locations around the lake. The member for Wallsend correctly stated that it sits on the boundary. That is a potential flaw, and the Parsons review is examining it. I take great pleasure in making a contribution to this debate because, once again, it is emblematic of the former Government's failure to deliver and the fact that the O'Farrell Government, particularly under our Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, is delivering better policing in the Hunter. [*Time expired.*]

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [11.19 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend on the Glendale police station. Prior to the election on 26 March, the Coalition gave the electorate of Wallsend an ironclad commitment to build the Glendale police station. That is evidenced in the budget papers and in the local media. However, we have yet another broken promise from this Government. Clearly it cannot be trusted; it is untrustworthy, uncaring and incompetent. Wallsend deserves a first-class police station at Glendale, which is the heartland of the electorate. The Labor Government's 2010-11 budget included a \$1 million line item for the purchase of land for such a facility.

When I was growing up in the southern suburbs of Sydney we had police stations everywhere. The police had a huge presence: we knew where they were and what they were doing. We knew that we were well protected. Police officers patrolled our parks, shopping centres and even our beaches. This was due largely to the former Labor Government's initiative to ensure that the police were front and centre in our communities. Clearly, the O'Farrell Government has little respect for the men and women who, day in and day out, work hard to protect our communities, as evidenced recently by the treacherous act of ripping away the police death and disability scheme, leaving our police and their families with no protection—

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: I request that you ask the member to come back to the motion before the House, not to go off on some tangent relating to death and disability. I believe that the member opposite is well and truly outside the standing orders raising death and disability when it is very clear that this is about a police station in the electorate of the member for Wallsend.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The Minister will resume his seat. Just as the Speaker cannot direct Ministers how to answer questions during question time, I cannot direct the member for Shellharbour in this instance.

Ms ANNA WATSON: The police death and disability scheme was ripped away from them, leaving their families with no protection. They were thrown on the scrap heap.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: Further to your ruling, it is very clear that the member opposite cannot go outside the leave of the motion before the House. I ask that you direct her back—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The Minister will resume his seat. I have ruled on the point of order. The member for Shellharbour should remind herself of the motion, but I believe that she is not being irrelevant at this point.

Ms ANNA WATSON: It is not surprising to learn that the Glendale police station promised by Barry O'Farrell has also been scrapped—ripped away from the residents in and around the electorate of Glendale. I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and congratulate her on moving it. I also call on Premier Barry O'Farrell and his Government to cease and desist breaking any more promises, and to build the station at Glendale as promised.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [11.21 a.m.]: I speak to the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and pay respect to the position that she has taken on this issue. However, I respectfully have a different view. Whilst I have heard the contributions of members from both sides of the House, I can say with some certainty that I was involved in the original decision to locate a local area command at Glendale. I was the Mayor of the City of Lake Macquarie at the time, the local government area that reflects the local area command fully, and I was involved in discussions. I have a significant interest in this matter, as the member for Lake Macquarie and as the mayor who, in the mid-2000s, met with the then commander Alan Clarke who approached me for some assistance in identifying land in the general vicinity of the northern end of Lake Macquarie with particular reference to the command that existed at that point—and still exists—at Boolaroo.

Mr Clarke was looking for land that might be applied to a new command centre that would bring together a number of divisions of the police in Lake Macquarie and provide them with modern facilities that

were sorely lacking. For many years I have been advocating for improvements to facilities for police in Lake Macquarie. In fact the first Minister with whom I met on my election to this place was the then Minister for Police, the Hon. David Campbell, the member for Keira. I pointed out to him the huge discrepancy in police to resident ratios of the commands that reflected his electorate and the electorate of the then Premier Morris Iemma compared to that in Lake Macquarie. The Minister acknowledged my representation and indicated that he would respond at some future time. Some months after that representation, additional resources were allocated. Even though I was the only member who had made contemporary representations to that Minister on these matters, I was the only member representing the area who was not invited to the media presentation at Charlestown.

I acknowledge the representations by the member for Wallsend on this issue, but I am the member who has taken a non-parochial position in that my electorate of Lake Macquarie will be losing a local area command. I do not believe that it is appropriate for members of this Parliament to discuss the pros and cons of the delivery of police services in a command. We are not experts in this. I took the advice of Mr Clarke and assisted him to the best of my ability as the Mayor of the City of Lake Macquarie, and I allowed the resources of the Lake Macquarie City Council to be used for that purpose as well. The fact is that the incoming local area commander, Mr Rae, in consultation with other police officers and the strategic planning division, has come up with a different position and I believe that we should respect that position as it stands today.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [11.25 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members for Swansea, Cessnock, Charlestown, Shellharbour and Lake Macquarie for their contributions to debate on this motion. The member for Swansea said that Newcastle crime statistics were not relevant to this debate. In fact half of my electorate is in the Newcastle Local Area Command, so the crime statistics are very relevant to the people of Wallsend and to the people living on the outskirts of the western suburbs. I too acknowledge the work of our hardworking police officers. I am disappointed that the member for Swansea did not touch on the reasons why the Government has abandoned building a police station in the Wallsend electorate.

The member for Cessnock rationally mentioned the main issues when he was doorknocking the people of Edgeworth and Cameron Park, who would border on or be close to the police station at Glendale, were it built. They were very pleased about the promise of a police station at Glendale and the shadow Minister for Police and shadow Minister for the Hunter at the time, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, was saying that Glendale needed a police station. Those people were misled and they are very disappointed. The member for Cessnock also mentioned that the Lower Hunter regional strategy identifies growth in the west of Newcastle and because of that growing population we deserve to have a police station there. The member for Charlestown said that the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command never wanted a police station at Glendale. That is not so. Before you were elected, Mr Cornwell, like the member for Lake Macquarie—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member will direct her comments through the Chair, not across the Chamber.

Ms SONIA HORNER: It is not so, Mr Acting-Speaker. I have also been involved in, and as enthusiastic as the member for Lake Macquarie, the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command. I recall that it was endorsed enthusiastically by the previous local area commander, Alan Clarke. He wanted a police station at Glendale. A later local area commander with a different view and an eye for promotion decided that Glendale should be abandoned, along with a broken promise by the Minister for Police and Minister for Emergency Services.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government members will come to order. The member for Wallsend will be heard in silence.

Ms SONIA HORNER: The member for Charlestown called Glendale police station a white elephant. I am sure that the communities of Glendale, Cardiff, Argenton and Edgeworth will be pleased to hear that they do not deserve to have a police station built in their area. In fact from New Lambton, at one end of my electorate, to Glendale there is no police station at all and this Liberal Government—

Mr Andrew Cornwell: Point of order: I know that the member for Wallsend is passionate about this, but she has cast an aspersion on the local area commander of Lake Macquarie and I would like to give her the opportunity to withdraw.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! There is no point of order. I cannot ask the member to withdraw. It is a matter for her as to whether or not she wishes to withdraw.

Ms SONIA HORNERY: Members referred to the Parsons review. The outcome of the Parsons review was interesting in that it recommended the decentralisation of police stations and stated that super police stations did not work. So if super police stations do not work the Government should take advantage of the Parsons review analysis and build local police stations where the community needs them. I respect the comments of the member for Lake Macquarie— [*Time expired.*]

Ms SONIA HORNERY: It would have been nice to let me finish.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member will resume her seat and remain silent. If the member's remarks were not so inflammatory, I may have been more lenient.

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

Motion agreed to.

ILLAWARRA DATA CENTRE

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [11.31 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) calls on the Government to confirm its pre-election commitment to the creation of a high physical security, technologically advanced surveillance and detection systems data centre in the Illawarra;
- (2) acknowledges that the creation of such a data centre will provide an unprecedented boost to the high-capacity data centre sector in the State, as well as meeting stringent greenhouse emission and security standards; and
- (3) notes that the data centre project will provide significant jobs growth for the Illawarra region, with a share of approximately 400 jobs from the construction and design phase of the project.

I was pleased with the recent announcement by the Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra, that a state-of-the-art data hub will be built in the Illawarra. The first will be built in Unanderra, in my electorate, and the second will be built in Sydney. Members will be aware that for some time I have been calling on the O'Farrell Government to introduce job-creating projects in my electorate and in the Illawarra. These projects are necessary because of the job losses the area has experienced recently. I do not blame the O'Farrell Government for all the job losses in the Illawarra—but perhaps for 99.9 per cent of them. The Government must invest in job creation. The Government has continued the work of the Labor Government, which announced in July 2010 that the data hub would be commenced. It was expected to be operational by 2011. The announcement followed my lobbying and my calling for job-creating projects in my electorate.

The two data hubs will hold sensitive State government information and will not only create significant budget savings but also will attract millions of dollars in investment to the region. We need more job-creating projects and significant investment from the Government for job-creating projects. The transfer of a government department to the Illawarra would attract further job investment. The area is doing it tough. The Minister for Finance and Services, and Minister for the Illawarra criticised the Labor Government's approach to information technology infrastructure and stated that other data technology should be explored before new centres are built. When I spoke to the Minister recently I told him about my press statement expressing appreciation for the Government's decision to build the data hub in the electorate of Wollongong. I remind the House that the project was planned by the Labor Government.

The two data hubs will consolidate government records and technical data which are now kept in 130 locations across New South Wales. It makes sense to move into this technology and to set up the infrastructure in an area such as Wollongong that needs job-creating investment. The data hubs will improve security and give the people of New South Wales assurance that, in the event of a catastrophe, sensitive material has been backed up. The construction process will create 200 jobs and the data hub will create 50 permanent positions in the Illawarra region. Ten to 20 jobs a day are being lost in the Illawarra so job creation is urgently required. In my electorate of Wollongong we urgently need job creation that will be significant, permanent and long-term. My colleagues from the region and I agree that there is a dire need for positive employment outcomes. I know members will comment on the \$5 million the Government will provide in order to match BlueScope Steel's \$5 million contribution. There will also be some investment from the Federal Government. However, BlueScope Steel will lay off over a thousand people and I do not think the State Government's contribution is sufficient.

The Illawarra needs a more significant, creative and instant solution. A good solution would be to move a government department to the region—something that will provide certainty and longevity in employment opportunities particularly in the area of information technology, which would employ some of our young people. The Illawarra needs serious action from the Government in job-creation projects. The University of Wollongong pumps out more communications graduates than any other university in the country. The sector remains small in the Illawarra because graduates are lured from the region. This backs up what I am saying. We need to provide the circumstance in which graduates will not want to leave and will be able to work and live in the Illawarra.

The communications sector employs 1.3 per cent of the Illawarra's workforce—1,800 jobs. The increase in employment opportunities will benefit the region immensely. Construction for the hub is to begin in September this year, followed by substantive construction work in November, with plans to open the building next year. I commend the former New South Wales Labor Government for its vision in creating such a project. I am pleased that the New South Wales Government has confirmed that it will honour its pre-election promise and commence construction of this innovative data hub, even though it will be two years behind the original completion date. I congratulate the Government on agreeing to proceed with the data hub in the electorate of Wollongong.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.36 a.m.]: It gives me pleasure to speak about the Government's systems data centre project. I am pleased to follow the member for Wollongong and to acknowledge her interest in the Government's use of integrated circuit technology. I congratulate the member for Wollongong and I will ensure that the Minister hears the congratulatory remarks from the member to the O'Farrell-Stoner Government for getting on with the job of doing the business required for New South Wales. We will make sure we get a copy of *Hansard* and refer the member's remarks to all members.

I speak today about the systems data centre project because of my interest in integrated circuit technology. Mr Acting-Speaker Gareth Ward, I also know that you, as the member for Kiama, together with the member for Heathcote, have been raising and discussing this project with the Minister. I congratulate you both as strong advocates for the Government's systems data centre project in the Illawarra region. Last night I was at a function at the CeBIT 2012 conference, which was held in Sydney this week, to showcase integrated circuit technology. There were international visitors and exhibitors. Forums were held throughout the week at which innovative people came together to exhibit new technology.

The Asia-Pacific region will be quite strong for the Government in future investment in Sydney. I am proud to be part of and involved in that. Last night I had the pleasure of sitting at the same table as the Minister for the Illawarra, and I had the pleasure of speaking about the Government's data centre project. I will mention that further later. Last night at the CeBIT dinner the National Association of Software and Services Companies [NASSCOM] presented an inaugural award to a young, talented university student in Australia who is recognised for work in the information and communications technology [ICT] field. It is wonderful to see the technological advances and the creativity and innovative skills of so many young people in our State.

This State currently has 130 older style government data centres, many of which are operating at full capacity using electricity inefficiently and are prone to outages. As the member for Wollongong observed, only recently the O'Farrell-Stoner Government announced that after a stringent tendering process Metronode (NSW) Pty Ltd has been selected to build and operate a two-tier data centre by the end of 2013. One centre will be located in the Illawarra region and the other centre will be located in western Sydney. The centres will provide a much-needed boost to the local economies and much-needed employment. The contract with Metronode marks a milestone in the State's bid to use ICT to streamline security, provide robust service delivery and reduce costs.

These two projects—one will be established at Silverwater in Sydney's inner west and the other will be established in the Illawarra—will provide a secure platform from which to deliver private government cloud services. This is the first step in a major whole-of-government ICT strategy to reduce costs, improve the State's critical infrastructure and operations, enhance delivery, and employ cloud-computing services. This comes off the back of the release of the Government's ICT strategy earlier this month. This is central to the future of the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals ICT strategy. It will make life easier for businesses and citizens engaging with the Government. I am sure the member for Wollongong will congratulate the Government on that strategy.

Other benefits will flow from rationalising platforms, reusing software and mitigating risks associated with increased costs, expensive electricity charges, system and service failures and ad hoc servicing systems. It will reduce unnecessary technologies, especially as much of the Government's existing capacity is outdated,

inefficient and does not deliver a viable cost-effective service for government agencies. That sounds like a Labor slogan: outdated, inefficient and does not deliver a viable cost-effective service. The project will provide capacity to consolidate the existing data centres and their computer infrastructure into two more efficient and reliable facilities. The proposed contract builds on the anchor tenants, which include the Ministry of Health, the Department of Education and Communities, the Department of Finance and Services, and Corrections NSW.

The Government will require all other government agencies to move into the new data centres within four years of their opening. This coincides with ICT replacement cycles and lease renewals, so the contract allows for contiguous growth at these sites to accommodate 100 per cent of the data centre load as required. Compared with other data centre expansion options, the data centre reform project will cost less over a 10-year period than allowing each agency to handle its own expansion or replacement of its existing data centres on an autonomous basis. The data centres will generate employment opportunities during the building and migration phases and offer long-term employment that will benefit both the Illawarra and inner Sydney.

It is estimated that construction of the centres will create 250 jobs across both sites. Also, these data centres have significant potential to attract global ICT organisations. The Government is committed to making it easier for New South Wales citizens and businesses to interact with the Government, to harness opportunities provided by ICT, to improve government operations and to develop a vibrant ICT industry in New South Wales. Metronode has scheduled construction for the Sydney data centre to start almost immediately and the centre is forecast to open by the middle of 2013. The Illawarra data centre will open in late 2013, shortly after the Sydney facility is opened. I am pleased to speak about this project. It is great to see the O'Farrell-Stoner Government delivering on its many promises made to the electorate before the election.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [11.45 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Wollongong. It is good news that the Government has finally, after much silence and rumour, and much agitation by the wonderful member for Wollongong in her local area and in this House, confirmed that it is delivering on its pre-election commitment to create a high physical security, technologically advanced surveillance and detection systems data centre in the Illawarra. The creation of such a data centre will provide an unprecedented boost to the high-capacity data centre sector in the State while meeting appropriate greenhouse emission and security standards. Importantly for the Wollongong area, the data centre project will provide significant jobs growth for the Illawarra region, with approximately 200 jobs to be generated during the construction phase and 50 ongoing jobs.

I congratulate the O'Farrell Government on this project. Youth unemployment in my region of Liverpool, Fairfield and Cabramatta is about double the national average. These sorts of projects should be located in the south-west in areas with high unemployment. This data hub is a must for the Illawarra and for New South Wales. The Labor Government recognised this when it announced its vision for the project, and the current Government is recognising what a vital boost this data centre will be for the local area. We all remember the pain that was felt by the Illawarra region when BlueScope steel announced in 2011 that it was ending steel export operations. The future of the region was uncertain at that time. Now with the Government confirming this project—it was originally announced and put forward by the Labor Government—employment in the Illawarra will gain a much-needed boost. Investment dollars will be attracted to the region and the economic benefits will be far-reaching.

It is also worth acknowledging how important this centre will be for the security of information and data that is sensitive to the Government and its various departments. More and more records are now kept virtually rather than on paper. This obviously saves space, is environmentally friendly and saves trees, but with these advantages come the risks of virtual and online security breaches. I understand that this data centre will be of the highest security so that potential breaches will be deterred and sensitive government information is not compromised. I thank the member for Wollongong for moving this motion and for helping to ensure that the region she represents is not ignored in terms of this data centre. With the project, which was put forward by the State Labor Government—and the Labor Opposition supports it—we will ensure that the plans and the flow-on economic benefits come to fruition.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [11.47 a.m.]: I too congratulate the member for Wollongong on moving this motion. Taking the political agitation out of the matter, the Illawarra needs our help, and this data centre is a step towards the help we will be giving to the Illawarra over the coming years. I am thrilled to commend the Government for its historic commitment to build a state-of-the-art data centre in Unanderra. This fantastic initiative will deliver ongoing, sustainable employment opportunities at a time when they are greatly needed in the Illawarra region. The 250 construction jobs for the two centres will be greatly appreciated. The Illawarra has been suffering since the BlueScope announcement.

This project is a step towards a new economy in the Illawarra and leaving the old heavy industrial economy behind. The old heavy industrial economy should be left well and truly behind. The departments of Health, Education and Communities, Finance and Services, and Corrections will be among the first to benefit, and all other agencies will migrate to the new facilities within four years. The University of Wollongong currently produces more communications graduates than does any other university in the country. What is happening in the Illawarra is poignant: The economy is changing and we must change with it. The Illawarra has been stuck in the heavy manufacturing sector and it is starting to move towards a new era, which is obviously information technology.

Ms Noreen Hay: We haven't been totally industrial for years.

Mr LEE EVANS: You have had your turn. It is my turn.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Wollongong will remain silent during the contribution of the member for Heathcote.

Mr LEE EVANS: This incredible infrastructure will offer nine megawatts of capacity, providing enough storage for all the data needs of the New South Wales Government. It will also create commercially viable facilities to meet the exploding demand for data and computing services. This new approach will position the Government as a leader in the use of technology to transform public services. It will make it easier to do business with the Government and improve the productivity of the public sector. This is just one of the many ways the Government has shown its willingness to enhance relationships with industries, especially those in the information and technology sector. Better use and integration of information and communications technology in government not only improves the services being provided to the public but also makes the Government more flexible and efficient in delivering the services.

BlueScope Steel's decision to scale back its Port Kembla operation last year dealt a heavy blow but the Government has responded decisively to restore confidence. This decision was one that the previous Government may have suggested: it put up the balloon but nobody saluted. Labor had 16 years to do something in the Illawarra, but it failed to take action. The Illawarra Innovation and Investment Fund has been the driving force behind this response, stimulating employment and economic activity. The importance of this commitment to the Illawarra cannot be overstated following the recent downturn in the local manufacturing sector. I look forward to working with the member for Wollongong and all other members from the Illawarra region to help them see the light on what can happen in the Illawarra. Illawarra is a very dynamic and vibrant area and it should be treated as such. I congratulate the member for Wollongong on moving this motion and I thank her for her indulgence.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.52 a.m.]: I support the motion, which states:

That this House:

- (1) calls on the Government to confirm its pre-election commitment to the creation of a high physical security, technologically advanced surveillance and detection systems data centre in the Illawarra;
- (2) acknowledges that the creation of such a data centre will provide an unprecedented boost to the high-capacity data centre sector in the State, as well as meeting stringent greenhouse emissions and security standards; and
- (3) notes that the data centre project will provide significant jobs growth for the Illawarra region, with a share of approximately 400 jobs from the construction and design phase of the project.

I congratulate the member for Wollongong on moving this motion, which seeks to hold the O'Farrell Government to its pre-election commitment to continue the work of the Labor Government to invest in the information technology sector in the Illawarra. The Illawarra is one of the fastest-growing regional centres in New South Wales, with a tertiary educational system producing some of the State's most qualified and sought after tertiary graduates. A significant factor in the evolution of the Illawarra's workforce is the University of Wollongong. The university produces highly skilled information technology graduates and communications graduates.

However, the graduates of the University of Wollongong need investment from this Government to help develop the information technology industry. An example is the O'Farrell Government's commitment to build a state-of-the-art data hub in the Illawarra. Investment in the information technology industry in a satellite region such as the Illawarra will have a flow-on effect. It will attract millions of dollars of private investment to

the area from entrepreneurs who wish to provide support for the new data facility and its growing workforce, and private information technology based businesses seeking to tap into a growing pool of highly trained and experienced information technology professionals.

That is why the commitment to build a high physical security, technologically advanced surveillance and detection systems data centre is so vital for the economy and industry base in an area such as the Illawarra. This will create jobs in the growing information technology industry and in the service industries of the region. I note that the construction process to create this facility alone will inject 200 new jobs in the Illawarra region and 50 permanent positions. I add that a data hub would be of benefit to my electorate of Fairfield. The creation of such a facility in the growing south-west region of Fairfield would provide additional jobs and opportunities for the community, not to mention be an economic injection into the south-west.

Furthermore, the proposed facility in the Illawarra will provide a safeguard to the sensitive information held by government departments, which are required to provide the best possible services to the people of New South Wales. It will mean that in the event of a catastrophe the information stored in government computers can be salvaged. I commend the member for Wollongong for keeping the pressure on the O'Farrell Government to ensure the Government delivers on its commitment to the Illawarra region. I commend the member for Wollongong for her persistence and her bargaining intellect in working for a better outcome regarding the Illawarra data centre.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [11.55 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wollongong for acknowledging that we are delivering information technology where Labor failed. We saw from Labor just 16 years of talk, talk, talk, but no action. I am delighted that we have a strong Minister for the Illawarra who is ensuring that we deliver on projects rather than just talk about them. Where is the shadow Minister for the Illawarra?

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Who is it?

Mr GARETH WARD: "Who is it?" the Minister asks. It is the Leader of the Opposition. Those opposite should promote the member for Keira to the frontbench, because he would be a much better shadow Minister for the Illawarra than is the present one. This Government promises and then delivers, as evidenced by this data centre, which is generating jobs. I must rebut some of the points made by the member for Wollongong with respect to jobs in the Illawarra. She said that \$5 million was paltry. How can it be paltry when one considers the 472 jobs being created by the Illawarra Innovation and Investment Fund? The hardworking Minister for the Illawarra, Greg Pearce, actually negotiated with Labor's Federal colleagues. Members opposite are obviously not even talking to the mob in Canberra, whose reputation is worse than their reputation. The member for Wollongong seeks to interject. She has more twists and turns than Chubby Checker when it comes to the Illawarra. We are delivering on jobs.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: The member for Kiama should be brought to order. He is not entitled to make personal attacks during debate on this motion. If he wishes to make a personal attack or impugn my reputation in any way he should do so by way of substantive motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I do not think the member for Kiama was impugning the reputation of the member for Wollongong.

Ms Noreen Hay: I think he was.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member will resume her seat. The member for Kiama will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr GARETH WARD: I refer to some of the jobs that have been created. Businesses right across the Illawarra have benefited from the Illawarra Innovation and Investment Fund, a bipartisan fund. The Opposition did not oppose a motion that was moved with respect to the Illawarra Innovation and Investment Fund, yet Opposition members come into the House and try to talk down the Illawarra. The member for Wollongong said that the University of Wollongong produced more communications graduates that did other university. The university actually produces information technology graduates, and we are very proud of that. A number of businesses in my electorate have benefited from the Illawarra Innovation and Investment Fund. Indeed, 54 jobs have been created at places such as Jamberoo Action Park, while Sound Therapy International Pty Ltd received extra funds.

The Government is delivering on its promises, such as funding for the Princes Highway. The Government has invested \$500 million into regional communities and is investing almost \$100 million towards improvements for Wollongong Hospital. The Government is making a real contribution to the Illawarra. When Labor was in government it only talked about the Princes Highway and jobs in the Illawarra; this Government is actually delivering. The Minister for the Illawarra is doing a great job negotiating with business and attracting business to New South Wales. Its Jobs Action Plan will reduce payroll tax for the first 100,000 new jobs in an endeavour to attract more business, such as the new biodiesel plant the Premier opened recently in Port Kembla that is generating jobs. Members opposite talked about encouraging people to the Illawarra but never delivered. I commend the member for Wollongong for the part of her motion that congratulates this Government on delivering and listening to the people of the Illawarra.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.01 p.m.], in reply: It is fair to say that the member for Kiama has no comprehension of the term "bipartisanship".

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: The member for Wollongong is the only person I know who can walk into a revolving door behind you and come out first.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! What is the member's point of order? The member for Kiama will resume his seat. The member for Kiama appears to be looking for a little time away from the Chamber.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I acknowledge the contributions to the debate today by the member for Bathurst, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Heathcote and the member for Fairfield. I have concerns about the contribution by the member for Kiama. It seems that Government members who spoke today would make falling over look difficult. These guys do not understand that my motion in June 2011 called for the data hub to follow on from the concept announced by the former Labor Government. I have acknowledged and congratulated the Government on deciding to proceed with that proposal.

Members could be forgiven for thinking I had come in here and dumped a bucket on the Government if they listened to the member for Kiama and some of the strange things said by the member for Bathurst, although I will let him off today. Much has been made of the fact that the Labor Government was in power for 16 years. Maybe some members opposite are a bit too young to know, but the community elected, re-elected and again re-elected the Labor Government because the Coalition parties were so useless. We made some major investments in this State and I will not sit here and allow you to dump on the former Labor Government's achievements.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Wollongong will address her comments through the Chair.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I will not allow the member for Kiama to dump on all the former Labor Government's achievements just because he wants to suck up to the Minister for the Illawarra, who everyone in the Illawarra, including the media, says they cannot find. The member for Kiama criticised the shadow Minister for the Illawarra, but the Minister for the Illawarra can never be found for comment. It is a disgrace that the member for Kiama should come in here and make the comments he did. It was announced that people would move into the new data hub four years after the opening. What is the Government thinking; what is the Government doing? Why would it take four years to move into the data hub after the opening unless they are a pack of tortoises?

We are not talking about moving in four years after the commencement of construction. It is apparent that members of the Government who spoke in this debate cannot and will not accept congratulations. That is an indictment on them that they will live to regret. As I said, they would make falling over look hard. They cannot work out what to say if Opposition members say the Government has done well. In that case we will have to attack them. As for the innovation and investment fund, at no stage did I criticise it. What I said was \$5 million is a paltry amount from a Government that claims it is going to look after employment in the Illawarra.

Mr Gareth Ward: You voted for it.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I would vote for it again if you gave us another \$5 million. Give us something. Do something rather than have another review and talk, talk, talk.

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

Motion agreed to.

ELECTRICITY PRICES

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.04 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) condemns the Government for breaking its promise to reduce energy prices for families in Wollongong and across the State;
- (2) notes the Premier's comments following the March 2011 election that the price increases recommended by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal would be fully implemented, contradicting statements prior to the election that families would be "given a break"; and
- (3) notes that time and time again whilst in Opposition Mr O'Farrell's shadow cabinet said the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommended increases should be rejected.

I refer to the O'Farrell Government's broken promises to households in New South Wales. Last year in the lead-up to the New South Wales election Barry O'Farrell tricked people into voting for him and his Government with false promises that he had no intention of keeping. There are heaps of broken promises, but for the moment I will speak about this one. Prior to the election, Barry O'Farrell promised to slash household electricity bills by merging the distribution businesses of the State-owned electricity companies EnergyAustralia, Integral Energy and Country Energy to pay for tiered rebates for 1.4 million families. Barry O'Farrell claimed his policy was responsible, achievable and deliverable while also tackling the drivers of electricity prices, none of which the Premier and his Government have delivered on. This just proves that you can say anything and promise anything before an election to get into government and then just renege on those promises. I remind members that Barry O'Farrell said his announcements would be responsible, achievable and deliverable. What rot.

Mr O'Farrell also claimed that this policy would be a win for families, pensioners and low-income earners of the Illawarra and New South Wales. Now, following the Premier's broken promises, they face increased electricity costs of \$500 or more per year. Families, pensioners and low-income earners are hurting, and many of them voted for the O'Farrell Government because of promises made about reducing the impact of the cost of electricity and not fully passing on the recommendations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. In February 2011, prior to the election, Mr O'Farrell also led New South Wales voters to believe that the poles and wires of the State's power industry would stay in public hands. He said, "We have absolutely no plans to privatise either the generators or the poles and wires." Three months after being elected the Premier confirmed that price increases of up to 18.1 per cent recommended by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal would be implemented fully, contradicting again statements made by the Premier prior to the election.

Mr Jonathan O'Dea: Point of order: If the member is going to quote supposed comments I ask that they be sourced and authorised properly. When people are quoted in this House it is standard practice that the source of the quotes is identified so that they can be verified.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I will seek some clarification on that matter from the Clerk.

Ms NOREEN HAY: To the point of order: I suggest that I should be allowed to continue my speech until you receive advice about the matter.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Wollongong may continue.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Three months after being elected the Premier confirmed that price increases of up to 18.1 per cent, as recommended by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, would be fully implemented, contradicting statements he had made prior to the election. Yet time and time again in opposition Mr O'Farrell and his Cabinet said that the recommendations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal should be rejected. Under its Fairness for Families, a fully costed and funded plan, the former Labor Government would have increased the New South Wales energy rebate to \$250 per year, saving families \$1,000 in electricity bills over the life of the plan. Labor would have extended the eligibility for the energy rebate to all New South Wales households with a combined income of under \$150,000 a year, together with the decision by the former Labor Government to offset the cost of the Solar Bonus Scheme.

That initiative would have saved up to \$350 in electricity bills for average families in the Illawarra and across New South Wales. This Government also promised to cap power company dividends to the State in order to keep electricity prices down. However, the New South Wales budget papers show that power network dividends to the Government will increase from \$579 million to \$825 million next year. The voters of the

Illawarra and New South Wales did not give the Premier a blank cheque to privatise power stations and increase electricity prices. There is a genuine sense of betrayal in my electorate, and the Government must be held accountable. South Australia privatised electricity prices by 30 per cent to 40 per cent—a fate that now awaits New South Wales.

But there is worse to come for the people of this State, with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal predicting a further 2 per cent to 10 per cent increase from July 2012 due to the higher network costs paid by the electricity providers, allowing them to recover the increased cost of doing business. I call on the O'Farrell Government to make its intentions clear as to what it plans to do to help residents in the Illawarra and across New South Wales cope with the huge increase in their electricity bills and to implement rural assistance for families that have been hit hardest by these crippling price hikes. I sincerely hope that Government members who speak to the motion will give a commitment to assist those families.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I refer to the previous point of order and remind members that during a speech they may read extracts from documents other than newspapers or *Hansard*, provided the quote is brief and that the source of the document is identified properly before a member quotes from it. The member for Wollongong should identify the document from which she quoted.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [12.12 p.m.]: I oppose the motion moved by the member for Wollongong, which is completely inaccurate and hypocritical. It states:

That this House:

- (1) condemns the Government for breaking its promise to reduce energy prices for families in Wollongong and across the State;
- (2) notes the Premier's comments following the March 2011 election that the price increases recommended by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal would be fully implemented, contradicting statements prior to the election that families would be 'given a break'; and
- (3) notes that time and time again whilst in Opposition Mr O'Farrell's shadow cabinet said the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommended increases should be rejected.

The O'Farrell Government does not support this motion for the very simple reason that it is inaccurate and hypocritical. The member for Wollongong should by now be aware that under the last five years of the former Government electricity prices rose by more than 60 per cent. A conga line of Labor energy Ministers and Treasurers ripped out \$14.2 billion in dividends and tax-equivalent payments from electricity businesses. The former energy Minister, now Leader of the Opposition, was guilty of neglectful and incompetent management—something that he has taken with him to his current role. The former energy Minister sat back and watched billions of dollars in dividends ripped from power companies and allowed overdue investment to flow onto the bills of customers by way of price rises. Members also know about the former energy Minister's embarrassing and amateur bungling of the Solar Bonus Scheme, which saw the scheme blow out from a predicted cost of \$355 million to \$1.7 billion—and New South Wales households have had to foot the bill. I have described the Leader of the Opposition as being "hypocritical and inaccurate" and now I add the words "embarrassing and amateurish".

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: This motion is not about the Leader of the Opposition. I ask that you bring the member for Camden back to the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Camden will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: For 16 years the former Labor Government showed little regard and had a resounding lack of respect for New South Wales energy consumers facing increasing power bills and cost-of-living pressures. It is more than a bit rich for the member for Wollongong to move a motion about power prices. However, the Liberal-Nationals Government welcomes the opportunity to correct her misconceptions. The Coalition campaigned on increasing assistance to New South Wales households and families, and that is exactly what it is doing. The member for Wollongong asked what the Government is doing, and I will tell her. Recently the Minister for Resources and Energy, the member for Terrigal, announced the delivery of yet another election commitment—that is, the commencement of the new Family Energy Rebate from 1 July.

The rebate will start at \$75, rising to \$125 on 1 July next year and to \$150 by 2014. More than 540,000 families across New South Wales will be eligible to receive the rebate. It is available to those families with a combined income of below \$150,000 and eligible under the Commonwealth's Family Tax Benefit A or B.

This new rebate is a recognition by the O'Farrell Government that households and families across New South Wales are struggling to cope with rising power prices. The rebate is being funded by the merger of the State's three electricity distribution businesses announced by the energy Minister in March. Additional savings from merging all three businesses will be directed to placing downward pressure on the retail price of electricity by reducing network charges, which will benefit all New South Wales energy customers.

More than 700,000 families that were neglected by the former Government will also receive increased assistance through the Government's Low Income Household Rebate, which rises to \$215 from 1 July and increases to \$235 by 2014. To reduce the impact of electricity price rises on households, the Government has also implemented a new dividends policy that will cap dividends for each of the Government-owned electricity businesses at existing forecast levels; commissioned a review of the electricity network licence conditions to halt any overspending that may be forcing up power prices; closed the former Labor Government's financially unsustainable Solar Bonus Scheme to new customers to reduce impacts on energy prices—

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: I want to know what the Government intends to do. The member for Camden should have read my motion properly. He is referring to solar rebates, which have nothing to do with the motion before the House. I ask you to bring him back to the leave of the motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Camden is being relevant to the motion.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I will not labour the point, but I note that the member for Wallsend and the member for Wollongong have had to come to the defence of the Leader of the Opposition. Their points of order related to the solar bonus and the amateurish performance of the then energy Minister, now Leader of the Opposition. I have obviously touched a raw nerve; Opposition members are ashamed. I will not say any more. It is extremely disappointing to see the recent draft price rises of the magnitude reported by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal—the average increase in household regulated prices is 16 per cent from 1 July 2012. While the Government has no legislative authority to overturn Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal decisions—and, once again, the member for Wollongong should be aware of that—it remains committed to doing everything it can to reduce the impact of those price increases. I have not addressed the carbon tax and the fact that members of the Opposition support it; I will leave it to my colleague the member for The Entrance to do that. For these compelling and sound reasons, I oppose this motion.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.20 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Wollongong on moving this excellent motion. Obviously it is a sore point for Government members because undoubtedly many who were on the Opposition benches in the last Parliament took the opportunity time and again to attack the former Government about Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommendations. They called on the Labor Government repeatedly to reject the tribunal's recommendations, but now they are in government they are very quiet about this issue. A functioning government requires an effective opposition to hold it to account. However, it is also important that oppositions do not make idle promises. When members of the Government were on the Opposition benches they made many idle promises. In fact, we have found more than 200 broken promises after more than 12 months of this Government, and it continues to break election promises.

One such promise was that in government it would reject any future Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommendations. Members opposite made a lot of noise about electricity prices and I am sure many of them discussed that issue at length during the election campaign. It is time they were honest with the people of New South Wales about their plans with regard to electricity pricing. The former Coalition energy spokesman, the Hon. Duncan Gay, issued a media release about this issue. In deference to the member for Davidson, who is so concerned about the sourcing of quotes, this quote is from *ninemsn.com*. Prior to the election the Hon. Duncan Gay said that the Government should reject price rises, which will see many families toppling into financial collapse. He called on the Labor Government to reject the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's recommended electricity prices. He stated:

The Government should reject these costs and come back to something families could afford.

Of course, the Hon. Duncan Gay was quickly moved from the Energy portfolio when the Coalition won government to ensure that he did not fulfil that commitment. Members were quick to point out that Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommendations were just that—recommendations—and that the Government had the opportunity to reject them outright. The Deputy Premier stated in this place that the Government could reject the tribunal's recommendations, and he called on it to do so. He is now silent about those

recommendations. Last year Integral Energy increased its prices by 15.5 per cent, EnergyAustralia increased its prices by 17.9 per cent and Country Energy—which services the area that the Deputy Premier claims to champion—increased its prices by 18.1 per cent. Of course, he said not one word about that despite the fact that he demanded the Labor Government reject the tribunal's recommendations, which this Government later accepted. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [12.25 p.m.]: As stated by my colleague the member for Camden, the O'Farrell Government does not support this motion because of its inaccuracy and hypocrisy. With power bills rising by 60 per cent during the last five years of the Labor Government's term in office, I find it astonishing that the member for Wollongong would be so stupid as to move this motion.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: The member is impugning the character of the member for Wollongong by referring to her inappropriately. The member should withdraw that word.

Ms Noreen Hay: It was unparliamentary.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: It is hardly unparliamentary coming from you.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: The member for The Entrance may be new to this place but there are standards. Members should not attack another member of this House at a personal level. They can say things in general terms, but what the member just said was said directly to me. Members should not speak through the Chair.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Members should direct their comments through the Chair. They should also refrain from making personal attacks on other members.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: What is missing from this debate is recognition of the devastating impact of Labor's carbon tax—a devastating tax that members opposite fully support. The price increases proposed by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal from 1 July have two components: Labor's carbon tax and increasing network costs. More than 90 per cent of the proposed power price increases for western Sydney households will be caused by Labor's carbon tax. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal has determined that price increases for Endeavour Energy customers are estimated to add \$182 to the average household bill, of which \$168 will be because of the carbon tax. Last year, the tribunal predicted that from 1 July 2012 prices would increase between 2 per cent and 10 per cent. Now, 12 months later—and overwhelmingly thanks to Labor's carbon tax—New South Wales consumers can expect average increases of 16 per cent.

It is an absolute disgrace to see Labor inflict this pain on families and businesses without compensation for the majority of New South Wales households. That is why this Government is forcing energy companies to reveal the costs of Labor's carbon tax on power bills after 1 July. We knew that the carbon tax would be devastating, but to see the real impact in dollar terms will be shocking. Now we know the real impact of the carbon tax, it is unbelievable that members opposite remain some of its biggest fans. That is, of course, except for one member—the member for Heffron. Appearing on *Sky News* earlier this month, the former Premier called on Prime Minister Julia Gillard to "seriously think about whether she can revoke [the carbon tax] dial it back somehow".

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. We are not talking about the carbon tax; we are talking about electricity.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The matter is relevant because electricity prices are inextricably linked to and affected by the carbon tax.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: Following up her comments with an article on ABC's *The Drum*, the member for Heffron wrote of the Prime Minister:

...resigning would be a significant Hail Mary pass. It would absolve the Government of most of its sins.

The Leader of the Opposition is on the record—on AAP on 9 August—as stating:

"I support the position the Prime Minister is out there advocating, and that is putting a price on carbon, a significant economic reform that we are seeing being put in place by the federal government"...

"I support putting a price on carbon, and that's what the prime minister is doing.

[*Time expired.*]

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.30 p.m.]: How could I not support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Wollongong challenging the O'Farrell Government for breaking its promise to reduce energy prices for families in Wollongong and across the State? During the Coalition Government's first year in office it has blatantly ignored the hardworking families and pensioners who will be hardest hit by the 17 per cent increase in State electricity prices. This price increase is affecting average households with high levels of electricity usage and low incomes. The Government should be fair dinkum and acknowledge that electricity is a necessity of life and most definitely not a luxury. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal recommended a 17 per cent price increase, but that was only a recommendation. It did not have to be accepted by the Government—it did not have to be—and implemented. I recall vividly the shadow Minister for Energy, the Hon. Duncan Gay, saying on Newcastle Prime TV in March 2010:

The Government should reject these costs and come back to something families could afford. They have done it—

That is, rejected determinations—

quite often in the past. This is in the Government's hands, what they do. The Government normally accepts the IPART recommendation, but they don't have to.

My colleague from Bankstown made the very salient point that Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner was of exactly the same opinion as Duncan Gay. Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner said:

The Government can reject Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's recommendations.

How the O'Farrell Government forgets its promises. It is our communities' opinion that it would be much more productive if the Government attempted to protect the vulnerable communities of New South Wales and increased the level of financial assistance in the form of higher electricity rebates. The Premier told those affected that he had enormous sympathy for them, but it is cold comfort to those affected by recent increased prices. Would it not be advisable for the Government to look back at its election promises and start honouring them? I make the following three suggestions to the Coalition Government. First, do not privatise electricity. I opposed the privatisation of electricity in government and I continue to oppose it strongly. Secondly, start freezing electricity dividends instead of increasing them. Thirdly, scrap the merger of three electricity distributors immediately. Premier O'Farrell should use the tool of foresight to reduce the threat of future power costs and to remember this, and I quote from a media release of February 2010 in which the Premier said:

The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals support any measures to reduce the impact of power prices.

If the Coalition Government really believes this, it should show the residents of New South Wales that it really means it. I strongly support the motion moved by the member for Wollongong because it is about looking after the battlers.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [12.31 p.m.]: I will make a short contribution to this matter. It is a matter in which the Public Accounts Committee takes a particular interest, as it is currently inquiring into how we will continue to provide a reliable and sustainable energy supply to the people of New South Wales in as affordable a way as possible. In the course of our inquiry, which I will not go into in detail because it is obviously the subject of ongoing committee deliberations, it has become apparent that price rises are a factor of, in my view, three main forces. One is green energy schemes, the second is network costs and the third is, particularly in the coming year, the impact of a carbon tax.

One has to realise that in making statements, which this Government made when in opposition, to the effect that we must control increases in price rises for energy and electricity, we also must consider how we can control those costs in a reliable and credible way. To back up those statements made on behalf of the public of New South Wales that we must keep costs under control—and various Ministers made some statements, but not all the statements that have been alleged today have been verified or accurately sourced—we identified in opposition that network costs had not been managed properly under the previous Government. On occasions, there has been excessive network expenditure.

There is no doubt, in terms of green schemes, the previous Government manifestly mismanaged them. The solar bonus scheme is, under any measure, an unmitigated disaster that was overseen by the now Leader of the Opposition. That unsustainable and very costly scheme did have an impact and continues to have an impact on energy prices. Our Government has also announced the closure of the greenhouse gas reduction scheme on commencement of the Federal Labor Government's carbon tax. That will reduce duplication among Federal and State schemes and minimise costs for electricity consumers. In the next 12 months the carbon tax will contribute up to 90 per cent of the price increase in electricity bills.

Mr Daryl Maguire: How much?

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: It will contribute up to 90 per cent, due to the carbon tax. Whether or not one supports the carbon tax—and those on this side clearly do not; those on the other side appear to support it—one cannot deny the fact that it has a major impact on the cost of electricity for the people of this State. In summing up on this matter, I ask the member for Wollongong: If we are going to decrease prices for electricity further, how do we do that? As the member for Camden indicated, this Government has introduced family energy rebates that will apply from 1 July, which do have the effect of helping people. There are also low income household rebates. They are very real measures. What would the Opposition do, or are its members just full of hot gas as usual?

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.36 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions by the member for Camden, the member for Bankstown, the member for Wallsend and the member for Davidson. In relation to the contribution of the member for The Entrance, in the words of Forest Gump: Stupid is as stupid does. The member for Camden did everything but address the motion before the House. He actually re-read my motion; however, I am not quite sure why he did that because I had already read it onto *Hansard*. I thank him for trying to assist me, but I suggest he get his head around his own job first and then I will tell him how I do my job. I was very interested in the brief contribution by the member for Davidson, who talked about what the Federal Government is doing. I note that during the 12 years of the Howard Federal Government, when it cut \$3 billion from the New South Wales GST, those opposite did not want to talk about that at all.

The motion I moved today is about the Government breaking its promises. The Government does not have to pass on the recommendations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal in full and, as I indicated in the lead-up to the election, Premier Barry O'Farrell said he would not be passing them on in full. What is this motion about? A couple of members opposite do not seem to understand it. It condemns the Government for breaking its promises to reduce energy prices. Government members can talk about anyone else they like—they can talk about Queensland and Western Australia—but they have not addressed the motion condemning their breaking of promises to reduce the price of energy for families in Wollongong and in New South Wales.

The motion also notes the Premier's comments following the election on 26 March that the price increases recommended by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal would be implemented fully—in direct contradiction of everything he said in the run-up to the election. Which one of the members opposite addressed that? Which one of them said anything? They all back-flipped, ducked and dived rather than dealt with the fact that they misled the community. They did not keep their promises and, if I was not as polite a person as I am, I might be tempted to say that they lied, but I am too polite to say that. We heard personal attacks from the member for The Entrance, which were absolutely appalling. As bad as those opposite are, I have not known any of them to behave like that. Hopefully it is not a new level to which we are stooping.

I acknowledge that the member for Wallsend and the member for Bankstown included a host of effects of the Government's broken promises and I thank them for that. I congratulate them on representing their electorates in the way they do. It is important that we take positive action to help the disadvantaged and pensioners. Members are elected representatives of the people of this State—not like the member for Newcastle who said yesterday that he supported Queensland. Shame on him. We do our best for them. The Government should get on with the job of helping the people of New South Wales. The Government does not have to implement in full the recommendations of the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 19

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

Noes, 60

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

Pairs

Ms Burton	Mrs Davies
Ms Keneally	Mr Stokes
Mr Park	Mrs Williams

Question resolved in the negative.

Motion negatived.

POINTS OF ORDER

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I will clarify a ruling I made earlier today in relation to a point of order that was taken on the member for Wallsend, who was speaking in reply to the debate on her motion relating to Glendale Local Area Command. I sustained the point of order in relation to her relevance, and I uphold that ruling. The point of order was taken in relation to Standing Order 137, which relates to the framing of argument within motions. Members seeking to take a point of order on the relevance of a member's contribution should refer to Standing Order 76, although even if a point of order had been taken under Standing Order 76 I deemed the member to be relevant at the time, and I uphold that ruling.

STACEY STREET, BANKSTOWN

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.52 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that Stacey Street is a significant arterial road in south-west Sydney;
- (2) notes that there is an open drain on Stacey Street that causes significant traffic congestion and safety problems;
- (3) notes that the Minister for Roads and Ports has recently said that the situation in Stacey Street is "not untenable"; and
- (4) calls on the Government to find a solution to fix Stacey Street.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to debate the first motion in my name, and I am especially pleased that the issue is Stacey Street. As the motion notes, Stacey Street is an important arterial street in the greater Bankstown area. Stacey Street provides a connection between the M5 and the Hume Highway, and passes by the heart of the Bankstown central business district. Stacey Street also provides an important connection to the Chullora Industrial Park. As many members would be aware, Chullora Industrial Park is a major area of employment not only for south-western Sydney but also within the Sydney Basin. Chullora Industrial Park is home to important businesses such as Fairfax and News Limited, and many other major companies. The major media outlets require daily road access for moving printed documents and other products via Stacey Street onto the Hume Highway and the M5.

It is not an exaggeration to say that Stacey Street is a major factor in the future health of our region's economy. If we do not invest in fixing Stacey Street now there is a real chance that it could cost us jobs in the future. What is more, the need to improve Stacey Street has the support of both major parties. Labor and Liberal committed to upgrading Stacey Street in the March 2011 election campaign. Not only are the constituents of Bankstown impacted by the traffic congestion and other issues on Stacey Street, but also those constituents from Menai, Oatley, Lakemba and East Hills who drive through and are likely to be regular commuters on this major arterial road. Time today may not permit, but I look forward to hearing from Government members who also will express support for improving Stacey Street.

One ongoing problem is the lack of a single vision for Stacey Street. We are fortunate that Stacey Street is located within an existing corridor of land, much of which is unused. Other land along the length of Stacey Street is ready to be used. However, Bankstown City Council has been unable to develop that land due to uncertainty as to whether Stacey Street will be upgraded. The Opposition would welcome the opportunity to work with the Government to develop a cohesive plan for the future of Stacey Street. Since I gave notice of this motion in August 2011 the Minister for Roads and Ports has committed to some minor works to Stacey Street. In September last year the Minister informed me that funding had been approved for two upgrades to Stacey Street this financial year.

These upgrades comprised \$110,000 of Federal Government funding for a right-turn phase at the traffic signals at the intersection of Greenacre Road and Stacey Street, and \$200,000 for intersection improvements at Stanley Street and Salvia Avenue. However, further works are needed to improve Stacey Street. A matter that must be addressed is the open drain that runs down the centre of Stacey Street between McCauley Avenue and Stanley Street. The former Government committed funding of \$250,000 to a study to determine the best solution to this ongoing problem. It is a complex problem that involves Sydney Water and the Roads and Maritime Services, the former Roads and Traffic Authority. Last year the Minister replied to my queries as to the outcome of this review, stating:

The RTA has reviewed the situation on Stacey Street, Bankstown, and has considered a range of options to move traffic around the open Sydney Water drain. There are a number of activities that could be undertaken to improve the traffic flow, however, the current arrangements are not considered to present an untenable situation.

Essentially, the Minister said that the problem could be fixed, but due to a change of Government it will not be fixed. It is disappointing that the Minister has not honoured his party's commitment to upgrade Stacey Street. The need to improve Stacey Street will only increase due to the Government's decision to only widen the M5 West. While the Opposition welcomes the decision to widen the M5 West, the failure to also widen the M5 East will create problems in the Bankstown area. Not widening the M5 East will create a bottleneck after King Georges Road, where three lanes of traffic will be forced into two lanes. As a result of that decision, more

traffic will be forced onto Bankstown roads, in particular and subsequently Stacey Street. Furthermore, the upgrade of the Port Enfield intermodal terminal, which should be operational next year, undoubtedly will increase traffic on our roads even further.

Some parts of Stacey Street are only one lane wide and as such additional funding is needed to widen Stacey Street so that it can cope with the increase in traffic. My final point is that we can make a solution together for Stacey Street. I believe that working with the two departments and council, the Government can find a solution. No doubt that has been an ongoing problem. With works on the M5 West potentially starting in the next year or two, and with the Port Enfield intermodal terminal becoming operational, there will be continued pressure on Stacey Street. I reiterate that members on both sides of the House should not view Stacey Street as a problem for Bankstown only. This major arterial road, which runs directly into Chullora Industrial Park that provides jobs for New South Wales, is a major thoroughfare for commuters throughout Sydney and it requires bipartisan support.

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 17/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.01 p.m.]: As Chair of the Legislation Review Committee I take this opportunity to comment on the recent Legislation Review Digest report tabled on 22 May 2012. This is the seventeenth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament—the hardest-working committee in the Parliament.

Mr Andrew Gee: Give yourself a rap.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The member for Orange made reference to the committee's brilliant chairman.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Myall Lakes will return to the leave of the motion.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: 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. Digest No. 17/55 examined the three bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 8 May 2012. The bills are the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, the Industrial Relations Amendment (Industrial Organisations) Bill 2012 and the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Adjustment of Areas) Bill 2012. The committee agreed that its jurisdiction was not enlivened with respect to the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Adjustment of Areas) Bill 2012.

The Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 amends the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 to provide for the disclosure and use of genetic information for a purpose other than the primary purpose for which it was collected, subject to certain conditions. The committee recognised that while this provision may impact on an individual's privacy, it is in the broader public interest to allow the release of such genetic information in order to lessen or prevent a serious threat to the life, health or safety of a genetic relative of the individual from whom the material was originally collected. As such, the committee did not consider this provision to be an undue trespass on individual rights and liberties. Whilst the committee noted the ethical complexities that concern the disclosure of an individual's genetic information, the committee recognised that the adoption of this bill would align New South Wales with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions.

The committee acknowledged that the commencement of the bill has been delayed to accommodate the development of appropriate guidelines by the NSW Privacy Commissioner regarding the disclosure of sensitive medical information. Further, the Privacy Commissioner was consulted extensively before the bill was finalised. With respect to the Industrial Relations Amendment (Industrial Organisations) Bill 2012, the committee noted that the bill confers powers on inspectors to investigate misconduct offences by officers of State industrial organisations and allows the appointment of an administrator for an industrial organisation by the Government

in circumstances in which an investigation into alleged gross misconduct had commenced but had not been concluded. Whilst the committee acknowledged that this bill has been passed by both Houses, the committee has referred elements of the bill to the Parliament.

The committee refers to Parliament whether allowing an investigator to question a current or former officer or employee of an industrial organisation constitutes a trespass of an individual's right to silence. The committee also is concerned that provisions within the bill that require the production of documentation or information may adversely affect an officer, employee or former officer or employee's right to silence. The committee commends the Government for its initiative in enacting this legislation in order to remove any ambiguity that may exist with respect to the ability for an administrator to be appointed to the Health Services Union, which is registered under National Law and has a branch in New South Wales. For a detailed consideration of the identified issues in the bills, I invite members to review the digest. I remind the House that the digest aims to assist members in their consideration of bills and highlights the issues that the committee has considered when reviewing bills that have been tabled in the House.

During the committee meeting members discussed whether to put photographs of committee members on the front of the digest. I thank the committee staff who worked on the digest, together with committee members, namely, the member for Kiama, the member for Rockdale, the member for Bankstown, the member for Parramatta and our colleagues in the other place, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps and Mr David Shoebridge, who have provided invaluable assistance in the scrutiny of bills introduced into this Parliament and in ensuring that the digest will continue to be of assistance to all members. I pay particular tribute to the member for Kiama for the assistance he has provided to me and the committee whilst a member of the Legislation Review Committee, and I welcome back the member for Swansea.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.06 p.m.]: I speak in debate on the Legislation Review Digest No. 9 of 2012 and No. 17 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament and acknowledge my fellow committee members—the members for the electorates of Myall Lakes, Parramatta, Kiama and Rockdale—the return of the member for Swansea and our colleagues in the other place, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and Mr David Shoebridge. I note that the tenure of the member for Kiama, was short but we welcome back the member for Swansea. I acknowledge the hardworking committee staff Emma Matthews, Emma Wood, Jason Arditi and Todd Buttsworth. There is no doubt that they perform a wonderful job in preparing these digests for each sitting week.

I was unable to attend the committee meeting this week as it was held, as it is on every second occasion, in the morning and it is very difficult for me, as I have mentioned in the past, to attend the 8.30 a.m. meetings due to family responsibilities. I note that I was not alone in being unable to attend as the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and the member for Kiama were also unable to attend the meeting. I ask again that the committee consider being a little more sensitive to the family responsibilities of members and consider taking up the lunchtime meetings on a more permanent basis, given that our meetings are fairly short. I think our last meeting last for only six minutes. That gives me more than enough time during lunchtime or any other time of the day to fully represent the Opposition as part of our wonderful structure of democracy. I am appointed to that committee and I do have a role to play. The committee reviewed three bills this week. The first bill the committee reviewed was the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2012.

The committee noted that the bill might have an impact on privacy insofar as it requires disclosure of personal information. The committee reviewed also the Industrial Relations Amendment (Industrial Organisations) Bill 2012. This bill was supported by the Opposition, which moved to amend the bill. The most significant amendment was to allow the Industrial Relations Commission rather than the Minister for Finance and Services to appoint an administrator. It makes sense that the industrial umpire should be responsible for appointing administrators rather than a Minister. This is particularly important when the Minister responsible is openly hostile towards unions, as is the case with the Minister for Finance and Services. I also note the digest referred to Parliament potential issues with the Minister appointing an administrator, but retracted these concerns due to the bill being amended. The digest offers a substantial analysis of this bill. In particular, it says:

The Committee refers to Parliament whether enabling an investigator to question an officer, employee or former officer or employee constitutes a trespass of an individual's right to silence.

The committee also referred to Parliament whether:

... the provisions that provide a power to enter premises and seize documents without a warrant may trespass on personal rights and liberties.

The committee further referred to Parliament issues regarding retrospectivity. In particular, the committee referred to Parliament:

... whether the retrospective commencement of these provisions is appropriate.

The digest also reviewed the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Adjustment of Areas) Bill 2012 but did not make any comment regarding this bill. Once again I wish the committee staff good luck as they will have limited time to prepare next week's digest due to back-to-back sitting weeks. I commend the digest to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.10 p.m.]: As Opposition Whip and someone who is very interested in the work of the committee and publications that assist Opposition members in particular in analysing legislation I thank the chairman again for bringing forward digest No. 17/55, dated 22 May 2012. The chair says, often proudly, that the committee is the hardest-working committee in the Parliament and I usually agree with that. That is still the case, although there are some matters on which I will comment. The committee meets every week and it tables and debates a report each sitting week. No other committee in the Parliament does that as frequently as the Legislation Review Committee. The digest before the House, however, would be better described as a flyer or a newsletter. For example, the contents listed on page 3 have already been mentioned by the two previous speakers: the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, the Industrial Relations Amendment (Industrial Organisations) Bill 2012 and the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Adjustment of Areas) Bill 2012. It is a 15-page document that has been padded out. Page 13 has just 14 words on it. Pages 14 and 15 contain not much more.

Mr Andrew Gee: It is the quality.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The member for Orange says "it is the quality". The chairman, the member for Myall Lakes, often refers to the previous administration. Members should compare this digest with a number of reports printed by the previous Government when the committee was chaired by Allan Shearan. I refer to just three of them: The digest of 20 October 2008, No. 12, contained 60 pages and dealt with seven bills and a number of regulations. Number 8 of June 2010 contained 69 pages and dealt with nine bills and a number of regulations. Number 17 of 2010, dated 30 November 2010, probably the last or second last of the previous Government, contained 182 pages and dealt with 25 bills plus regulations. The digest before the House is documentary proof that whilst this is still the hardest-working committee in the Parliament it is actually reporting on legislation of a do-nothing Government.

The member for Myall Lakes always proudly says, "Sixteen years you people had in government." After 16 years in Opposition the Coalition has arrived in government ill-prepared to run a decent legislative program. One would have thought that after 16 years we would have had more than a 15-page digest to debate 1½ years after members opposite came into office. That compares with 180 pages of digest printed by the former Government. I congratulate the chairman on his consistent work. It is no reflection on him or the committee members, but it would be nice if the Government gave this hardworking committee a little more work to do so we could have some substantial publications to brief members of Parliament on the various pieces of legislation that come before this House.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [1.14 p.m.]: I will comment briefly on the Legislation Review Committee report in light of the comments made by the member for Mount Druitt. I agree with certain things he said. He is quite right that the chairman is a very good chairman and it is a hardworking committee.

Ms Robyn Parker: There were so many faults in their legislation. That is why the reports were so large.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I acknowledge the Minister's interjection. I concur with her view that there were many faults in the previous Government's legislation and that is why the digests were so large. I have a different proposition. The member for Mount Druitt was trying to equate the number of pages to the amount of work done. Having worked in academia for seven or eight years I can say that just because someone writes a lot of material it does not mean the ideas have been conveyed.

Mr Tony Issa: Quality not quantity.

Dr GEOFF LEE: The member for Granville is exactly right. It is about quality, not quantity. The member for Orange also is correct. It is all about the middle management of the Opposition trying to pad things

out and put forward misleading information. The most important thing about the digest is to make it simple and easy to read so that members can understand the legislation we have been examining. I commend the members of the committee for their hard work. In fact, most of the work is done in our own time when we read the legislation so that we can compile the digest. The committee is there to debate only certain issues but it is understood in the committee that we do the work prior to attending the meeting, which is most fit and proper. It is about efficiency in government, not about padding things out and thicker documents being better.

It is about making simplified information accessible and raising concerns, if there are any, that may flow from the legislation. It disappoints me that the member for Mount Druitt cast aspersions on the committee's work and suggested that it was not good because we did not write voluminous reports, which may have been totally irrelevant. It insults the members of the committee and certainly insults the hardworking staff of the committee. The committee staff have a lot of work to do each week. They do not have a lot of time, as the member for Bankstown said, when there are back-to-back sitting weeks. The member for Mount Druitt is saying, "The more, the better." Clearly that is not the case.

The member for Mount Druitt is claiming that the voluminous digests produced under the previous Government were superior. As a former educator I know how hard it is to write simple English and produce quality documents. I commend the committee, the chairman and the staff for their ability to put together a succinct, clear and logical argument to point out any concerns the committee may have about legislation. I commend the Minister for pointing out that our legislation is perhaps better and that there is therefore no need for the committee to draw attention to any issues in the legislation. It disappoints me that the member for Mount Druitt after such a long career in this place still has not worked out the difference between quality and quantity.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I also endorse the comments about the chairman of the committee. His office is near mine and I assure members that every Monday he spends hours preparing for this committee. I can assure the House of his dedication to the committee.

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

Report noted.

[The Deputy-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) left the chair at 1.18 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

HEART RHYTHM WEEK

The SPEAKER: I reiterate the message from the Minister for Health this week regarding Heart Rhythm Week. The Atrial Fibrillation Association will be holding its annual Heart Rhythm Week to raise awareness and promote a better understanding of heart rhythm disorders and, in particular, the rapidly rising incidence of atrial fibrillation in our community. This year's theme, Your Heart in Your Hands, Know Your Pulse, aims to encourage members of the public to recognise symptoms of heart rhythm disorders and advise when they should seek further advice from a health care professional. At least one in four of us will develop a potentially fatal heart rhythm disorder. Palpitations, light-headedness and shortness of breath could be symptoms of a heart rhythm disorder.

Professor Freedman OAM, Professor of Cardiology at Concord Repatriation Hospital and Deputy Dean at the Sydney Medical School, University of Sydney, is on hand in the office of the Assistant-Speaker—I thank the member for Lismore—in room 755 before and after question time to provide a quick heart rhythm assessment and to teach members how to take their pulse. An iPhone application can be downloaded that will check one's pulse. Learning how to take one's pulse is a simple test that could save one's life. I encourage all members to take up this opportunity. Once again I thank the Minister for Health for that statement.

PREMIER, AND MINISTER FOR WESTERN SYDNEY

The SPEAKER: I take this opportunity to extend the warm wishes of all members of the House to the Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney on the occasion of his fifty-third birthday.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: The members opposite may wish to call a division on that, Madam Speaker.

QUESTION TIME

[*Question time commenced at 2.23 p.m.*]

TIM KOELMA POLITICAL LOBBYING

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Energy and Resources, Minister for the Central Coast and Special Minister of State. Given that Tim Koelma was suspended following allegations that he breached—

Mr Andrew Fraser: Are you a masochist?

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

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: —electoral funding laws, why did the Minister mislead the House on Tuesday by saying that he resigned to pursue alternative employment opportunities?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: As I said on Tuesday, I have been sitting here for 13 months and I have not been asked one question about the Solar Bonus Scheme because the Leader of the Opposition wrecked it. I have not been asked one question about coal seam gas because he handed out the licences.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: However, when there is an opportunity to smear under parliamentary privilege he gets to his feet with alacrity. This man will go down in history with his first parliamentary question being a personal attack upon a member of his House. Since then—

[*Interruption*]

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Since then he has kept his record perfect with personal attacks on the Minister for the Environment and the Minister for Tourism. He is now smearing a person who was employed in my ministerial office and who is no longer on my staff.

Ms Anna Watson: Point of order: While this may be entertaining for those—

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

Ms Anna Watson: The Minister should answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is in order at the moment.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: And it is. What I have done on prior occasions is simply to point out to the House the ethical standard that prevails on the front bench opposite.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Every front bench member opposite has a poor record of moral integrity.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, which relates to relevance. The Minister has gone nowhere near answering the question. He is simply attempting to divert attention and to smear members on this side of the House. This is a very serious issue and the people of New South Wales deserve an answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! So far there have been no attacks against individual members of the Opposition. The Minister will return to the question.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I am addressing the underlying premise of the question. Questions in this House do not directly seek information as such; they are based on the context in which information is sought. The information upon which this question is sought is an attempt to traduce the reputation of someone outside of this Parliament who is unable to present himself—

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: He is doing that under parliamentary privilege. The Leader of the Opposition should acknowledge that that is the basis of the question.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: If the Minister were to read the question of the Leader of the Opposition again, he would realise that he was asked why he misled the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! I heard the question.

Mr Michael Daley: It is not about someone else; it is about the Minister and his truthfulness.

The SPEAKER: Order! The question perhaps implies an allegation that the Minister has misled the House, but that has not been proven and I cannot rule on that, as the member for Maroubra well knows.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Members of this House will be interested to learn one simple fact—

Mr John Robertson: You can't tell the truth.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: You of all people.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I will answer that interjection. This is the man who submitted to his Premier a Cabinet minute stating that the cost of the Solar Bonus Scheme would be borne by the customers of New South Wales and then denied that to the community. This is the man whose first act as the Secretary of Unions NSW—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Madam Speaker, unless I am mistaken, you asked the Minister to return to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Minister that I have asked him to return to the leave of the question.

Mr Michael Daley: He is all over the shop. Did he resign? Who is lying? Is the Minister wrong or is the *Sydney Morning Herald* wrong?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat. We know what the question was. I have asked the Minister to return to the leave of the question.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I am delighted to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is about to answer the question.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I cannot answer it because my time is running out. If I am not heard in silence I will not be able to answer. [*Time expired.*]

MOTOR VEHICLE REGISTRATION STICKERS

Mr JAI ROWELL: I direct my question to the Premier. How is the Government making life easier for motorists?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for his question and his interest in this issue on behalf of motorists, particularly those in south-western Sydney. Until we complete the South West Rail Link, motorists will not have a legitimate alternative route to Sydney and elsewhere. Have members noticed that, regardless of

whether we are having fun, the older we get the more quickly time passes? I am sure members of the Asquith Probus Club who are present in the gallery today know that as well as I do. I think I am now eligible for membership of that club. Birthdays and other anniversaries come around much more quickly, as does the date on which we must reregister our motor vehicles. I am sure one or two members of the Asquith Probus Club present remember what a pain in the neck it was to remove registration labels in days gone by. One would have to use a razorblade or nail polish remover, depending on whether one was the member for Wollongong or the member for Lismore—

Ms Noreen Hay: That is sexist.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I did not say which one of those members used nail polish remover.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Lest the member for Wollongong is offended by what she claims is a sexist comment, I advise the House that in the dark distant past I have been known to use nail polish remover to remove a registration sticker—and I do not intend to take my socks off to show what colour nail polish I am wearing today. There are no Seals on the Government side of the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury and the member for Fairfield will come to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Whilst modern registration stickers are easier to remove—once you get your nail under them you can simply peel them off—the fact is that they still represent an inconvenience and I am delighted to say that from 1 January registration stickers will no longer be required for 5.5 million light vehicles registered in New South Wales.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That represents 97 per cent of all vehicles registered in our State. This will be a great relief to car owners who, in the normal course of their lives, will still get annual reminders to register their cars, but it will be of bigger benefit to business and particularly fleet owners. This cut to red tape has been warmly welcomed by business. It has been welcomed by the Motor Traders Association, which represents 5,000 businesses across New South Wales. Every month Bayswater Car Rental, which has 1,200 cars, has to go through the process of removing registration labels from its vehicles. It has been welcomed by the Business Chamber, which claims that this initiative will save business in the order of \$5 million and, it estimates, in the order 160,000 hours that is otherwise spent dealing with unnecessary red tape. I am sure there are many business owners—small, medium and large—who could use those hours to better effect.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The decision to abolish registration stickers for light vehicles from 1 January comes as a result of a review by Roads and Maritime Services and the Better Regulation Office. The review found that because of the automatic number plate recognition technology that is available, and increasingly available, in police cars, registration labels are not needed to support compliance and enforcement of vehicle registration and other laws.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Vehicle owners will continue to receive notifications from the Roads and Maritime Services as well as the numerous comprehensive third party insurers reminding them to renew their registration. Under this scheme, motorists will also be able to check the status of their vehicle registration or another vehicle's registration using the Roads and Maritime Services website. There will be no excuse for driving an unregistered vehicle. Registration stickers were introduced in 1932 in this State at which time there were around 145,000 vehicles registered. Here we are, almost 80 years later, and there are 5.5 million vehicles registered in this State. After these changes come in on 1 January motorists will no longer need to remove and replace registration labels on their cars. This is a good, common-sense announcement and it reflects modern technology. It is about reducing and removing inconvenience for motorists, and reducing red tape for small business. It is another sensible delivery by this Government, after review, of a change to New South Wales.

POLITICAL LOBBYING

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast. Given the Minister was misled yesterday, how can he guarantee that his chief of staff has not been referring on lobbying clients from his taxpayer funded mobile phone to other firms, including his former associates at Sefiani Communications?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I will read to the House a quotation:

Lebanese residents were promised Housing Commission homes for their brothers and sisters from overseas in return for joining the Liverpool branch of the Labor Party.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order—

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: This is so good.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. The member for Wyong will come to order.

Mr Paul Lynch: The point of order relates to Standing Order 73, of which this Minister is in total and flagrant breach. If he wishes to conduct an attack on me, the standing orders, decency and courage—which are lacking in him—require him to do that by way of substantive motion, because that will allow me to respond to him, point out who is informants are, and point out the connection he has with those informants and the connection of those informants with the burning of Liverpool council chambers.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. If the Minister wishes to impute improper motives to the member for Liverpool—

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I never mentioned him.

The SPEAKER: I thought the Minister mentioned the member for Liverpool. Did he mean the former member for Liverpool?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: No, I never mentioned the member for Liverpool. Why is he so defensive?

The SPEAKER: I must have misheard the Minister.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I am sure he is quite innocent. Nobody else believes it, but I do. I have had enough fun with the member for Liverpool. If ever the House has an hour or so, we will have a debate, the member for Liverpool versus me, and we will talk about the great mysteries of Housing Commission rorts.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, which relates to relevance. The question is serious. So far we have not had an answer. The Minister keeps ranting and doing everything he can to avoid answering the question.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Let me give the answer that I was trying to give earlier but was stopped by the effluxion of time. Had the Leader of the Opposition granted me the extra two minutes, he would have got the answer. I refer to my previous answer.

RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. What is the Government doing to deliver better health infrastructure for patients in regional New South Wales?

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I am delighted to provide an answer to the excellent member for Lismore. The very first question I answered in this House on becoming Minister asked what the O'Farrell Government had achieved in round 3 of the Health and Hospitals Fund. The question on that occasion came from the member

for Tamworth. On this occasion I am very happy to advise the House that in round 4 we have achieved 39 per cent of the share of the Health and Hospitals Fund. That is well above the population share of 33 per cent and the same share that we achieved in round 3. Labor achieved 17 per cent in round 1 and 21 per cent in round 2; we have beaten Labor hands down. And why is that? Because the Federal Government acknowledged that the quality of our submissions to the Health and Hospitals Fund was so superior to those of Labor and it was able to respond accordingly.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: We provided money out of our budget to match the contributions from the Commonwealth. In this round we put in \$40 million to attract \$40 million for the Kempsey hospital, which is in the electorate of the member for Oxley. We put in \$20 million to attract \$60 million for Lismore. We put in \$6 million for Hillston and \$6 million for Peak Hill, and that is exactly half the amount of money allocated out of the Health and Hospitals Fund. We also put money into the Yamba Community Health Centre. The member for Clarence and I are very pleased about honouring the commitment we both made at the recent by-election in that electorate. Those funds were provided to match the contributions of the Commonwealth. I acknowledge the Federal Health Minister, who spoke to me personally about these commitments. She and her predecessor said that the Federal Government would not have been able to make such a contribution to New South Wales if the contribution of New South Wales had been not so substantial. I invite members to look at what we did in the previous round at Tamworth, Port Macquarie, Dubbo, Bega and Wagga Wagga.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: They are amazing amounts of money. I was asked by the member for Lismore to advise what people think of these announcements, and I will do so. I will read first an article that was reported in the Northern Rivers *Echo* of 10 May 2012. Lismore Base Hospital Medical Staff Council chairman, Dr Christopher Ingall, described the funding as "a shot in the arm" to the hospital. He said:

Over the past couple of decades we have only just managed to keep doctors here. Now they will be able to work in a better environment with improved medical conditions. And we'll have more beds, to manage the bed-lock we have now in the emergency department.

The member for Lismore will agree with me when I say that, having seen the emergency department in that hospital, it would have to be one of the most run-down and substandard emergency departments in the State. I know the shadow Minister for Health would agree with me—he is nodding his head and agrees with me. But those opposite had 16 years and what did they do? Zip, nothing, no dollars—they made lots of promises but provided no dollars, in 16 very long years. I have received correspondence from doctors and nurses in Kempsey and from other allied health professionals. I have had letters from people in the community, from patients, their families and carers saying well done to the O'Farrell Government and to the member for Oxley

The member for Lismore reminded me this morning that in 1998—before he was elected—the major issue that people in his community were talking about was the need to upgrade the Kempsey District Hospital. When was the first time any substantial amount of money was allocated? It was this year. Why? It is because the Government put in money. What did those opposite do? Zip—nothing. If you think I am angry, I am. I am angry on behalf of these communities that have waited for a very long time for this hospital upgrade. In Hillston, Councillor Peter Laird, the mayor of Carrathool shire, had this to say on the local ABC news about the money that is going for the multipurpose service there:

Absolute excitement within the community at Hillston and district. It services well out to Ivanhoe too and meets with the Royal Flying Doctor. It's tremendous news, \$12 million. It'd be the biggest for a long while but it's something that needed to happen and it's wonderful that it's coming about.

I was happy to attend the Yamba Health Service with the member for Clarence and the newspaper article—*[Time expired.]*

WARATAH ADVISORY AND ANDREW HUMPHERSON

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast. In light of his refusal to answer the previous question, will he table the chief of staff's phone records?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Madam Speaker, can you not see the scene in the strategy meeting this morning as members opposite sat around—like that great opening scene in *Macbeth*—all gathered there swirling around the cauldron chanting, "Fair is foul and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air". There they were—the whole gang, the very much reduced gang—all 20 of them, working out the question to ask the Minister for Energy and Resources. And I got the full title. The only time I ever get the full title is in question time. This question is an ongoing effort by those opposite. They have moved well away from where they started. It was originally an election funding issue, which has now been appropriately addressed by the Election Funding Authority. However, members opposite continue to make unsubstantiated suggestions and allegations. Let us think this through, Madam Speaker. Should members opposite be able to ask that the telephone records of your chief of staff, your personal assistant or anybody else be made available? At no stage are those opposite seeking information on matters of public affairs. Despite all my titles, nothing relates—

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Nothing relates to the administration of my portfolio; everything relates to fishing expeditions to traduce the reputations of people who are outside this House.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Those opposite scream Standing Order 73 every time you mention their name—and rightly so, because why else does anybody mention the name of a Labor member of Parliament except to point out their many defects? Notwithstanding that—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: We have had a 2½-minute dissertation about the Minister's interpretation of the question. The question is about lobbying—an issue the Premier went to great lengths to address.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume his seat if he does not want to find himself outside the Chamber. The question related to phone records and the Minister is addressing that very issue. I am listening carefully to the questions and to the answers. The Minister has been relevant.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: All matters relating to ministerial staff come under the purview and control of the department and those matters are controlled by the director general of the department. This Government, its Ministers and ministerial staff comply with the code of conduct and we will continue to do so. But I say that the very concept of a code of conduct was traduced over 16 years by those opposite. A number of them still sit across there—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven of them were Ministers in a Government that Rodney Cavalier—the great Labor historian—described as the worst Government in the history of New South Wales.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. This question goes to your integrity and honesty—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will resume her seat. I have listened carefully to the questions and to the answers, as I do every day. I ask Ministers to return to the leave of the question if they are way off track but at the moment the Minister is being relevant.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I enjoy receiving these questions because they give me an excellent opportunity to display the inadequacies of those seven—the famous seven who are still sitting in this Chamber. [*Time expired.*]

OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANGS

Mr TONY ISSA: My question is addressed to the Attorney General. What has been the recent development regarding the Government response to organised crime?

Mr GREG SMITH: I welcome the question from the member for Granville and thank him for his sterling defence of the community in an area that has been put under great strain by criminals firing guns and endangering the community. It gives me a chance to update the House on how the NSW Police Force—with the support of this Government—is getting serious about cracking down on outlaw motorcycle gangs and the tattoo

parlours under their control. It allows me to highlight how those opposite have misunderstood the consorting laws passed in the first week of the Parliament this year and just how effective those laws are proving to be. Yesterday the Legislative Council passed the Tattoo Parlours Bill 2012.

These reforms made good on the Premier's commitment to break the stranglehold that outlaw motorcycle gangs have over the tattoo industry in this State. Removing bikies from the tattoo industry will reduce the reason for rival gangs to fight turf wars because these businesses will no longer be symbols of a gang's territory. The fatal brawl between members of the Comancheros and Hells Angels at the Sydney domestic airport terminal in March 2009 has been linked to the Hells Angels opening a tattoo parlour on what the Comancheros considered to be their turf. When tattoo parlours are no longer controlled by bikies they will not be so closely associated with serious acts of violence such as shootings and firebombings.

Bikies will no longer feel that they own the tattoo industry and that they have the right to stand over and extort owners of tattoo businesses who are unaffiliated with outlaw motorcycle gangs. Nor will tattoo parlours be able to provide a means for organised criminals to launder the proceeds of crime. And that is what they do in tattoo parlours. Any person currently operating, or wanting to operate, a business that offers body art tattooing services will need to obtain a licence from NSW Fair Trading. It will be an offence to carry on such a business without an operator licence, attracting a penalty of up to 100 penalty units, or \$11,000, in the case of a corporation and 50 penalty units, or \$5,500, in any other case.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: A continuing offence provision also applies to this requirement, that is, the penalty will increase by the same amount each day that the offence continues. I am sure the member for Mount Druitt, who is a former police officer, would be interested in bringing in such penalties. The Commissioner of Police will be able to conduct investigations into licence applicants and licensees to ensure that only fit and proper persons are granted and able to hold licences. Reputable operators have nothing to fear from these laws. Indeed, I imagine they will welcome them. The tattoo parlour reforms are in addition to our criminal organisations and consorting reforms, which passed in March this year.

On 11 May police announced that two alleged high-ranking members of the Nomads outlaw motorcycle gang would face court next month charged under new consorting legislation. On 16 May it was announced that detectives had laid further consorting charges against Nomads outlaw motorcycle gang members. The new legislation is being used by the State Crime Command's Gangs Squad and in particular by Strike Force Raptor and Strike Force Kinnarra investigators as a proactive strategy in combating outlaw motorcycle gang related organised crime. While it is clear that the police understand the new consorting laws, the same cannot be said for the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Toongabbie and the member for Liverpool. They have persisted with the claim—indeed, they have attacked their own outlaw gang legislation—

Mr Nathan Rees: You didn't want to do it.

Mr GREG SMITH: They attacked the fact that we had included defences in the legislation that Labor had included in the first place. You do not even know that, you goose.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Has the member for Cessnock taken offence at that comment?

Mr Clayton Barr: You kicked out the member for Canterbury for using the term "scumbag".

The SPEAKER: Order! I took that action yesterday following a number of incidents. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Clayton Barr: I ask you to be consistent.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will certainly remove members from the Chamber if I think their language is offensive or unparliamentary, as I did yesterday. I do not believe any standing order has been breached at this stage.

[Extension of time granted.]

Mr GREG SMITH: These ignorant members have persisted with the claim that family members or those working in a tattoo parlour will not be caught by the consorting laws.

Mr Nathan Rees: We haven't.

Mr GREG SMITH: The member for Toongabbie does not even know what he said. They fail to understand that it is up to those who have been arrested to prove that their associations were reasonable.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: In his media release on 16 February the Leader of the Opposition said, "family members, work colleagues and students are automatically exempt from anti-consorting laws" and that "police will be powerless to act". Since then he has repeated these statements to the media. I can only stress that if people are consorting with family members or in tattoo parlours as part of an outlaw motorcycle gang that is not reasonable. That is unreasonable, and people will be liable for prosecution.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: Habitual consorting could not be proved under the old Act unless people met seven times in six months to chat with each other. Now it can be proved after only one warning. Members opposite had 16 years to change the law. What did we get? Many of them are older and deeper in debt. Members opposite should get better legal advice. They should find a lawyer, because there is not one lawyer in the Opposition. They should start backing the police. Support the police and stop putting the police down.

EXCLUSIVE BRETHERN DEVELOPMENT APPLICATION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast. Did the Minister have discussions with the member for Gosford about his decision to leave Parliament House early on 8 May to vote on the Exclusive Brethren development application before Gosford City Council, given that he had earlier sought official leave not to attend a meeting?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: You have got to give it to them. Did I have a discussion with the member for Cessnock? Did I have a discussion with the member for Keira? Yesterday—this is important—300 people in the Cessnock electorate lost their jobs, but the Opposition has not asked one question about that. It is more important to ask me who I spoke to on 8 May. What a great question. It is the killer question. One is always waiting for the killer question. It is coming, it is coming. Then Leader of the Opposition asks, "Who did you talk to on 8 May?" I probably spoke to the Leader of the Opposition on 8 May. I should make a record of all my conversations.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Shellharbour will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order. The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I have many conversations with many people and I do not disclose any conversations with anyone.

VOLUNTEERING

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. How is the Government supporting our volunteers?

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I thank the member for Gosford for his question. In fact, the member accompanied me when we launched the volunteer strategy at the Newcastle Volunteer Resource Centre on the weekend. He was accompanied by the member for Charlestown and the good member for Newcastle. It was a great day. Many people were there and they were excited to hear about the Government's strategy concerning volunteering. About two million volunteers in New South Wales contribute about 240 million hours of their

time each year, with a financial contribution of \$5 billion per annum. Volunteering is never about money, it is never about the \$5 billion, and it is never about the hip pocket. As I have indicated to the excellent Asquith Probuss Club previously, volunteering is not about the hip pocket; it is about the heart.

That is why the Government wants to celebrate and acknowledge volunteering, and we did so by launching the volunteer strategy during National Volunteer Week, which was last week. The strategy is worth \$4.5 million to 2016, and we are proud of it. I will indicate some of the priorities in the strategy announced last week. First, we want to make volunteering easier for people. How do we do that? The first thing we have done is reduce the cost of police checks. In the past police checks cost \$52. However, in concert with the excellent Minister for Police, we have agreed to reduce the cost of police checks to \$15 for volunteers. Not all volunteers require police checks. However, people involved in a federally funded aged care facility need a police check, and it will now cost only \$15 for volunteers. The second priority is to recognise the value of volunteering. How do we do that? We have done something that is a first in Australia, another first for the O'Farrell Government, and something about which we are particularly proud. It is called time banking.

Time banking is essentially volunteering bartering. For instance, someone who spends two hours cooking meals for a homeless shelter can put those two hours into a time bank and if that person needs somebody to drive them to the doctors they can then ask a volunteer to spend half an hour of their time doing that. That volunteer will then put that half an hour into the time bank, and it goes around and around. This initiative brings people together and, more importantly, it provides local businesses with the opportunity to reward their local volunteers who have time banking credits with product discounts, a free movie pass or something similar. This excellent initiative has never been trialled before. I hear interjections from members opposite but reiterate that this is an important initiative. I received an email from Rick Pratchett from Yagoona, who calls himself a lifelong Labor voter, which reads:

I have to give credit where credit is due to those who do something truly worthwhile. So I have to congratulate you on your implementation of the concept of time dollars [timebanking] to increase community participation in volunteering.

Time banking is a great concept that is well received wherever I go and is something about which we are particularly proud. Another example of action we are taking to help volunteers is creating a pathway to education and employment. Not every volunteer is elderly and we need to engage young people in volunteering. One way to do that is to acknowledge the skills young people can develop. For example, a young person may volunteer to help the bush fire brigade for half an hour or half a day every second weekend. We should acknowledge the skills they acquire by giving them a certificate and suggesting that if they embark on an educational program they will be able to become a firefighter. [*Extension of time granted.*]

This would provide a pathway to employment, which is really important, and a pathway to education. A number of our volunteers are elderly and do not want to go back to employment, but they never stop wanting to learn. This initiative provides that pathway. The Government also wants to engage the potential corporate army of people that we have at our disposal in New South Wales and funnel them into the volunteering sector. So many corporations in our great society want to add value to our community but they struggle because they are unaware of the various pathways.

If companies get their employees to volunteer the Government can help channel those volunteers into the appropriate areas. The Government has announced a number of other strategies to encourage volunteering in our great State. I encourage all members to read the strategy. At the end of the day this is about our volunteers, who are critical to our way of life in New South Wales. They put the "civil" in our civilised society. If one takes volunteers out of our community one takes the heart and soul out of our community. The O'Farrell Government values volunteering and that is why we are very proud of this initiative.

ELECTRICITY ASSETS SALE

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is addressed to the Treasurer. With the recent example of Eraring Energy having to pay liquidated damages to Origin Energy due to unscheduled transformer maintenance even though all actual demand was met, can the Treasurer advise the amount of those damages and what impact this gentrader agreement impost would have on the sale value of the asset?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question. He shares my concern about the electricity transaction that occurred just before the last election. I will outline the concerns about that transaction. Liquidated damage payments are made to the gentrader counterparty if monthly generation availability targets

are not met. In the case of Eraring Energy the counterparty is Origin Energy. As the Tamberlin inquiry found, an allowance has been made for this liability for budgeting purposes—the expectation. Following the unplanned outage of Eraring power station unit 2 transformers, the application of liquidated damages is a matter of arbitration between Origin Energy and Eraring Energy. As the arbitration is confidential between the parties and is currently underway, clearly it would be inappropriate for any further comment to be made on this matter, but I am happy to keep member apprised of developments.

However, I do note his concerns about gentrader transactions. Indeed, we all have concerns in this regard—the Auditor-General and members of the Probus Club in the gallery. He confirmed—and this is an important point given what we heard from the member for Maroubra about the desalination transaction—that the assets were sold for half their value. The Tamberlin report states that the directors of the State-owned corporations, looking after the interests of the State, said that price was scandalously low, it was uncommercial and unacceptable. Everyone agreed how bad the deal was. Delta chief executive officer, Mr Everett, had told Labor that the gentrader was the wrong model and was likely to produce substantial legal dispute, which we are starting to see today. Who signed off on that transaction? It was not Captain Solar; it was the hero of middle management. He is Mr Ten Per Cent—every number he gives out is about 10 per cent, and that is not bad for him.

Over summer the member for Maroubra did a bit of a road tour. He talked to the backbenchers about what might happen should there be changes at the top. Apparently he visited Fairfield and spoke about the small business portfolio. He went to Cessnock and spoke about the sports portfolio. He is not a bad cricketer. He spoke to the member for Wollongong—this is a little bit concerning—about the Treasury portfolio. We are getting to see the shape of what could be coming. As the member for Lake Macquarie says, we have a lot of concerns about the transaction and about the potential shape of the Opposition because I understand the member for Maroubra apparently has 11 members in caucus.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: On behalf of the member for Lake Macquarie I ask that you bring the Treasurer back to the leave of the question. I ask him a question: How is your electricity bill going? Where is your electricity bill—stranded in the upper House.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I do not think he added to his 11 votes, but it is a concern. The electricity bill is in the upper House. The bill would release billions of dollars of infrastructure for this State. I do not know whether the member for Maroubra has been out in his community recently, but the people there want infrastructure built. The O'Farrell Government is getting on with it, but he is holding some of that back. We have followed our election commitments. Labor is not used to following elections commitments. It says one thing and does something different. Its approach is to say one thing before an election and do something different afterwards. We say what we are going to do and we are doing exactly that. We said we would have an independent inquiry and ask the experts, and that we would retain the poles and wires in public hands. We have done that. There is an opportunity for all members in the upper House—I do not say many good things about the former Treasurer, Eric Roozendaal, and I will continue the trend today—

Mr Nathan Rees: Good.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I will let the member for Toongabbie speak on my behalf. There is an opportunity for Eric Roozendaal and every member in the upper House to put the interests of the State first, support a transaction that puts downward pressure on prices, produce billions of dollars for infrastructure in this State, and do the right thing by New South Wales, once and for all.

VIVID SYDNEY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How will Vivid Sydney boost the State's creative industries and our economy?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Davidson for a very good question. Like Big Kev, I'm excited. Tomorrow night Vivid Sydney 2012 kicks off. Vivid Sydney is our annual festival of light, music and ideas featuring the spectacular illumination of the Sydney Opera House sails. Vivid Sydney celebrates Sydney as the creative hub of the Asia-Pacific, with light installations and projections; free family events; music

performances and collaborations; and creative ideas, public talks and debates. Now in its fourth year, Vivid has become Sydney's major festival in winter. It is a groundbreaking event model that builds the creative community of Sydney as well as generating visitors from our key tourism markets.

Attracting internationally renowned artists emphasises Vivid Sydney's global outlook and Sydney's position as Australia's global city. Vivid Light, a part of Vivid Sydney, presents the best in lighting technology from around the world. Vivid Light will see Sydney city light up each night from 6.00 p.m. with 63 interactive light installations—20 more than last year—huge 3D-mapped digital projections of the six Indigenous seasons across the city skyline and, for the first time, extension of the lighting displays to the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct. Key elements of Vivid Light include Lighting the Sails at the Sydney Opera House by German-based digital artists Urbanscreen and a world-first interactive collaboration at the Museum of Contemporary Art between music icon will.i.am of the Black Eyed Peas, and renowned Sydney artist Justene Williams, where members of the public can "play" the building. It is amazing technology.

Vivid Live, to be opened by the internationally renowned Florence and the Machine tomorrow night, will see more than 25 music events by leading international and national artists and two world premiere performances at the Sydney Opera House. We have come a long way since Brian Eno. Vivid Ideas, another part of the program, will attract global industry leaders alongside emerging talents, coming together over an 18-day program of discussion, debate and workshops at the new Vivid Ideas Exchange, located at the Museum of Contemporary Art. Vivid Ideas offers a robust program of creative industry and public events with a focus this year on technology and start-ups, innovation, and our engagement with Asia. Creative industry business events held during the festival include X Media Lab, Song Summit, Mumbrella 360, CeBIT Australia, and SPARC Design. With more than 100 creative and industry events, Vivid Ideas has more than doubled in size since last year. This reinforces Sydney's role as the creative capital of Australia.

On this side of the House we are aware of and value the fact that 37 per cent of Australia's creative industries are located in New South Wales, and that approximately 150,000 people in New South Wales are employed directly in creative industries, which is approximately 5 per cent of the State's workforce. This Government is committed to growing and developing our creative economy, and Vivid is a wonderful launch pad to show the world what Sydney and New South Wales is capable of. In just four years we can already see the positive cultural and economic outcomes that Vivid Sydney is having for New South Wales. Destination NSW estimates Vivid Sydney 2012 will generate at least \$10 million in economic benefit for the State. Last year Vivid Sydney attracted audiences of 400,000 people; this year we expect half a million people will experience Vivid Sydney. I will see members there at one of the best events in the world.

Question time concluded at 3.15 p.m.

VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2011-2012

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the Consolidated Fund receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2011-2012.

VARIATIONS OF ESTIMATES APPROPRIATIONS 2011-2012

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 24 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the estimates appropriations for 2011-2012 relating to the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, and the Department of Premier and Cabinet

PETITIONS

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

Coal Seam Gas Mining

Petition calling for a royal commission into the impacts of coal seam gas mining, a moratorium on coal seam gas mining and a ban on the extraction technique known as hydraulic fracturing, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

Pets on Public Transport

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

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**.

Animals Performing in Circuses

Petition requesting a ban on exotic animals performing in circuses, 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**.

Woolloomooloo Public Housing

Petition calling for certain actions in relation to Housing NSW property and for priority for supported housing at the Camperdown project to be given to rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

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

Redfern Railway Station Lift Access

Petition requesting the immediate installation of lifts at Redfern Railway Station, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

CITY OF SYDNEY AMENDMENT (CENTRAL SYDNEY TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE) BILL 2012

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry O'Farrell, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.17 p.m.]:
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill amends the City of Sydney Act 1988 because the City of Sydney is unique and is not just another local government area. Sydney is Australia's only global city and is the gateway to the nation. The City of Sydney local government area accounts for about one-quarter of New South Wales economic output or approximately 8 per cent of Australia's gross domestic product. The Sydney local government area is home to approximately 187,000 people and 400,000 jobs. Sydney is also Australia's leading tourism and events destination. Last year the city attracted 28.8 million domestic and international tourists, who spent \$12.7 billion. The bill seeks to establish the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee to oversee and coordinate the management of traffic and transport in the Sydney central business district because of the impact that the Sydney central business district has on the State's economic activity and international competitiveness.

While the city council and Transport for NSW work cooperatively on many individual transport issues, there is no effective coordination mechanism that can ensure decisions are made that support the broader interests of the State. This has meant that, while my Government has pursued a program of transport reform to

support Sydney's pivotal economic role, the council has pursued its own parallel vision of a "City of Villages". We must ensure that both levels of government are working together to deliver the best results for the State's economy and for all the people who use the city, whether they be residents, commuters, visitors or business owners. The Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee will, for the first time, bring all significant traffic and transport decision-making under the one umbrella.

I will now deal with the bill in more detail. The operation of the committee is limited to the Sydney central business district, defined with reference to the map I have presented to the Speaker. The committee will be chaired by the Director General of Transport for NSW, Mr Les Wielinga, with a further three members nominated jointly by the Minister for Transport and Minister for Roads and Ports, and three members nominated by the City of Sydney council. The committee is required to meet a minimum of four times each year, but has the capacity to, and I expect will, meet more often. The functions of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee are described in clause 51H.

The functions of the committee include: providing high-level coordination of the development of transport and traffic policies, plans and projects affecting the central business district; assessing the impact of traffic and transport management decisions and actions within the central business district on the efficiency and effectiveness of the transport network that provides access to and movement within the Sydney central business district for persons and goods; coordinating the management by road authorities and parking authorities of traffic and transport within the central business district; reviewing and approving certain projects within the central business district having a significant impact on central business district traffic and transport; and promoting the efficiency and safety of the public transport network in the Sydney central business district.

The committee will also oversee the many councillor State-run committees and working groups that are currently working on specific transport issues or precincts within the Sydney central business district. In assessing each proposal, the committee is required to consider: the future economic welfare and development of Sydney and the State; the efficient functioning of businesses in the Sydney central business district; the maintenance of access for freight into the central business district; the efficiency and safety of the public transport network; and the needs of commuters, residents, pedestrians and visitors to the central business district. Under the bill, a roads or parking authority will be required to notify the committee prior to commencing works on traffic control or establishing or amending the operation of a parking scheme. The committee will have the power to direct the authority to stop, vary or defer carrying out the proposed changes.

The Government is concerned to avoid duplication and the committee becoming backlogged with minor proposals. To that end, the committee may issue notices to roads authorities setting out types of works that do not need to be referred to it on the basis that those works are unlikely to have a significant impact on roads, traffic or transport in the Sydney central business district; the committee may issue guidelines as to the details of proposed works that are required to be provided to it; the committee will not consider any work or scheme proposed by a public sector agency, other than a central business district roads or parking authority; and the committee will also not consider works that are of a temporary or emergency nature or are related to a sporting, cultural or other special event.

There will be strong interaction with the Central Sydney Planning Committee, with the committee required by clause 51N to consult the Traffic and Transport Committee before it makes a decision that will require road works or traffic control works that have a significant impact on traffic and transport in the Sydney central business district. The Central Sydney Planning Committee must take into consideration any representations made by the Traffic and Transport Committee. This will ensure that significant impacts on traffic and transport are identified and addressed early in the planning process. It should be noted that consideration by the Central Sydney Planning Committee under clause 51N does not absolve roads authorities from their obligations under clause 51L. This clause requires a roads authority to refer to the Traffic and Transport Committee proposals to undertake road works and traffic control works.

If disputes arise between a roads or parking authority and the committee, the bill provides for the dispute to be resolved through consultation between the transport and roads Ministers and the Minister responsible for the relevant roads authority, and if agreement cannot be reached the Premier will resolve the matter. To be clear, this bill does not change the responsibilities of a roads authority—the council will remain responsible for funding and developing road and road infrastructure proposals, and maintaining those public roads for which it is the roads authority. It is intended that the council's Local Pedestrian Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee would still review the purely technical matters of traffic and control works. Transport

within the Sydney central business district cannot be designed with only the residents in mind. Many other people are stakeholders in Sydney city's transport, not least of who are the thousands of Sydneysiders who travel to the central business district every day and the businesses operating both within and outside the city.

The maintenance of the State's economic engine room requires a body that has the power to ensure that an effective and efficient transport network is delivered for the benefit of greater Sydney and the State. About 20 minutes ago I received a letter with today's date—it was not birthday greetings—from the Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney in relation to this legislation. It asked that the bill not be introduced until certain matters are resolved. I give the member for Sydney a commitment that those matters are being examined—in particular routine maintenance. I say to the member for Sydney that, as outlined in the second reading speech, the committee has the responsibility to issue notices to roads authorities setting out the types of works that do not need to be referred to it on the basis that those works are unlikely to have a significant impact upon roads, traffic or transport in Sydney's central business district. I think that covers the point validly raised by the member for Sydney. We will work on that matter between now and next week, when the bill is debated. If there is a need to amend the bill to ensure that it does not add extra duplication, we will do so. I commend the bill to the House.

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

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (RESTORATION OF OATHS OF ALLEGIANCE) BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 May 2012.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [3.26 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. The Opposition opposes this bill introduced by Fred Nile in the Legislative Council and by the Attorney General in this place. I note that the Attorney General has not added any argument in support of this proposition other than to refer to the second reading speech by Fred Nile in the Legislative Council, which is regrettable. There is no substantive argument in favour of the bill in Nile's speech—there might be other arguments, but Nile has not made them. He has put arguments in support of another bill that he has not introduced. It is perhaps an adverse reflection upon the Attorney General that he does not understand the issues involved in this bill.

I oppose the bill for three reasons. First, as a matter of principle, the bill is wrong because it is constitutionally fundamentally corrupt. Secondly, the arguments advanced by Nile are wrong in fact and theory and in some cases are mendacious and dishonest. Thirdly, Nile's advocacy is driven by thoroughly unworthy political partisanship. He is supported by the Government for the tawdry reason that it needed his support a little time ago to gut the Police Death and Disability Scheme, and continue to need his support to attack workers in other areas. This bill proposes to amend the State Constitution. At present, members of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council and of the Executive Council make an oath or affirmation in the form, "I pledge my loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales." That formulation was introduced by an amendment to the Constitution achieved by a private member's bill in my name in 2006. That replaced the previous regime that obliged members to swear an oath in the terms of the then second schedule to the Oaths Act, which read:

I do swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors according to law. So help me God.

Section 12 of the Constitution also required that if a monarch died all business of the Parliament ceased until everyone had sworn allegiance to the new monarch. That was very telling of the historical origins of the oath in late seventeenth century England but obviously an absurdity in the contemporary world. Both those archaic aspects—the language and the procedure on a monarch's death—were resolved and removed by the private member's bill. The requirement to halt Parliament was dispensed with and the pledge was located in the Constitution and not some other disconnected legislation. This bill now seeks to alter the first of these two changes although not the second, which is interesting in light of some of the claims made by the bill's promoter. Even in the first change the reference now is not to the Oaths Act but is contained in the Constitution.

The bill provides that members will now have an alternative to taking the pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales; they will be able to make an oath or affirmation of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, her heirs and successors. It is important to point out that these are alternatives and the

archaic loyalist oath of allegiance replaces the more democratic current alternative only if individual members so choose. That is important to emphasise because of the rampant and flagrant dishonesty of the bill's promoter in claiming that this bill reintroduces the pre-2006 position, which it clearly does not. One of my occasional frustrations with some members of this House is their comparative lack of understanding of history. I daresay we will hear some contributions about the origins of the oath of allegiance many centuries ago when the English monarchy was first established.

Those who know anything about constitutional history know that that is wrong. For those who do not, I direct their attention to the recently produced paper by the Parliamentary Library on this topic. When first introduced, the oath was directly religious and at that time thus sectarian and political. It arose from the Reformation and the Protestant victory over Catholics in England. The Parliamentary Library's paper points out that the oath first emerged in 1689 following the interestingly named Glorious Revolution and the replacement of a Catholic King with a Protestant King. It was the time of the Battle of the Boyne, which is still celebrated to this day by those soulmates of Nile, the sectarian extremists in various parts of Ulster. The oath was tied in with the Act of Succession prohibiting Catholics from being the monarch or the spouse of one.

The oath was so contentious that it was the main issue provoking civil war in 26 counties of Ireland following the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921. This brief historical excursion is significant not only because context matters—and it always does—but also because it is relevant to remind members that the oath of allegiance has not always been uncritically accepted. Even more important is the fact that it is a reminder that its historical meaning—that is, its meaning when introduced—was one that modern Australia could only look at with horror. The oath of allegiance was drafted by the seventeenth century English equivalent of Hamas. I turn now to the arguments, so called, proffered by the bills proposer to justify it. These arguments are inaccurate, spurious or disingenuous. Some of them involve lies. In the second reading speech in the other place Nile argued that his bill represents the actual legal and constitutional position.

If that were true, under this bill members would not be allowed alternative pledges. If he really thinks the 2006 amendments do damage to the constitutional structure then he would be obliged to move for their complete removal. That is, it would require an entirely different bill and not the bill before the House. He has not done that and this bill will not do that, so his argument is just dishonest poppycock. It cannot be correct because it still leaves the 2006 pledge as an alternative. Nile goes on to argue that because we are all part of an indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the monarch this oath of allegiance must be reinstated. That is more drivel. Not only does the 2006 amendment make no change to the constitutional position, but once again the 2006 amendment still remains as an alternative under this bill. All Nile's bill does is provide an alternative to those who wish to swear allegiance to the Queen rather than to those who elect them.

Indeed, rather than strengthening our fabric as a nation, if anything this bill does the opposite by dividing the allegiances of members. Most of Nile's second reading speech ranted about republicanism and the virtues of a monarchy. Interesting as that may be to students of intellectually second-rate rhetoric, it is entirely irrelevant to this debate. Nile's speech reads like it belongs to another piece of legislation. The pre-2006 position involved an oath of allegiance to a head of State. The 2006 amendment replaced that with allegiance to Australia and the people of New South Wales. The change was not from a monarch to a republican president. It was from a head of State to the people. It was not about monarchy or republicanism; it was about democracy. If one were a democrat, one would support the 2006 amendment. If one were anti-democratic, one would support the pre-2006 position and Fred Nile. I am happy to be regarded as a democrat; Nile obviously is not.

I suspect that the real test if this bill comes into effect is what members will do. How many members of this Chamber will swear allegiance to Australia and the people of New South Wales and how many to a monarch? I suspect that the overwhelming majority will swear allegiance to the former, not to the latter. I will have some interest in keeping count and advising electorates if their elected representative prefers to swear allegiance not to them but to a monarch living in England. Once again, if Nile were serious about this argument he could not leave what he falsely claims is a republican pledge in the Constitution. The truth of the theory in this matter is that in a democratic society the allegiance of elected representatives should be to those who elect them and not to the head of State—republican or monarchist.

The arguments put by the bill's proponents are without merit. Worse than that, they are dishonest. Of all the criticism that can be made against the arguments purporting to support the bill, one common theme is that none of them makes sense unless the allegiance to the Queen replaces the pledge for every member—that is, if the 2006 changes are completely undone. This bill does not do that. I believe the truth is that Nile desperately wants to completely undo the 2006 change and make us all swear allegiance to the Queen with no alternative.

That is why he makes the arguments he does, which are actually unrelated to his bill. Of course, he cannot get away with that nonsense in 2012. Even this conservative Government is not stupid enough to support that proposition. That is why we have got a series of arguments from Nile that support not this bill but another bill he would like to have moved but did not. He would like to have moved a bill completely undoing the 2006 changes rather than illogically tinkering with them.

The end result is this silly mishmash wherein some members will pledge allegiance to something and others to something else. It is simply silly. We should collectively know where our allegiance lies and pledge to that. Instead, this bill has different members pledging allegiance to one thing and others to something else. If it is important enough to make an oath of allegiance or a pledge, it is important enough to get it right. That means every member pledging allegiance to the same thing, otherwise there is frankly no point doing it. The fact that when this bill passes members will not all pledge the same allegiance means there is no point to it. Nile's bill and the Government's support of it make a complete mockery of the entire concept. Frankly, it makes it literally pointless. The end result is that the allegiance of the House is split—some members will swear allegiance to the Queen and some to Australia and the people of New South Wales. The House cannot make up its mind to have one allegiance; there then seems little real purpose of going through the process.

When Nile addressed the other place on 24 November 2011 in reply he said that this bill would restore the status quo operating since 1823 in the Legislative Council and 1855 in the Legislative Assembly. That extraordinary claim was repeated in his "Focus on Parliament" segment in his January 2012 magazine, which he presumably distributes to his supporters. The claim by Nile that this bill restores that status quo is untrue; it is a lie. Most obviously, the status quo required all members to take an oath of allegiance. That is simply not the case with this bill. Indeed, I believe that a majority of members will not take the oath and will continue to make the 2006 pledge. However, in other ways the pre-2006 status quo is not affected by this bill. Pre-2006 the oath was contained in the Oaths Act and was not in the Constitution. The change in 2006 to move the pledge from the Oaths Act into the Constitution is in fact replicated in this bill. On that point Nile explicitly adopts the change made in 2006.

There is another aspect in which this bill adopts one of the 2006 changes and thus rejects the pre-2006 status quo, which Nile disingenuously claims he has reinstated in this bill. The pre-2006 regime required at the passing of the sovereign for the Parliament to come to a halt until a new oath of allegiance was sworn by all members to the new sovereign. That absurdity was removed by the 2006 changes and those changes are retained in this bill in new section 12 (4B). Nile also asserts that this bill restores the "unity of our nation, because all other States and, most importantly, the Commonwealth, has the oath of allegiance". This is entirely dishonest as an argument. First, this bill does not restore the oath of allegiance; it merely restores it in the handful of cases where members choose it rather than the pledge. Moreover, this scheme is not repeated in any other jurisdiction in this country. The bill establishes no unity at all.

There is no uniformity on this issue in Australia despite Nile's thoroughly inaccurate rhetoric to the contrary. The Commonwealth, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and the Northern Territory simply have an oath to the Queen and nothing else. That is in stark contrast to the position in this bill. Queensland has an oath to the Queen and the people of Queensland. Western Australia has alternatives—the people of Western Australia or the Queen and the people of Western Australia. The Australian Capital Territory has an oath to the Queen and/or the people of the Australian Capital Territory. Despite Nile's dishonest claim to the contrary, this bill would deliver a scheme entirely different from that in any other State. His claim of restoring unity in Australia on this issue is an unvarnished falsehood. Interestingly, the model that seems closest to the Nile bill is the one in the Australian Capital Territory. That is a matter of some irony.

Therefore, the bill is wrong in principle and in terms of constitutional theory. The arguments advanced by its proponent are wrong and dishonest, and this bill's genesis is also completely deceitful. The bill achieved priority in the other place only because the Government needed Nile's vote that week to do over the Police Death and Disability Scheme. It is not simply that that fact is notorious; it is blatantly obvious from *Hansard*. The current constitutional scheme has been in place since 2006. The changes introduced then were a democratic updating of an archaic and pre-democratic oath. It caused no major upset when introduced. Frankly, the amendments were so uncontroversial they were hardly noticed. I described them at the time as moderate and reasonable and, indeed, modest changes.

The only angst was from a handful of extremists who are now being supported by the Government. That is the point. Nile needs only a handful of votes to maintain his position in the other place. He cobbles together a coalition of different extremist groups and that gets his upper House quota. It does not matter what it

is—oath of allegiance, banning burqas, Islamophobia, homophobia—it is part of a calculated strategy to get elected. There is no principle in this. I, for example, have seen this self-proclaimed protestant minister fawn over religious relics at a non-protestant church. If Nile were around in the sixteenth century he would have supported Tetzal, if he needed to, to get his quota. The 2006 amendments placed the allegiance of members of Parliament where it belonged—to those that elect them.

This should be the case whether the system is a monarchy or a republic. It is not a republican issue, despite the consummate and offensive dishonesty of those promoting this bill. In a democracy, the allegiance of elected members must be to those that elect them—to their electorate. Any other allegiance is offensive and obscene. Worse, historically, the oath of allegiance comes from sectarian political divisions of the late seventeenth century. It is undemocratic. The oath of allegiance to a head of state historically dates to a pre-democratic time. It is pre-democratic. It is offensive to the nature and quality of democracy and democratic structures to have people in this place give their allegiance to anyone other than those who elect them. This bill should be rejected for the nonsense that it is.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [3.40 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I speak in support of the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. The object of the bill is to amend the Constitution Act 1902 to give a member of the Legislative Council, the Legislative Assembly or the Executive Council the option of taking an oath or making an affirmation of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, as an alternative to the pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. Before a member of Parliament can sit or vote and before a member of the Executive Council can assume office he or she must make a pledge of loyalty.

At present taking an oath of allegiance is neither required nor offered. The proposal is that the taking of the oath of allegiance will be offered as an alternative to the pledge of loyalty, not as a substitute. In 2006 the Constitution Act 1902 was amended to require members of Parliament and Ministers to make a pledge of loyalty to Australia and to the people of New South Wales instead of swearing allegiance to the Queen, which had been the previous requirement. This bill seeks to restore the oath of allegiance as an alternative to the pledge of loyalty. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile spoke as a Christian in the other House. Other than his Christian beliefs, I do not agree with a lot of his opinions. He said:

The oath of allegiance to the Queen unites the peoples of a nation in times of war and peace. Once the oath has lost its significance, then lost also is our national discipline and patriotism. As we know, our service men and women take a similar oath. The oath is not simply to the Queen as an individual but to the Crown, which embodies far more than just the physical characteristics of our country. It is the basis on which our Constitution is founded, the font of our laws and the single entity which unites all Australians into one nation. It is thus the endowment of the hopes and aspirations and indeed the whole wellbeing of the people it safeguards.

It is that oath of allegiance that has been the basis of our society for well over 100 years. My grandfather put his age up for the First World War, put his age down for the Second World War and was a prisoner of war in Singapore. He took an oath to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. My father fought in the Second World War and he took an oath to Her Majesty. When I was in the Police Force I made an oath to Her Majesty. My brother served as a national serviceman and took an oath to Her Majesty. This legislation is not talking about doing away with an affirmation or some other pledge: It provides an alternative. Nothing can be wrong with that. Surely, in today's society, we can have more than one option, "That is it, we are dictating it and that is the way you are going to do it." Surely we can still have the other option that so many of our brothers and sisters—our forebears—used for more than a century. The member for Liverpool said that Labor opposed the legislation. It opposes free choice, options and alternatives. What harm is there in having a choice?

The member for Liverpool said that providing an alternative is morally corrupt. There is nothing morally corrupt about it. In 2006, when the member for Liverpool introduced his legislation, he was wrong in removing the previous oath of allegiance and giving us only one option—his option. It is the Labor way or it is no way. It is interesting to see how the Labor heavyweights operate within Labor in 2012. They say the General Secretary is right, even when he is wrong, and because of that the right has ensured dominance in that party. The Labor Party says, "You do it our way or no way", and the people of New South Wales who did not vote for the General Secretary must abide by what he says. That is exactly the attitude of the member for Liverpool. He said he was frustrated with people in this Chamber. That comment typifies the member for Liverpool and the Labor Party—it is why only 20 of its members are in this place. In March 2011 the overwhelming majority of people said, "We do not want any more of that."

Not only has the member for Liverpool lost touch with the community, but Labor has lost touch with reality. The member's speech was full of second-rate rhetoric. There is absolutely no substance to what he was saying. How can one argue against giving people an alternative? How can one argue against giving people a

choice? This is not some weird and wonderful choice. We are talking about a choice of swearing allegiance to the Crown or making an affirmation to the people. There is nothing bizarre about it. It is hard to work out what his real argument is, other than to say that this is typical Labor—"You have no choice, this is the way it is going to be." That is plainly wrong. Unfortunately for the Labor movement, while it has members like the member for Liverpool in its ranks, it is forever condemned to what Labor heavyweights are saying—years in opposition, years in the wilderness. The member for Liverpool said that it would be interesting to count how many people use one oath of allegiance or the other. That is what choice is all about.

It does not matter whether you have one on one side and 100 on the other; what matters is the choice to use one or the other. His keeping count is totally irrelevant. The member also spoke about dishonest arguments. His argument is dishonest and morally corrupt. It is the Labor Party dictating its principles and its corrupt way of looking at things in life by saying something is wrong with the people of New South Wales or the people in this House having a choice. Until recently, people had a choice when it came to oaths and affirmations in courts. The member for Liverpool accused Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile of being dishonest. I said at the beginning of my speech that when it came to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, other than his Christianity, I do not agree with a lot of what he says. Notwithstanding our disagreement—and there is nothing wrong with having disagreements and debates—one thing I can say is that there is nothing dishonest about him.

This claim that Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile is dishonest is another example of the member for Liverpool being twisted and vengeful, and full of venom, bile and vinegar. Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, in the mind of the member for Liverpool, is dishonest because he does not agree with him. He does not fall into line with the member for Liverpool; therefore, he is dishonest and stupid. The member for Liverpool uses those terms to describe Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile when it is the member for Liverpool who has the problems. As I have said previously about Labor, the member for Liverpool is projecting his distorted view of society onto others. He is projecting his view of politics onto members on this side of the House. It is a great privilege and a pleasure to stand in this place and say that I support the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [3.50 p.m.]: I oppose this retrograde bill and I am disappointed that it is likely to pass and become law with the Government's support. The Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011 would allow members of both Houses and Ministers to take an oath or affirmation of allegiance to the Queen, her heirs and successors, instead of a pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. Why, in 2012—well into the twenty-first century—would this Parliament want to give members and Ministers the option of pledging their allegiance to the Queen, over their country and constituents? Pledging allegiance to the Queen is out of touch with twenty-first century Australia. Our communities expect their Parliament to reflect contemporary views and the make-up of contemporary society.

The City of Sydney is made up of 200 nationalities. As members of Parliament, we should be working to engage people who are outside the political process in governance and democracy. If our politicians are pledging allegiance to an absent monarch, who has little involvement in the affairs of this State, most people will see Parliament as irrelevant. Removing the oath to the Queen in 2006 was appropriate at that time and restoring it is a backward move that I expect will one day again be overturned. This has nothing to do with the Republican debate—it is about the commitment we should demand of members of this House when they are elected as representatives. First and foremost, that commitment should be to their constituents and to the people of New South Wales. I oppose the bill.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [3.52 p.m.]: I support the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. The wise and hardworking member for Myall Lakes, who is also a member of a hardworking committee, hit the nail on the head when he said that this legislation is all about choice. In response we have a wall of sound from the Opposition. I think the Opposition is putting up that wall of sound because it is denying that this bill really is all about choice and the ability of members to choose whether they would like to swear allegiance or pledge loyalty. What could be simpler and fairer? This bill gives both members of Parliament and Ministers the option to swear or affirm allegiance to the Queen, her heirs and successors, as an alternative to the current pledge of loyalty. The oath of allegiance for new members of Parliament and Ministers was abolished in 2006 and replaced by the pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales.

This bill provides future members of Parliament and new Ministers with the option of swearing or affirming allegiance to the Queen, her heirs and successors, prior to taking their seats or taking office. This will be an alternative to the pledge of loyalty. Members of Parliament and Ministers can do one of three things: they can swear allegiance to the Queen, her heirs and successors; they can affirm allegiance to the Queen, her heirs

and successors; or they can pledge loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. Today we have seen denial from the member for Liverpool—denial about the current state of politics in Australia. Those opposite seek to deny that the Queen is still the formal Head of State. Whether the member for Liverpool likes it or not, the Queen is still the Sovereign of Australia. Those opposite may not like it or agree with it, they may want to change it, but the reality is that the Queen is still the formal Head of Australia. Some members may choose to swear allegiance or affirm allegiance to the Queen, but they do not have to.

Mr Matt Kean: Not just those opposite.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Not just those opposite, but all members, as the member for Hornsby rightly points out. The underlying theme throughout the contribution of the member for Liverpool was the seeping political correctness that we see all too often in this day and age. It is the same political correctness that seeks to ban nativity scenes from shopping centres. I see the member for Cessnock is in the Chamber. I suspect he supports his nativity scenes in shopping centres in Cessnock.

Mr Clayton Barr: I am a big fan.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The member for Cessnock is a big fan of nativity scenes. He is an advocate for choice and although he has probably been told that he needs to support his party's line on this bill, underneath I believe he supports the theory of choice in these matters. It is the same seeping political correctness that seeks to ban the expression, "Merry Christmas" and replace it with "Happy Holidays". This is the sort of outrageous political correctness that we are unfortunately confronted with today and continue to be confronted with. Yes, we do live in a multicultural society and we celebrate and embrace that. But the reality is that the Queen is still the formal Head of Australia. To deny that fact is to embrace the political correctness of which we have seen too much. Sitting members of Parliament and current Ministers would not be required to take a new oath or make an affirmation as to their allegiance or loyalty.

However, any member of Parliament or Minister who wishes to do so may make a statement in Parliament about his or her preferred form of allegiance or loyalty. I will be keeping an eye on what the member for Hornsby does in this regard. The bill provides for greater consistency with practices elsewhere in Australia. In the Commonwealth and other State jurisdictions, an oath or affirmation of allegiance to the Queen is either mandatory or an optional form of mandatory declaration. In New South Wales the Lieutenant-Governor, the Administrator, judges and justices of the peace are required to swear or affirm allegiance to the Queen under the Oaths Act. As the member for Myall Lakes pointed out, this is all about choice, about giving members the choice to take their seats in this place in the manner that suits them. Many members would not want to swear allegiance to the Queen and that is fine. The Government embraces choice and the freedom to choose, and that is what this legislation is about.

It is not about whether one is a republican or a monarchist or whether one wants to ban nativity scenes—although to some members opposite I think it is. This is about freedom to choose and what more fitting place to demonstrate and embrace that freedom to choose than in Australia's oldest Parliament—the Parliament of New South Wales. The bill also makes it clear that a member of Parliament who has made an oath or affirmation of allegiance does not have to make a further oath or affirmation in the event of the demise of the Crown. These provisions are important. All thinking members who embrace freedom of choice will support this bill. The contribution of the member for Liverpool had some disturbing aspects. He referred to Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile by his surname only. I thought that was disrespectful, and I think many members would agree. That sort of attitude was all pervasive throughout the member's speech—

Mr Kevin Conolly: Disrespectful.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The member for Riverstone rightly points out that it was disrespectful. The member for Cessnock heeds my words. I am sure that if he chooses to address the House on this bill we will not hear the same language from him. As I said, the contribution of the member Liverpool was disappointing and narrow-minded. He tried to open up the old monarchist-republican debate. He tried to bring all of that into it. The member for Hornsby seems to be up for that particular fight. But that is not what this legislation is all about. We should be moving on and embracing the fact that this legislation is all about freedom of choice not only for members of Parliament but also for Ministers—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Hornsby will come to order. The member for Orange has the call.

Mr Victor Dominello: William Wallace fought for freedom.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The Minister reminds me that William Wallace fought for freedom. Certainly, for many members that may have only fleeting relevance to this legislation, but I appreciate the Minister's contribution. In the spirit of choice, freedom and democracy, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [4.01 p.m.]: The object of the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill is to amend the Constitution Act 1902 to give a member of the Legislative Council, the Legislative Assembly or the Executive Council the option of taking or making an oath or affirmation of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors, as an alternative to a pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. I make the point that this bill gives us the option of taking or making an oath or affirmation of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, which was denied us by the former Government. This bill will give members a choice. The whole issue is about choice. It does not take away the choice of members to take the pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales.

The member for Liverpool said that in a democratic society we should swear allegiance to the people that elected us. I would argue that in a democratic society people elected us to represent them and the Constitution under which they live and as such democracy would be the right to choose. It is appropriate that we debate this issue this year, the year of Queen Elizabeth's jubilee. Australia is not a republic and I do not believe it ever should be. I am proud to say that I am a monarchist. Although this debate is not about the monarchy or a republic I put on record that I am a proud monarchist. Most of us in this House have known nothing else but to have Queen Elizabeth as our Head of State. Some may remember her father, King George VI.

I need not give a history lesson, as we are all aware of it, but I question why we do not recognise that the colony was proclaimed formally as the colony of New South Wales by Governor Phillip on 7 February 1788 in the name of King George III, in turn giving birth to this State and to our great country. It is a wonderful country in which we live, and I am a proud Australian. Our Constitution was presented to the electors of each colony and formally approved. On 1 January 1901 the Commonwealth of Australia was born. The States, as they were known, became one nation whilst still retaining their parliaments; they had their own constitutions individually under the Crown, and on becoming States they gave authority to a Federal Parliament. Section 109 of the Australian Constitution states:

When a law of a state is inconsistent with a law of the Commonwealth, the latter shall prevail, and the former shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be invalid.

Of 44 proposals to amend Australia's Constitution, only eight have ever been approved. Our communities like the Constitution and the fact that the Crown was the basis on which the Australian Constitution was formed. When the former Government removed the oath of allegiance in New South Wales, the Governor from Government House and the portraits that were signed by the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh from the Parliamentary Dining Room most people in New South Wales were horrified. They were horrified that not only that could be done but, more importantly, that it could be done without any democracy and consultation. That was a trademark of the former Government and members opposite should be ashamed of it. So far, this Government has righted two of the previous Labor Governments wrongs. Her Excellency the Governor and Sir Nicholas have been reinstated in Government House and I am pleased to say that the signed portraits of Her Majesty and the Duke of Edinburgh are now back where they belong, hanging in the Strangers Dining Room. I believe this bill will right the third wrong.

I ask how it can be that this State does not give New South Wales members of Parliament or the Executive Council the option to take an oath or affirmation of allegiance to a monarch who is legally and historically recognised within New South Wales and in our nation as a whole. The former Labor Government has tried to rewrite history and deny its sins of the past, and this is yet another example of that occurring. The former Government tried to deny us our heritage, history and constitutional due by pushing its faceless men's back-room republican agenda. Members opposite say that their pledge is to the people of New South Wales, whom they purport to represent and serve honourably. If that is the case why were the people of New South Wales not consulted on the decision to remove the oath of allegiance?

Members opposite, while in Government, never represented the people of New South Wales honourably. So why should we believe that this was their intention when they removed the oath of allegiance? The people of Australia delivered a resounding no to the 1999 referendum on a republic, but it appears that

some members opposite clearly do not accept the people's vote. People have always embraced all the visits to Australia by Her Majesty since her first visit on 3 February 1954. People cannot get enough of the Royal family, no matter who comes to this wonderful country. Every week our magazines have stories of the Royal family and they are best sellers when a member of the Royal family is featured on the cover.

The Royal wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton last year saw records broken for television coverage; and for those lucky enough to be there, the crowd was as large as that for the Queen's coronation. If I had a dollar for every Labor politician who fell over himself or herself to be part of the wonderful Royal wedding or Her Majesty's visit to Australia last year, I would have to include it on my pecuniary interest return and claim it as a second job. The hypocrisy of the Prime Minister in attempting to be part of all things Royal due to the popularity of the Royals equals the day I walked into my office in Parliament House about a month ago and saw a picture of the Prime Minister on the front page of the *Catholic Weekly*. That is a story for another day.

If members of the public are no longer interested in the monarchy, as the Opposition would have us believe, they have a strange way of showing us. I am proud that Her Majesty's portrait is displayed in the New South Wales Parliament. I ask this House: Why is it that we cannot choose to respect and honour the heritage of this country by acknowledging its rich history and current status as a Commonwealth? I fully support this bill because it is a bill of choice. As an elected member of this House and as a patriot of our country and State, its people and their Queen I believe in our history, our present and our future as a member of the Commonwealth. I believe in the laws which were formed from British roots and the descendants of the First Fleet sent to New South Wales. I believe it is a member's right to take an oath or affirmation of allegiance. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [4.10 p.m.]: I speak on the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. I listened with some distaste to the contribution of the member for Liverpool. He attacked Fred Nile and, although many of us might disagree with a lot of what Fred says, it is a disgrace for the member for Liverpool to call him a liar in this place. If he wishes to attack Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile or anyone else in this or the other place, as he reminded us in question time today, he can do it under Standing Order 73. Members should remember a couple of things about the member for Liverpool.

I have been in this place almost 22 years and he is the only member—probably the only member in the history of this place—who has actually been sat down in his maiden speech by a Speaker from his own party. This was because he was offensive. We have recently changed the standing orders. When Labor was last in government the member for Liverpool wrote a new set of standing orders even though he was not a member of the Standing Orders Committee. He had been a member when Paul Whelan was the chair. The committee only met once, the meeting was adjourned and never reconvened. In fact, the Standing Orders Committee did not reconvene for about 10 years, until we came to government. We were dictated to by the member for Liverpool because he wanted to change the standing orders in this House to suit himself and his socialist colleagues.

Mr Clayton Barr: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 76. The member is entitled to speak to the bill but the first two minutes of his dialogue have been about the reputation and behaviour of the member for Liverpool. I ask that you direct him to return to the leave of the bill.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Coffs Harbour was responding to the member for Liverpool, who spoke earlier.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I make the observation that this is the first time that the member for Cessnock has spoken today and he still has not mentioned the 300 to 500 jobs that have been lost in his electorate today. He is an apologist for the member for Liverpool. Members opposite have backed a republic, day in, day out. Australia is a constitutional monarchy. Following the 1975 sacking of Gough Whitlam, Bob Hawke changed the Constitution but he did not remove the Queen from the Constitution. He left the monarchy as a safeguard. That safeguard is something that we, as members of Parliament who represent our constituents, acknowledge and should remain totally committed to upholding.

I am reminded also by the member for Camden that when Labor was government Meredith Burgmann could not get rid quick enough of the portrait of the Queen from the President's dining room. I am proud to say that portrait now hangs in the National Party room. It hangs there because we are proud to be supporters of a constitutional monarchy. The portrait of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip was removed from the dining room

and hidden behind a pillar in the anteroom opposite the Jubilee Room—the Parkes Room. Every time school students or constituents visited the Parliament I proudly showed them what the clowns opposite did because they did not like a constitutional monarchy.

I refer members to a book entitled *The King and his Dominion Governors*. That book was written in response to the sacking of Jack Lang by a Governor way back in the 1930s. Many people made contributions to the book, which included a thesis from a man named Tate. When the book was published it was endorsed by the author. He concluded that the Crown in New South Wales and Australia—New South Wales being the oldest State—was the people, and the Governors representing the Crown were in fact representing the people. As part of my duties in this House I sign every piece of legislation that goes from here to the Governor.

Mr Victor Dominello: An excellent Governor.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: An excellent Governor, as the Minister says. She is probably one of the finest Governors I have ever seen, and I think they have all added greatly to both New South Wales and Australia. If she regards a piece of legislation in this place to be offensive she has the right not to sign it, which means it cannot be brought into law. She has that authority because she represents the Crown, and the Crown is the people. The author of the book *The King and his Dominion Governors* is none other than a highly rated Attorney-General of this country, an icon of the Labor Party, Justice H. V. Evatt. Doc Evatt has stated that the system we have is probably one of the best in the world. Australia is one of the oldest democracies in the world and its Constitution protects the people. What we are doing today is giving people a choice. People were given a choice on 26 March last year, a choice which resulted in 20 members of the Labor Party returned and this Government being elected with a massive majority.

I compliment Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile on this legislation. It gives members a choice to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen or the Crown, representing the people, or a pledge of loyalty. The choice is given to each of us, not to the member for Liverpool or Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. I believe that while ever we are a constitutional monarchy we have an obligation to swear the oath as put forward in this legislation. Those who do not will still represent their constituents without fear or favour. Members will have an opportunity to use whichever oath they wish to swear, but let us back old Doc Evatt and Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile and support this legislation so that we have a choice in New South Wales.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [4.18 p.m.]: I support the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. I commend Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile for bringing the bill before the Parliament. I doubt there would be any member of the New South Wales Parliament who would not agree that Australia is a unique and blessed country. Our country has a rich history and heritage and since 1788 we have acknowledged and respected the sovereignty of the Crown. Under the Crown we have largely enjoyed political stability. Australians have not anguished over civil wars, immense political corruptions—other than the Labor Party—or oppression, as have many countries throughout their histories. It could be said in recent times that New South Wales was perhaps under immense political corruption. Australians enjoy a remarkable sense of freedom, which is planted and nurtured in our Constitution. The core of the Australian Constitution is written into its preamble, which states:

Whereas the people ... have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown ...

In 1901 Australia set at the heart of her Constitution an allegiance to the Crown. Those who represent political parties, community groups and organisations, and who are elected to represent the people of New South Wales, are enabled and empowered by the Crown. The Crown is not politically partisan; it represents the whole of the people, unity of the States and the sovereign. Simply put, this bill seeks to return to future members and Ministers of the New South Wales Parliament the option to swear or affirm allegiance to the Queen, her heirs and successors prior to taking their seats or taking office. That will be offered as an alternative to the current pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. In 2006 the Labor Government abolished the oath of allegiance, which had been in place since 1902.

That was a last ditch effort to re-energise republicanism, and it was an underhanded one at that. Some would say this was an act of treason. It is somewhat amusing to note that the very members of Parliament who voted for the oath of allegiance to be abolished in 2006 swore that oath upon their entry into the New South Wales Parliament. They would not have been able to take their seat if they had not sworn the oath. The efforts at republicanism were a vain attempt to diminish the significance and importance of acknowledging the Crown as sovereign to our State and country. Let us not forget that in 1999 the push by the republicans to abolish the

Crown failed dismally. Why did it fail? It failed because Australians did not want to abolish the Crown. It may have been what the Labor Party, some academics or the trendy left wanted, but it is not what the people wanted. Prince Charles stated:

Something as curious as the monarchy won't survive unless you take account of people's attitudes. After all, if people don't want it, they won't have it.

I assure the House that if the people wanted Australia to become a republic the proposed changes to the constitution in 1999 would not have been so emphatically defeated. The people of Australia showed resounding support for our Commonwealth status. They sent a very clear message that becoming a republic was simply unacceptable. Every State voted down the proposed republic: New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and even Western Australia. Little has changed since 1999. As Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile stated in the other place:

There is little passion in the country for republican change ...

Edmund Burke stated:

Society is a partnership in all science, a partnership in all art, a partnership in every virtue and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.

The constitutional system is intrinsically woven into Australian history, society and way of life. Returning the oath of allegiance to the New South Wales Parliament is a wholly appropriate act by this Government. The Liberal-Nationals Government is restoring what should never have been removed in the first place. Under the monarchy we enjoy great freedom, stability, safety and peace. It should never be forgotten by the Australian people that it is upon this foundation that the constitution, and Australia herself, is built. On 6 February 2012 the Queen reached her sixtieth year as Queen of our great nation. It is appropriate that after 60 years as our Queen, head of state and monarch that the Constitution Act 1902 be amended to once again include:

I swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Her heirs and successors according to law. So help me God.

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [4.24 p.m.]: The Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011 will go some of the way to undoing the damage done in 2006 by the Labor Government when it abolished the oath of allegiance and replaced it with the pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. I wholeheartedly support the words spoken by the member for Coffs Harbour and the member for The Entrance in this debate. As a proud monarchist and patriot of our fine country I strongly support this bill. Its purpose is to amend the Constitution Act 1902 to give a member of the Legislative Council, Legislative Assembly or Executive Council the option of making an oath or affirmation of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors. It is an alternative to the pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales.

A key element of this bill is choice. I am a proud monarchist and patriot, as are many other members in this place. It is highly important that this Parliament acknowledge the strong support that exists for the monarchy and Commonwealth. This bill restores the choice of an individual member of Parliament which was unnecessarily removed under the Labor Government. Sitting members of Parliament and current Ministers will not be required to make a new oath or affirmation as to their allegiance or loyalty. However, it will be possible for any member who wishes to make a statement in Parliament about his or her preferred form of allegiance or loyalty—similar to the pledge just made by the member for The Entrance.

The significance of this oath dates back to 1856, the start of responsible government in this State. Members were required to take the oath of allegiance to the Crown. Labor's efforts to destroy this tradition have an origin well before 2006. Bob Carr twice attempted to remove any reference to the monarchy: first in 1993 and again in 1995. In 2006 when debating the issue it was stated that the purpose of the bill was to replace a "largely meaningless" oath. This shows how out of touch those opposite are with the will of the people of New South Wales and Australia. There is nothing meaningless about our personal heritage and the heritage in which we have formed civil governance in this nation.

This is just one of many issues on which the Labor Government took New South Wales out of step with our fellow States and Territories. It is important to note that federally, and in every other State and Territory, members of Parliament have the option to take an oath or affirmation of allegiance or pledge of loyalty to our Queen. New South Wales stands alone in its opposition to tradition and heritage—for the sole purpose of

political ideology by those opposite. This bill provides greater consistency with practices elsewhere in Australia and within New South Wales. Currently the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, Administrator, judges and justices of the peace are required to swear or affirm allegiance to the Queen under the Oaths Act.

Although those opposite refuse to admit it, and try to deny it wherever possible, the Australian people hold high regard and respect for our head of state, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This was illustrated last year by the nation on two occasions. Australians embraced the royal visit by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. People young and old flocked to every vantage point possible to share in what was a truly special occasion. Her Majesty's visit last year was not the only royal occasion that captured the minds of the Australian people. The royal wedding between His Royal Highness Prince William and Catherine Middleton, to become the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, was watched live by millions of Australians.

This bill reflects the sentiment of people across the State and respects our history. Australia is a proud member of the Commonwealth, in which it plays a key role. Australia sets exemplary standards for itself and is a respected Commonwealth member state. Not only do Australians lead the way with standards of governance but we also excel in other fields, including sports. In 1938 Sydney hosted the Commonwealth Games, then known as the British Empire Games. Since then Perth, Brisbane and Melbourne have hosted the games. In 2018 Australia will once again proudly host the Commonwealth Games. Through the republic referendum in 1999 Australia reconfirmed its loyalty and commitment to the Commonwealth and to the monarchy.

The vote was defeated federally, in every State, and in one of the two Territories. In New South Wales it was defeated 54 per cent to 46 per cent. Despite that result, in 2006 the Labor Government wilfully ignored the opinions of the majority of people and labelled the Act a "largely meaningless" oath. This Government supports choice and the ability for people to support the Commonwealth and the monarchy. I am a proud supporter of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. I support the bill, the choice it offers to members of Parliament and the respect it shows to our nation's position within the Commonwealth, and a history of which we should all be extremely proud.

I thank the Hon. Fred Nile for the timely introduction of the bill as we celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. At this time consideration is being given to renaming London's clock tower, commonly known as Big Ben, as Elizabeth Tower. Celebrations are occurring right across our great Commonwealth. I respect and am grateful for our democracy, our culture and the very language I speak, all of which have been inherited from the United Kingdom and its Westminster system and laws, with our monarch as its head of state. It is a system of government that has worked well for centuries. Australia's history since colonisation has come a long way from the early days of New South Wales as a penal colony. We should all embrace that rich history and be thankful for the contribution made by the Crown. Long live the Queen. I commend the bill to the House.

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

NEPEAN HOSPITAL PARKING FACILITIES

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [4.31 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the petition of more than 10,000 persons relating to car parking facilities at Nepean Hospital. Not long after I was elected it became very clear that car parking at Nepean Hospital had reached crisis point. Even prior to then it was well known across the Penrith electorate and further afield that car parking at Nepean Hospital was in a state of crisis. That had come about as a result of a series of decisions over a long time. Those decisions, which were not inappropriate, were made to ensure that funding that was invested in Nepean Hospital went to appropriate medical and health facilities. However, it is clear that the ability of people to use a car park to access those facilities had fallen off the radar and been somewhat neglected. It was with great pleasure prior to the election that I was able to stand beside the now Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, and commit to the construction of a multistorey car park at Nepean Hospital.

The car park has been approved only in the past two weeks by Penrith City Council and the Joint Regional Planning Panel. We are now able to commence work on the tender options, which will lead to construction. We are now looking at a clear time line for delivery of this project. The tender arrangements will be completed, initial construction should take place by the middle of the year and major construction should

begin by September. This will be a major piece of infrastructure to support the long-term investment from both sides of politics and the State and Federal tiers of government in the Nepean Hospital precinct. It will also form a critical part of the extension of health services throughout a growing economic corridor in the Penrith region.

There is little doubt that the opportunity to create jobs in the health sector is critically important to the long-term development and prosperity of the Penrith region. However, it is just as important that people are able to access those services. I recognise the work that the Penrith community has put into raising the profile of this issue. There is little doubt that whether someone is a representative on the senior medical staff council, a member of the NSW Nurses Association or a member of a family that has had to access some of the services at Nepean Hospital they would have experienced the difficulty of finding a car parking space. That will come to an end because the O'Farrell Government is meeting its election commitment. The O'Farrell Government is keeping its promise to improve car parking facilities at Nepean Hospital.

A multistorey car park will be constructed on the corner of Derby and Somerset Streets in the hospital precinct. It will have approximately 650 spaces and is a multimillion-dollar investment in this precinct that will support the multiple millions of dollars that have already been invested there. It will provide an anchor point for future car parking. That is one of the things that I am most happy about in this process. In addition to finding an interim solution to the long-term issue of car parking at Nepean Hospital with the support of Penrith City Council through the establishment of an overflow car park with 100 spaces, Health Infrastructure has been working to establish a master plan for the hospital precinct. That plan earmarks sites for future car parks.

It has been identified that car parking will continue to be a challenge for any hospital precinct, especially one as important as Nepean. It services the two million people who live in western Sydney and others in many parts of regional New South Wales. Nepean Hospital is the most westerly teaching hospital. If people are living in Bathurst or Orange there is a strong likelihood that if they need to access services in this precinct they will need to drive their car there. The new multistorey car park will make it significantly easier for people to access the hospital's facilities. This development is a clear example of the O'Farrell Government meeting its election commitments. It is a multimillion-dollar investment in the Penrith region. It is a clear response to the demands of the people of Penrith. And this car park will be built.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [4.36 p.m.]: I note the obvious pride of the member for Penrith in his local hospital. He has good reason to be proud of Nepean Hospital because it is an excellent hospital and one of the flagship teaching hospitals of the University of Sydney. It is well administered and its staff are distinguished by their commitment not only to first-rate patient care, which they provide, but also to the people with whom they share their lives. I was the regional examiner for the College of Physicians exam at Nepean for some years and I spent a lot of time at Nepean Hospital speaking to clinicians and to patients, because these exams take days not hours, and I have always been impressed by the high standard of care and the outstanding commitment of the clinicians there.

I am unclear about why a petition of more than 10,000 persons is needed to tick off an election promise: that could be done with the stroke of a ministerial pen. This is probably something to do with the creation of a database for future use and also to hide some of the facts of this development. Fourteen months after the election the development application has only just been lodged. This much-needed car park will be built but it will take some years. There is also no mention that the parking will be privatised, which will mean that patients will be paying for parking in the future. This will be a private enterprise development on the hospital site. It is very difficult to get financial recompense for those who are unable to pay full parking because it comes out of the hospital budget. It is given only rarely because many people do not even know to ask about it.

This will be a major cost for the community, which could have been explained to people when they signed the petition. They could have been told that they would be paying for parking forever. However, as I said, the Nepean Hospital is a very good hospital. I note that the member for Penrith paid tribute to governments of both persuasions and at both levels. The member clearly forgot the line that Government members are to expunge all achievements of any other government than this one from history. The fact is that there has been considerable investment in Nepean Hospital for some years; that investment is ongoing, much of it from the Federal Government. However, between 2006 and 2007 a considerable sum of money was spent on a medical assessment unit and a psychiatric emergency care centre.

Recently I saw the refurbishment of wards in north block and the very impressive commencement of construction of wards in east block—a major, and much-needed, redevelopment of the hospital, paid for in the main by gratefully received Federal Government funds. This will enhance the ability of the hospital to care for

the community, as it needs to do not only because of the rapidly increasing population but also because this is a major teaching unit. It trains many of our future clinicians in western Sydney. I pay special tribute to Professor Michael Peek, Dean of the Medical School at Nepean Hospital. One would have to go a long way to find a more committed clinician and better role model for future clinicians of western Sydney.

This Government treats facts about Nepean Hospital like State secrets. For example, nurses number nearly 1,200 and medical staff about 350. Questions about Nepean Hospital such as how many staff it now has, what its budget is, and how many admissions it now has, are not answered by the Government. It refuses to answer questions on things such as how many nurses are employed, how many nursing vacancies there are, or even what the hospital's budget is. The walk-out rate from the emergency department in July last was 11 per cent. This is a great hospital. It does enormous good for the community, and I commend its good work.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [4.41 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak to the 10,000 petition on car parking for Nepean Hospital. As the member for Macquarie Fields mentioned, Nepean Hospital is a well regarded teaching hospital. This is a great hospital, one of the network of teaching hospitals in Sydney and throughout New South Wales. However, the member failed to mention that the site of the car park has existed for decades; so the previous Government could quite easily have fixed the parking problems at Nepean Hospital. But that Government had no plans. It is true to say that money for the car park is coming from both the Federal and State governments; the member for Penrith acknowledged that. That is how hospitals are funded. This Government is getting on with the job of delivering on its election commitments.

We are building what the people in the community want—and that includes the people of Londonderry, Blue Mountains, Riverstone, Bathurst and Orange. Why is that? It is because Nepean Hospital is a receiving hospital for a lot of New South Wales. I think the member for Macquarie Fields would support me in saying that people are flown from throughout New South Wales to these teaching hospitals; people from all over the State come to see their critically ill friends and family members who are in these hospitals. People are being flown from Lithgow hospital to the Nepean Hospital, as they are from Bathurst and Orange. Those families have to find accommodation in Sydney when they do not know the area and do not know where to park. Has anyone from the Opposition gone out to this area in recent times? I am sure the member for Liverpool would not even know where Nepean is.

Mr Paul Lynch: That just shows how much of a fool you are.

Mr BART BASSETT: It does not take much to rev him up. The only time he would have been out there is when he was in a chauffeur-driven car and been dropped off.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: I was peacefully minding my own business when this entirely unprovoked attack happened.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Paul Lynch: That this bloke's a dill, number one.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! That is not a point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr Paul Lynch: You should tell him that if he wants to launch an attack—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr BART BASSETT: The member's reaction shows he is very upset about what I have said.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: Once again the member continues in that vein.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Paul Lynch: It is under Standing Order 73. If the member wants to launch an attack, he must do so by way of substantive motion.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! There is no point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr Paul Lynch: I was minding my own business, and he just started an attack on me.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! I will expel members who continue to be disorderly.

Mr BART BASSETT: I congratulate the O'Farrell Government for the commitment made at the election and for getting on with building the car park. The community is happy.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO MONTY WEDD

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.45 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to a true character and gentleman, the late Monty Wedd. Montague Thomas Archibald Wedd was born in Sydney in 1921 and died at Fingal Bay on 4 May 2012. What he did in between those dates, with his artistic talent, passion for preserving our past and incredible zest for life, has left an indelible mark on our country. For Monty, each of his tomorrows truly always was a blank page waiting to be created. Monty was born in Glebe and left high school during the Depression to work as a junior poster artist at Hackett Offset Printing Company before becoming a designer and illustrator for a furniture manufacturer. During this time he continued studying commercial art at night at East Sydney Technical College. He then worked as a furniture artist and salesman at Grace Bros before joining the Australian Army in 1941, where he served in the First Artillery Survey Regiment, and then the RAAF, where he attained the rank of Leading Aircraftman in 34 Squadron.

After the war he spent three years studying under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme, completing his arts course at East Sydney Technical College, during which time he produced his first comic strip, *Sword and Sabre*, a story about the French Foreign Legion. He married Dorothy in 1949. She shared his love of history and helped him with his research and reading. Throughout the 1950s Monty worked extensively as a cover artist on numerous pulp fiction novels. In 1954 he created *The Scorpion*, which became a bestseller, with sales of up to 100,000 per issue—despite being banned in Queensland, purportedly on the grounds that the bad-guy protagonist kept escaping his just deserts in order to fight another day. He then produced a series of Captain Justice stories for Calvert Publications; but they had to be largely re-drawn to satisfy 1950s censorship rules and regulations, for example, the hero's face could not be entirely hidden, no flashes could issue from guns, no character could carry an offensive weapon in the hand, and no-one was allowed to be killed. Anyone in this House who is old enough will remember this little ditty—I won't sing it but you know the tune:

In come the dollars, in come the cents,
to replace the pounds and shillings and the pence.
Be prepared for changes when the coins begin to mix,
on the 14th of February, 1966.

Members should also remember the little fellow that appeared in the educational cartoons for the Decimal Currency Board's campaign to teach us about decimal currency, Dollar Bill—another of Monty's creations. Monty was in great demand during Captain Cook's Bicentenary celebrations, creating historic strips, illustrations and cards for everything from television series to Minties and washing powder between 1969 and 1970. Monty's work has appeared in a range of Australian newspapers, including the Sydney *Daily Mirror*, the *Sunday Telegraph*, the *Sunday Territorian* and the *Sunday Mail*, the *Newcastle Herald* and my electorate's Port Stephens *Examiner*.

While perhaps best known nationally for his art, his precision led to Monty taking an interest in military memorabilia. He liked to study the uniforms to get them just right. Monty is well known in the Hunter as the curator of the Monarch Military Museum. Here he has amassed thousands of treasures for generations to come to learn from and enjoy. This private military museum, nestled proudly in Williamtown in my electorate, does look slightly out of place to anyone travelling along Nelson Bay Road who has not seen it before. It is nothing short of a grandiose castle—nearly under the FA-18 Hornets of RAAF Williamtown. But anyone who

has ever been in it knows it is even more fascinating on the inside, where you can be lost for hours amongst the treasures Monty and Dorothy have amassed over more than 50 years. They purpose built the museum after running out of space in their former Dee Why home and moving to Williamstown in 1987.

My now adult sons and I spent many a wonderful school holiday afternoon at Monty's castle immersing ourselves in the military memorabilia. It was partly the amazing collections and partly Monty's passion and enthusiasm and incredible knowledge for the stories behind each and every piece which kept us entertained. A true gentleman, he was always willing to explain, in great detail, the history of a piece. He was well regarded across the country as an expert on military history and fielded calls on various unusual queries. With a special interest in military uniforms, Monty had a collection from the British Army from 1788 to 1890 and Australian uniforms from World War I.

The collection includes a propeller from Charles Kingsford Smith's Southern Cross, a rare Brougham carriage, a Japanese tank, armour through the ages, tins, badges, plates, helmets, swords and bayonets. There are also stamps, hundreds of cameras, rare musical instruments and countless other items of interest. Mixed in with the military artefacts are a collection of historical cartoons. Although incredibly prolific, he apparently kept a copy of every piece of work he created. In 1993 Monty was awarded an Order of Australia for his services as author, illustrator and historian. Monty is survived by his wife, his devoted life-time partner, Dorothy, and his children, Sandra, Justin, Warwick and Deborah, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Vale Monty Wedd.

EAST TIMOR INDEPENDENCE TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.50 p.m.]: On Saturday 19 May 2012 I attended an event at the Uruguayan club in Hinchinbrook in my electorate organised by the Timorese community to celebrate 10 years of the independence of East Timor. It also doubled as a fundraising function for Radio 2000 FM 98.5, which is a Timorese radio program. A number of significant people attended the event, including Fonseca Dos Santos Pereira, Consul, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste; Carlos Pereira, a well-known figure in the Timorese community; and Peter Lay from the Timor Chinese Association—an association that is quite significant within the community. On 31 March 2012 I had the pleasure of attending the inauguration dinner for the new executive of that association. Also in attendance was Dr Helen Hill, an academic who has been an activist in the solidarity movement. I have been reading work for many years. I remember buying her book *Stirrings of Nationalism in East Timor: Fretilin 1974-1978* from Jefferson Lee, who was also at this function and once again selling books. The East Timor Students Association also gave a presentation.

There is always a bitter-sweet element to these events. It was certainly a celebration of the independence of Timor-Leste. It was also counter posed with the fact that there was a minute's silence for those whose lives had been lost in the struggle for independence. The background to the Timorese struggle is quite extraordinary: many centuries of colonial rule by the Portuguese, significant fights and uprisings striving for independence during that time, and particularly notable was the rebellion by Dom Boaventura in 1912. The links with Australia have been significant. In fact, Australia invaded East Timor in World War II and that provoked the Japanese invasion of East Timor. Timorese in significant numbers assisted Australia, the Australians and the commanders that were there, and that led to massive numbers of Timorese deaths. That story is well recorded in Paul Cleary's book, which was published in 2010.

Interestingly some of the members of the command company involved—people such as Paddy Kenneally, in particular—became great activists for Timorese independence several decades later. Matters became particularly severe in 1975 with the Indonesian invasion, which grabbed my attention at the time. I have maintained an interest in it ever since. I remember attending a plethora of events in my local area to support the Timorese community and the Timorese struggle well before the Dili massacre in 1991 when a lot of other people, because of the publicity of that massacre, joined the movement to make Timor independent. We established a Parliamentary Friends of East Timor in this House with Ian Cohen, Peter Wong and me as the co-chairs. We tried to get into Timor in the run-up to the independence campaign as a way of putting more pressure on Indonesian authorities. They refused to allow us to be admitted, which is not surprising in those circumstances.

A number of years ago I had the pleasure of visiting East Timor. I met Mari Alkatiri, Xanana Gusmão and Jose Teixeira, who I noticed in the media is still a spokesperson for Fretilin. None of those connections are surprising. It is not only something I have been particularly interested in. Probably the largest concentration of Timorese in New South Wales is in the electorate of Liverpool. In the 1999 referendum there were two polling

booths in Sydney for those entitled to vote to cast a vote, one of which was in the Masonic Lodge at Liverpool. I have a distinct memory of being there and watching a large number of Timorese patiently lining up to vote in the referendum. They lined up much more patiently than most voters in elections in this country would, but it was an indication of how seriously they took their opportunity to vote.

Liverpool has also been the long-term base for a significant number of significant Timorese figures. For many years José Ramos-Horta had a house in Liverpool, which he subsequently sold because Dona Natalina, his mother, went back to permanently live in Timor. Estanislau da Silva, a good mate of mine and a Minister in the first Timorese Government, for many years lived in Liverpool. One of my good mates who I saw last week, Carols da Costa, has just gone back to Timor. A person who has passed on and lived in Liverpool for a long time was Jose Maria Mok. His daughter is married to the current East Timorese Ambassador. I had the interesting experience of making representations on her behalf to remain in Australia a number of years ago, so I claim responsibility for the Ambassador's wife still being in the country. My connection with the Timorese has been one of great joy for me but great sadness for those who have lost their lives in the independent struggle. I conclude by saying Viva Timor-Leste.

NAIL CAN HILL RUN

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [4.55 p.m.]: "The steep down hills were the toughest" is a common sentiment from participants in Albury's famous Nail Can Hill Run, which has just celebrated its thirty-sixth year. Those who are not dedicated long-distance runners might think the uphill stages of a run are the most difficult part. But the Nail Can Hill Run is not your average test of human endurance and athleticism. Yes, the run is named after a ridge that runs above the city of Albury and it is fought on that ground. However, the race—last run on 6 May this year—commences at an elevation of 250 metres, climbs to 405 metres and finishes lower than it began, at 185 metres. At its steepest stage the runners will drop 110 metres in elevation over a race distance of one kilometre. That hurts. Paradoxically it is a race named after a hill, which is mostly a descent.

This year has been another successful step in the development of an important community fitness activity. Ordinary runners and plodders mix with elite athletes to run the 11.3 kilometre course on the first Sunday in May each year. The race, which began in 1977 with 98 starters, had almost 1,700 participants this year—a record number. A clue to its origin is that the run's founders—Peter Harper and Lester Sawyer—were both orienteers. It is a mountain run rather than an urban road race or track event. The record time for a male participant is still held by Steve Moneghetti, who timed 34 minutes 57 seconds in 2003. This is almost 10 seconds faster than the winning time set in the first race back in 1977. The women's time has dropped by 12 seconds and is held by Kate Seibold-Crosbie, who posted a time of 43 minutes and 53 seconds in 2008. This year Albury's Lachlan Chisholm clocked 38 minutes 8 seconds to be first across the line.

Many participants are content to jog, walk or amble along the trail, simply enjoying this section of natural vegetation in our city. Of course the slowest of these might take up to three hours to finish their "race". For many, their race time is irrelevant. In that respect, the Nail Can Hill Run is a classic community fun and fitness activity where everyone gains from their own success. Managed by the Rotary Club of Albury West, the event raises money to help those in need in our community. In 2012 the beneficiary was Autism Spectrum Australia (Aspect) and its Riverina School in Albury, which provides satellite classes in Wagga Wagga. This school "helps children with autism learn to manage their disability and reach their full potential". This leads me to mention two other winners: this year the leading fundraiser was Mike Eden, who raised \$4,273.99, and the team award went to Frances Dallinger of Belbridge Hague for raising \$4,423.99.

I congratulate all who donated to this good cause, who raised money or sought sponsorship. The Nail Can is truly one of Australia's great runs. The course mostly follows the ridge of the Nail Can Range that borders Albury's west. For participants, the run begins with two kilometres of mostly level ground, commencing at Lavington Sports Oval. The first kilometre is sealed road but by the second kilometre you are crunching gravel. Then the first climb begins. After a steep section you run through a gate and onto a fire trail. You still have a kilometre of climbing ahead of you, but the spectacular views will keep you motivated. Soon you hit the highest point of the race, having covered four kilometres in distance but 155 metres in elevation. Suddenly you are tumbling downhill.

There is another short, sharp and unexpected uphill section known as Pete's Pinch, which takes its name from one of the founders of the race, the aforementioned Peter Harper. As you strike the bottom of the hill you can see right out over West Albury and the Murray River flood plain. Before you can relax you are running steeply upwards for another jolt to your aching legs. It might only be 100 metres in distance but it is a painful

parting shot of ascent. With a little over three kilometres left, you have reached the summit of Nail Can Hill. Follow Hernia Hill track as it falls away to your left, then steeply down to Pemberton Street, where the end is in sight. Race organisers warn participants to approach this section with caution.

The runners' legs, which have been battered by the climb and long descent, are shaking and heavy at this point—it is easy to take a tumble. Then it is all over. The Nail Can Hill Run is rapidly gaining in popularity and fame as a destination event for Albury. If you enjoy community fun runs or competitive cross-country racing put Albury on your calendar for May 2013. All who enter will receive a certificate and there are prizes for winners in categories, which include family and work groups, sports teams, age busters, as well as age groups. Registration may be made online, with information found on the *nailcanhillrun.com* website. In concluding, I particularly thank the Rotary Club of Albury West for managing the event, and key sponsors—the Commercial Club of Albury, Atel, Moriarty Financial Services and the *Border Mail*. There is still plenty of time to prepare for next year's run.

TRIBUTE TO BILL WOOD

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.00 p.m.]: Today I speak of Bill Wood, a constituent of mine who sadly passed away last Friday. Bill was 77 years of age—but a very young 77. I first knew Bill as the director of the Coffs Harbour TAFE campus until he retired 12 or 13 years ago—maybe longer. Bill was born to be an educator. Prior to his retirement and post his retirement from TAFE he was extremely involved in the University of the Third Age. He took great interest in education generally—not just TAFE but all forms of education. In fact, for a number of years he was chairman of the Coffs Harbour Regional Conservatorium board. Bill visited Parliament on a number of occasions to request money for the conservatorium. When the conservatorium had to relocate the former Government, through Minister John Della Bosca, gave it some \$200,000. I have no doubt that the conservatorium got the money due to Bill's strong representation and insistence, and it was able to buy its own premises.

Bill was also extremely involved in Rotary, more especially the Rotary cartoon gallery at Coffs Harbour. Before he was taken ill suddenly with a stroke, Bill lobbied me strongly for Coffs Harbour council not to change the designation of the Bunker Cartoon Gallery, which is an old World War II bunker at Coffs Harbour. It has been renovated by Rotary and is the first and only cartoon gallery in the Southern Hemisphere. Literally thousands of cartoons are submitted annually for a cartoon competition, and Bill was a great advocate for it. Bill's funeral is at one o'clock tomorrow and it is somewhat fitting that tomorrow night Lobbecke, the cartoonist, will be in Coffs Harbour at a function that Bill organised. It will be a bittersweet night because the number of people who attend out of respect for Bill and the work that he did across the Coffs Harbour community will be testament to the great job that he has done.

I feel sure that if people do not get to his funeral half an hour early tomorrow they will not get into the chapel, let alone get a seat. He was so well regarded that when I found out he had been taken ill and tried to ring his wife, Beverly—Beverly is a lovely person too and this has taken its toll on her—I could not get through to her; her message bank was full because people were so concerned about Bill's welfare. To some extent his passing is bittersweet because if he had lived his prognosis was not good; he would probably have had to spend the rest of his life in a wheelchair or in a nursing home—and that is something no-one would want a man like Bill Wood to have to suffer.

Coffs Harbour and the community generally across the State will be much poorer for Bill's passing. I extend my condolences to his children and wife and thank them for the support they gave him over a great number of years so that he could put into the Coffs Harbour community so much time and effort, a lot of which will probably go unrecognised. Today I tried to Google some of his exploits and deeds over the years and, typical of Parliament House, my printer would not work. So I am going on my knowledge of him rather than what I could find on the internet. I feel sure that more of Bill's achievements will be mentioned over the coming days. I hope that the media in Coffs Harbour give him a fitting tribute because he deserves it. Of course, Beverly should not be forgotten; she stood by his side for all those years. As I said, Bill was a very young 77, as is Beverly. I hope that the representations she has received from members of the public over the past week and those she will get over the next few days will give her some solace in her sad loss.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Government and the Parliament I extend our sympathies and condolences to Beverly Wood and her family on the passing of her husband, Bill Wood. I extend our appreciation to Bill Wood on his commitment to education not only on behalf of the Coffs Harbour community but also on behalf of the community of New South Wales.

DEMENTIA

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 p.m.]: Dementia is an increasingly important issue in our community and one that is particularly relevant in my electorate of Pittwater given the fact that its population is both increasing and ageing. This often devastating condition is as much a social issue as a medical issue due to the enormous challenges it presents. Dementia does not discriminate and it is not an issue we can simply put to one side and ignore because the frightening statistics surrounding its prevalence speak for themselves. A recent Access Economics report forecast that dementia prevalence in Pittwater will increase by more than 330 per cent between now and 2050, to affect about 3,500 people. That represents a significant increase on previous forecasts and highlights the need for improved awareness about the health and social and economic impacts on dementia sufferers and their families.

Whilst we have certainly come a long way, particularly over the past two decades, in helping remove the stigma once associated with dementia and encouraging individuals and families to seek help, this forecast is a significant wake-up call for our community. It means that we need to start seeing a stronger shift away from the belief that dementia is only a concern for older people and is some sort of automatic consequence of ageing. It is not. We need to see an improvement in the limited understanding of the symptoms of dementia beyond memory loss. We need to see an increase in awareness about the onset of dementia and the fact that it can often develop many years, if not decades, before it is diagnosed. Importantly, we need more people to start talking about dementia—discussing it early with their friends and families and understanding the importance of early diagnosis in effective treatment. Only through doing that will we be able to start removing the shadows that have unfortunately covered this condition for far too long.

Whilst research suggests that Pittwater is in for a challenging period over the next 40 years in dealing with the social and economic impacts of dementia, it is important to recognise that the quality of life for people living with dementia can be maintained or improved through appropriate services, that dementia risk reduction is possible and that ongoing research presents promising opportunities for better medical treatment in the future. A huge part of this positive outlook and the effective management of dementia is due to the role of carers within our communities and the immeasurable benefits they provide. Last week we celebrated National Volunteer Week, and there is perhaps no group more worthy of appreciation during this event than those who take care of their loved ones and family members living with dementia and other debilitating conditions. It was also an important opportunity to recognise those volunteers throughout our communities, such as those who selflessly donate their time at the Chesalon Day Centre at St John's Church in Mona Vale in Pittwater, who provide invaluable respite opportunities for local families. Groups such as this demonstrate the type of community engagement and understanding about dementia that is needed to help tackle this issue.

What is really alarming about the latest research into dementia is that more and more younger people, in their forties and fifties, are being diagnosed with the condition. Unlike the circumstances often associated with older dementia sufferers, those managing the condition in their forties and fifties, or even in their thirties, often still have dependent children and considerable financial responsibilities, which add further dimensions to their challenges. What this all feeds back into is the need to convert the issue of dementia from something people do not discuss, do not think about and do not plan for until it is thrust upon them, to something that is widely recognised, discussed and openly accepted as a significant community issue. Above all, this involves people not being hesitant to talk with their general practitioner when things do not seem right and encouraging our friends and family members to seek assistance if they notice memory loss and disorientation.

While we are fortunate in Pittwater to have some outstanding residential aged care services, support groups, volunteers, respite services and home care opportunities, the seriousness of this issue and its complexities mean that we must all take a proactive approach. Quite simply, this involves making our communities dementia friendly by helping to change attitudes, developing tolerance and understanding, offering support to those around us and encouraging others to seek help. Most importantly, we must help to remove any of the remaining stigma that surrounds this condition. That is vital because we are all likely to be touched by dementia in one way or another during our life. Just like other medical conditions, we are all bound by the reality that we are human and we are all in this together. I thank all those in Pittwater who are advocating for dementia sufferers and their families, and the countless volunteers who help to make this terrible and unfair condition a little more manageable.

OBESITY

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [5.10 p.m.]: Without doubt a person's wellbeing can affect their personal life, particularly their family life and their self-confidence. As decision-makers for New South Wales it is our responsibility to encourage adults and children to lead healthy lifestyles, particularly given the effect that

obesity has on our constituents' wellbeing and the associated financial ramifications for the State's health system. According to a New South Wales population health survey undertaken in 2009, 53.5 per cent of the State's population was classified as overweight or obese. This has serious implications for individuals suffering from obesity and for our healthcare system, which is feeling the weight of the associated health implications. The need for medical care has greatly increased due to an escalating number of cases of type 2 diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, stroke, sleep apnoea, gallbladder disease and osteoarthritis. Sleep disorders alone cost the country's economy more than \$5.1 billion each year in health care and lost productivity.

According to a 2007-08 report on child health, the Hunter's figure for overweight two-year-olds to eight-year-olds of 23.8 per cent is the highest in the State. The region also has the second-highest percentage of obese nine-year-olds to 15-year-olds—that is, 6.5 per cent. These truly worrying statistics demonstrate that urgent action is needed. I am happy to say that some organisations are fighting against obesity and encouraging healthy lifestyles within my community. Wallsend and its surrounding suburbs are home to many sporting organisations that encourage locals to participate in football, touch football, rugby league, netball and cricket, just to name a few. Maryland-Wallsend Netball Club, Wallsend Touch Association and the Shortland United Junior Football Club are outstanding organisations that do wonderful things for the community by encourage locals to participate in sport.

We also have swimming facilities such as the Wallsend Swimming Centre, which hosts the Wallsend Warriors Swimming Club. The club engages children from as young as five to adults in their early twenties. It is fantastic to see our younger members of society leading healthy lifestyles in the pool and away from their phones and computers. Another fantastic example is the initiative delivered by Glendale High School. Sports co-coordinator Shayne Mason and physical education teacher Dylan Morgan have developed a gym program to make fitness a part of life rather than a chore for their students. They donated their own gym equipment for use by selected students with poor self-esteem and behaviour problems or those who were at risk of leaving school. Mr Mason said that they use up all their energy in the gym, so they are a lot calmer in the classroom and focus on their work. After two years, more than 100 students have joined the gym, which is an excellent outcome.

Regular exercise drastically reduces the likelihood of obesity, which is an important issue to consider. The severe consequences of obesity on both society and the State require serious action. Programs need to be devised and targeted at adults and children to encourage them to have a healthy lifestyle because obesity-related illnesses place a large strain on our State's health system. Obesity affects the way our constituents live their lives. As decision-makers for New South Wales it is our responsibility to encourage adults and children to lead healthy lifestyles and to maintain an acceptable weight. Organisations and sporting groups should not be responsible for encouraging healthy living in our communities. As decision-makers, the benefits of persuading society to be healthy are too significant to ignore.

KATHLEEN LENA AUTOBIOGRAPHY LAUNCH

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.15 p.m.]: I am 100 per cent committed to the great electorate of Tweed. On Saturday 19 May I had the privilege of launching Kathleen Lena's autobiography *My Life*. Kathleen is affectionately known as "Aunty Kath" around the Tweed and is a prominent Aboriginal Elder in the region. She decided to write her own biography on her eightieth birthday at the prompting of some family members. It is appropriate that her family encouraged her to write this wonderful book because it is filled with a sense of family and community, which are strong attributes of the Aboriginal people. Aunty Kath wanted to show the way that she and her family have lived and survived over the decades while dealing with changes and tragedy and tapping into one of the most complex and immediate issues for Aboriginal people. Aunty Kath's sense of hope is obvious in her autobiography. She says that her greatest hope is to see her people rise up to meet the challenges of life and to overcome them.

I was honoured to attend the book launch last Saturday. I was reminded of the important position that Aunty Kath occupies in the Tweed community generally and in the local Aboriginal community. As an Elder, Kath sees her primary role as guiding young people. She feels the sense of responsibility associated with being an Elder and hopes to extend her role through her writing. Even now she volunteers with On Track—a great organisation led by Leone Crayden—assisting many Aboriginal youths and older people. Aunty Kath is a legend in our area. She says that giving advice is the most important part of any Elder's role, and the history and heritage that her autobiography contains make that clear. Her book will no doubt be a valuable tool for young Aboriginal people in learning about the lives and circumstances of their people. Aunty Kath already has a new book in the works that she says will focus solely on community. Aunty Kath is also an important religious leader in our community. She is a devout Christian. It is impossible to talk to Aunty Kath without feeling overwhelmed. She is a beacon for the Aboriginal people and the wider Tweed community.

Aunty Kath has donated a copy of *My Life* to the Parliament, and earlier today I had the privilege of presenting a copy to the Premier and then delivering it to the Parliamentary Library. I hope that members get the chance to peruse the book because it contains many photographs that trace Aunty Kath's and her ancestors' lives. I was thrilled to present the book to Parliament and hope that members will enjoy reading about the life of this wonderful woman. I have known Aunty Kath for more than 23 years. She does many welcome to country ceremonies for me and she is highly respected. The Aboriginal people are a very important part of my local community. The Tweed has been home to many famous Aboriginal people, including rugby league great Larry Corowa and the first Aboriginal parliamentarian in Australia, Neville Bonner, who was born on Ukerebagh Island, which is the site of a number of bora rings.

The book launch was conducted at the Minjungbal Cultural Centre. The centre has a museum and a boardwalk through the mangrove swamps that has interpretative signage to help visitors understand how the Aboriginal people survived in what can be a harsh environment. It is a fantastic place and a focal point for the local Aboriginal community. I have a great deal of respect for the Aboriginal people and also for the large number of people of South Sea Islander descent who live in my electorate. They have been there for several generations and are an important part of our local community. I respect them, and honour the Aboriginal people's custodianship of country. More importantly, I class Aunty Kath as a personal friend. She is doing her people proud. I am pleased that I was able to present a copy of her book to Parliament. Once again, Aunty Kath is 100 per cent for the Tweed.

INNER-CITY HOMELESSNESS

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [5.19 p.m.]: Good progress is being made in tackling inner-city homelessness as a result of cooperation between all levels of government and non-government organisations. The City of Sydney Street Count in February found a drop in homelessness in the inner city from 418 in February 2010 to 310 in February this year. Numbers in Woolloomooloo dropped from 95 in winter 2010 to 45 in February this year. But we still have a homelessness problem, particularly in Woolloomooloo where nearly one-third of the city's homeless people were counted. This drop in numbers on the street is the result of active programs that have changed how we respond to homelessness. The "housing first" approach offers permanent housing to homeless people with the support they need to get back on their feet. Mission Australia's Michael Project showed that it costs us more to leave someone homeless than it does to provide them with a home and wraparound support such as health and hygiene, cleaning, shopping and cooking skills.

New funds have allowed additional homes and better services. I commend the Commonwealth Government for putting new money into social housing and affordable housing. Way2Home, an outreach program funded by the city and the New South Wales Government, helps homeless people in the street to get into housing and receive ongoing support. A homeless health team from St Vincent's Hospital provides much-needed health services direct to rough sleepers. Way2Home has placed 151 people in permanent housing since it began in April 2010, including 38 rough sleepers from Woolloomooloo who now have long-term supported housing. Platform 70, funded jointly by Federal and New South Wales governments through Bridge Housing Limited, will accommodate 70 rough sleepers from Woolloomooloo in a home of their own. A total of 24 Way2Home clients have been housed there. The wonderful Camperdown Project facility is housing 60 rough sleepers and 60 low-income people, with 25 Way2Home clients there already.

The City of Sydney runs a dedicated homelessness unit, the statewide Homeless Persons Information Service, and provides brokerage for emergency accommodation and transport home. We have public space liaison officers to manage the impacts on city parks and streets and coordinate the Woolloomooloo integrated service hub, which brings medical, legal and employment services to one location at one time to help rough sleepers out of homelessness. The City of Sydney was commended in this year's homelessness achievement awards and I am proud of the work we do. I congratulate all those who work so hard to better respond to homelessness and help vulnerable people get a home of their own. This is particularly relevant at the moment while we are experiencing cold and wet weather.

I am pleased that the NSW Police Force is undertaking a statewide training program for all officers to accompany the revised homelessness protocol. Police deal with complex situations and inner-city police commanders ask officers to focus on resolving conflict and addressing problematic behaviour rather than criminalising homelessness. Service providers are now focussing on pathways out of homelessness. We are encouraging charities that provide food to link up with service providers and venues where people can get help with their problems and are supported to get off the street. These charities are also looking at providing meals in areas where homeless people live but no services are available.

We also want to break the cycle of people dropping food, furniture and clothes in the street in Woolloomooloo. This food is not safe to eat and attracts rats and ibis. Local residents and social housing tenants continue to complain about the dumping, which does not help homeless people or residents. Improved and expanded activity programs have helped rough sleepers take their vital first steps. These programs include the impressive facilities at Ozanam House in Woolloomooloo and the upgraded Wayside Chapel, along with Milk Crate Theatre and homeless football. Initiatives like *The Big Issue*, the magazine sold by homeless people who want to change their lives, give people a chance to re-engage and sort out their lives. Sydney has the most expensive housing market in Australia, and the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling has now classified Sydney as "severely unaffordable".

The National Housing Supply Council says that Australia has a shortage of about 215,000 dwellings and predicts it will keep rising. Australians for Affordable Housing has reported that housing stress now affects more than one in 10 households, who pay more than 30 per cent of their income on housing. The latest Anglicare rental affordability snapshot identified that only 0.6 per cent of private rentals in Sydney were affordable for people on lower incomes, thereby locking out people on minimum wages, single incomes and Centrelink benefits. All levels of government must address the important issue of homelessness. It is terrific to see that there has been progress in addressing homelessness, but the efforts must not stop. I call on the New South Wales Government to continue investing in positive homelessness programs and to put funds into low-cost and social housing that will help prevent homelessness.

NORTHERN LAKES DISABILITY TOURISM PRECINCT COMMITTEE

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [5.24 p.m.]: I am pleased to commend and support the tremendous work carried out by the Northern Lakes Disability Tourism Precinct Committee, supported by the Central Coast Tourism Board and the O'Farrell-Stoner Government. The northern region of the Wyong electorate has been identified as a primary growth area on the Central Coast, and the committee has been working hard to ensure that this growth sees an enhancement of infrastructure catering for people with disabilities and mobility issues. The hope is that Lakes Beach will soon become one of the world's first disability-friendly and all-access beaches, due to the efforts of the Northern Lakes Disability Tourism Precinct Committee. The pilot program to turn Toukley and Budgewoi into a leading disability and mobility holiday destination will shortly commence. The catalyst of the program will be the granting of access over the dunes to people in wheelchairs and others with mobility issues.

The Northern Lakes Disability Tourism Precinct Committee consists of concerned Central Coast residents, regional peak disability organisations and respite providers. The committee's vision is to work to make the lives of people with constraints as easy as possible and to promote the Central Coast as the preferred holiday destination for locals and visitors with disability and mobility needs. The committee has been working hard throughout my electorate to ensure that local businesses are aware of the needs of people with disabilities. This work includes free site visits to businesses and advice to help increase patronage and accessibility to the more than 20 per cent of our community who have a disability. In addition, the committee is working for infrastructure improvements and upgraded amenities, including ramp access, signage, beach wheelchairs, viewing platforms, barbecue areas and coastal walkways. All of these everyday activities can easily be taken for granted, but to some people with disabilities these simple pleasures are unfortunately out of reach. Through the good work of this committee more people with disabilities are now able to join in these activities.

On Friday 18 May 2012 I was privileged to attend Lakes Beach in my electorate for the arrival of three Sandcruiser wheelchairs. These wheelchairs are available free to people with mobility issues, allowing them to get to the ocean. These wheelchairs were secured through funding from Destination NSW and Central Coast Tourism. I was joined by Gary Blaschke, the chairperson of the Northern Lakes Disability Tourism Precinct Committee, and Ms Jacqui Greaves, business development manager for Central Coast Tourism, along with Mr David Galea, a personal trainer who is wheelchair bound as a result of multiple sclerosis. Mr Galea was the first to try one of the new Sandcruiser beach wheelchairs. He told me he was delighted that he could now return to the beach and ocean, a place familiar to him as only four years ago he was a patrolling surf club member until multiple sclerosis changed his life.

It brought tears not only to David's eyes but also to my eyes to experience the joy of a wheelchair-bound person being able to access the beach for the first time in years. After being confined to his home, hospitals and care centres, it was tremendous for David to be able to go down to the beach and feel the ocean breeze on his face. It is heartening to think that hundreds and eventually thousands of people will be able to have the same experience. With the right kind of wheelchair people ultimately will be able to go into the

water as well, which will be a tremendous experience for them. The wheelchairs are the first stage of a total transformation of the Lakes Beach surf club, which will include the construction of a series of ramps and platforms leading to observation decking for the use by both the community and Lakes Beach surf life savers.

I make special mention of the chairperson of the Northern Lakes Disability Tourism Precinct Committee, Mr Gary Blaschke, for his tireless work and commitment to this tremendous cause. I hope that his efforts, which have seen the start of the transformation of the Lakes Beach surf club, continue to blossom and that his vision to establish my electorate as the disability tourism capital of New South Wales becomes a reality. I look forward to working closely with the Northern Lakes Disability Tourism Precinct Committee and Central Coast Tourism over the coming years to ensure that people with disabilities have the best possible access to services and facilities. I commend their efforts and commitment to this cause to the House.

KINGSWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [5.29 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I inform the House of some of the fantastic work that is taking place at Kingswood High School in the Penrith electorate. Kingswood High School is a fantastic local school with a strong focus on meeting the development and career aspirations of its student body. The school makes an immeasurable contribution to the social health and welfare of the surrounding community through this approach. It is fostering strong links with our business community, tertiary educators and skills training specialists to ensure that, after leaving school, students develop into mature adults who contribute not only to the local economy but also to a much broader space. It is giving people the opportunity to kickstart their lives.

I recently attended Kingswood High School to announce funding towards the establishment of a cafe training centre at the school. This continues the many other practical-oriented courses and training options that exist at the school and is testament to a school that has been able to adapt to a population that does not necessarily choose to go to university. The school is prepared to invest in skills training of students who want to investigate other opportunities. The centre will provide hospitality students with a simulated commercial environment, extending to them an insight into the hands-on reality and disciplines required for success in a hospitality career.

Initiatives such as this put the students at Kingswood High School ahead of the pack when it comes to entering the jobs market, gaining apprenticeships and traineeships, or undertaking further education upon graduating from high school. The announcement bolsters the school's commitment to vocational education and training [VET] courses in areas such as information technology, construction, retail, hospitality, business, entertainment, primary industry in agriculture, and metal and engineering. I note that in a number of other learning areas the school has programs in place to promote and encourage the talents of individual students. The school recently partnered with CityRail to host a photography display at the recently upgraded Kingswood railway station. In addition to the pleasure of having a display of local artwork, the community received a further dividend from the focus of the photography display in the suburb of Kingswood: enhancing community pride and increasing awareness of local issues.

These initiatives do not just happen; they require significant effort. I recognise the leadership of the school principal, Paul Erickson, and acknowledge the tireless work that he and the entire staff at the school engage in to create an excellent environment for students and, more importantly, to deliver practical results for students who sometimes experience significant challenges. Recently the school was able to highlight the fantastic work of some of its students in an article in the *Penrith Press* about the school's Brick and Block Program in partnership with the Australian Brick and Blocklaying Training Foundation. A group of 16 students, a number of whom had disengaged from the learning process, took the opportunity to acquire practical building skills, which resulted in the construction of a pizza oven, barbecue and retaining wall at the school. It is worth noting that the pizza oven will be used as part of the cafe training centre. The program helped a number of students re-engage with their studies and inspired some to take up bricklaying apprenticeships.

We must ensure that the school system adapts to the needs of students, particularly as we are asking students to stay on at school a little longer. We need to ensure that schools such as Kingswood High School are supported in creating opportunities and programs for students. The excellence of Kingswood High School in fostering the transition of its students to productive and contributing members of society should be applauded. The results it is achieving in vocational education have a very real impact on the lives of students. A recent Suncorp Bank wages report identified that some of the strongest wages growth is taking place in the practically oriented skills training areas that students are undertaking at Kingswood High School. The school should be commended for the progress it has made. I look forward to supporting the school in its ongoing success.

HOMEBUSH BAY BRIDGE

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.34 p.m.]: I am privileged to represent the electorate of Auburn and, within it, the relatively new suburb of Wentworth Point. It is a vibrant community with active and involved citizens. Today I inform the House about a proposal by Fairmead Business for a major \$43 million piece of infrastructure for Wentworth Point—the Homebush Bay bridge. Recently exhibited plans show the bridge as a pedestrian walkway, bicycle and bus route. Cars will not be permitted on the bridge. I recently wrote to the Wentworth Point community seeking comment about the project and I thank the many people who responded for the thoughtfulness and engagement they displayed.

It is clear that many residents are of the view that the bridge will be an asset. It will provide a connection to the Rhodes precinct for shopping and transport. Likewise, the bridge will give Rhodes residents good access to Sydney Olympic Park facilities and open spaces. Much of the positive feedback related to the benefits of the bridge to public transport. Clearly, a matter of concern to residents is the lack of public transport to the suburb and the lack of transport integration of ferries, buses and rail services in the area. The infrequency of transport was cited, as well as the fact that bus and ferry services stop running in the early evening. As the local member, I know that this has been an ongoing issue. To illustrate my point, one resident commented, "Having lived at the waterfront for five years and put up with substandard transport, approximately one-hour bus trips to Strathfield station every day, we look forward to a much improved travelling time to Rhodes."

Many constituents made the point that the bridge is an opportunity to improve public transport and connections to the area. It seems too obvious to point out that we can have all the transport options in the world, but if they are not integrated then added benefits are futile. The fact is that the proposal should have come with a transport plan. It is vital that the community understands how the bridge will be integrated with other traffic issues and transport in the area. Good planning is about doing the proper work at the beginning of a project. I ask that the Minister for Planning and the Minister for Transport ensure that this work is done before making a determination on the bridge.

Other comments included concerns regarding the visual impact of the bridge to views down the bay and the need for a curfew for buses if the bridge is to be used for special event transport. The waterfront kayak club in the area wanted to ensure that the bridge would not adversely affect its activity. It requested space under the bridge on the Wentworth Point side for storage and club facilities and pointed to the need to access the water by a jetty. The bridge eventually will be owned by the Sydney Olympic Park Authority [SOPA]. The Sydney Olympic Park Authority's submission, while supportive, nevertheless raises the need for more definitive information regarding load capacity and the types of vehicles that may use the bridge. In relation to environmental issues, the authority has made the valid point that the bridge will be built in an area that:

... serves as an integral part of the extension of the estuarine wetlands of the southern end of Homebush Bay. The significance of the waterway as a waterbird flight path has not been identified as part of the EA. The EA should broaden the study to the estuarine wetlands and mudflats located at the southern end of the Bay as the 10 hectare waterbird refuge is of national significance and listed by the Commonwealth.

An environmental assessment that has not considered this issue must be found wanting. Although it has been argued that there is no link between the bridge and future increased density in the area, I do not believe the two can be separated. The investor, Fairmead, will want a return on its \$43 million investment. What exactly will this be? Is it linked to increased density? This must be transparent so that the general public knows exactly what the potential positives and negatives of the bridge investment will be. In the interests of transparency, I believe that the bridge proposal and the planning proposal for increased density should be dealt with together. Increased density was clearly acknowledged in a prior preliminary environmental assessment.

It is appropriate that the bridge proposal is considered with the planning proposal, as concurrent assessments would identify any needs for infrastructure to support an increase in population. This not only relates to traffic and transport issues but to open space, park amenities and, significantly, the school issue. The Rhodes master plan did not include provision for a school. It is anticipated that students will use the bridge to access schools in Wentworth Point. There has been discussion about building a new school on land owned by NSW Maritime at Wentworth Point. However, this is preliminary discussion and it is only logical that this vital piece of infrastructure should be considered and bedded down concurrently with or prior to any determination on the bridge proposal.

I have read with interest Auburn City Council's submission and note that the council is asking that the proposal be deferred and considered concurrently with the increased density planning proposal. I agree that it is only fair that residents are presented with the whole picture of the future of their suburb and that plans include

the services and infrastructure required. In summary, the bridge cannot be considered in isolation. While there is no doubt about the potential positive benefits of the bridge, more work needs to be done. Proper consultation with the community needs to be undertaken regarding increased density, traffic issues, transport links and environmental impacts. Planning for the future of this community must be brought together in one package. I ask the Minister and the Department of Planning to take into account these matters and I look forward to the Department of Planning taking steps to rectify the significant gaps in planning and adopting best practice and holistic planning in the future.

HORIZON COMMITTEE ANNUAL AUTHORS LUNCHEON

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [5.39 p.m.]: Today I had the pleasure of hosting a function that has become a yearly tradition in Parliament House, the Horizon Committee Annual Authors Luncheon. For more than a decade, the Horizon Committee, which is a dedicated and successful fundraising committee for the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, has held its luncheon at Parliament House to raise funds for charity. This year the committee had 150 guests in attendance. Despite the less-than-inspiring weather, we were able to enjoy an entertaining lunch in the Strangers Dining Room. The authors luncheon is supported by author management agent, the dynamic Selwa Anthony, and featured two of her Australian Voices in Print authors. This year's featured authors, and entertaining guest speakers, were Sue Williams and Paul de Gelder. Despite the busy life of a member of Parliament, I was glad I have had the chance to read both books that were featured at today's lunch—so I truly understood what they were talking about.

Sue Williams, who is a journalist and author, penned her *Welcome to the Outback* after deciding to embark on a journey to discover what the real outback is all about. A self-confessed city slicker, Sue set out on a wild adventure and tried a number of different things to really experience life in the outback. I am sure that I would not have jumped into a boxing tent and taken on a professional boxer as research. Her book is incredibly entertaining. Her speech at the lunch today further revealed her passion for this amazing country that we all call home. Paul de Gelder is probably more well known for his shocking attack by a shark while working as a clearance diver for the Royal Australian Navy. He has since shared his experiences and his remarkable life story, before and after the attack, in his book *No Time for Fear*.

This cocky teen-turned-fearless adventurer has some amazing stories to tell—from a troubled youth, to his elite career in the Navy, to the brutal shark attack in 2009. Despite losing two limbs, his thirst for life has increased. Hearing him speak was truly inspiring. During my speech today, I mentioned that I thought his story would have been worth reading with or without the shark attack, as it included his time in the Army at the Holsworthy military base, which is in my electorate of Menai, and his time in the Navy. That story is inspirational on its own. Today's lunch would not have been possible without a lot of hard work. I offer thanks to the organised and energetic Colleen Keys, OAM, who is president of the committee, her hardworking team, and the dynamic Selwa Anthony.

I have been to several of the committee's events, and they are always enjoyable but, importantly, the fundraising from events, like the Horizon Race Day and from lunches like the one that was enjoyed today, help to truly change the lives of children who are deaf or blind. The Horizon Committee comprises women and their families who work to achieve a common goal to help to improve the lives of children with hearing and/or vision impairment, including children with additional disabilities. The funds raised by the Horizon Committee assist the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children to provide the best possible educational options for hundreds of children each year.

The committee began in 1984 when several Motherhood Quest entrants wished to ensure that the valuable fundraising work for the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children would continue. Since then, the committee has flourished, and a number of fundraising events are held each year. The Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children has operated since 1860. Throughout Australia it currently provides quality and innovative education and other services to achieve the best outcomes for present and future generations with hearing and/or vision loss. It offers educational programs that are aimed at early intervention and equips children with hearing and/or vision impairments with the tools they need. There is a Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children in Sutherland and there are other centres all across Sydney.

The institute also offers a teleschool option for people who are being looked after in regional and remote areas, which was the purpose of fundraising at the luncheon today. Recently I learned that my colleague and member for Mulgoa visited the Nepean preschool for the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children to meet children who will benefit from a \$7,200 grant for building improvements. It is great that this Government

is supporting such a wonderful organisation to enable it to continue doing what it does. I also personally thank the more than 250 volunteers who donate their time each year to the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children.

Last week we celebrated National Volunteer Week and the amazing people in our communities who work tirelessly for vital community services and travel organisations. I know that many residents in the Menai electorate benefit from the generosity of their neighbours through becoming involved in community services or providing extra support. Each volunteer deserves to be acknowledged for their commitment and their desire to help others. To come full circle, I am inspired by those who are united by a common goal to offer help, such as the women of the Horizon Committee, which exists to support the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children. I also applaud the hundreds of volunteers who work for the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children and the thousands of volunteers who work across all facets in our communities to improve the lives of somebody else.

SALVATION ARMY RED SHIELD APPEAL

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.44 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I inform the House of the wonderful Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal doorknock. I was given the great privilege of being invited by the Salvation Army to become Chairman of the Macarthur zone doorknock appeal. The Salvation Army is a great organisation that has been serving Australia for more than 125 years. The Salvation Army helps people in their time of need and offers many services, including refuge and accommodation, financial counselling, drug and alcohol support services, suicide prevention and bereavement counselling, legal services, missing persons, youth support, court and prison support, aged care and rural isolation support. Maintaining these services is not cheap. The Salvation Army relies on the support of our communities. One of the Salvation Army's most important fundraising drives on each year's calendar is the Red Shield Appeal doorknock, which occurred last weekend. That fundraising effort is a huge logistical task that is devolved to areas and then zones.

The Salvation Army allowed me the privilege of becoming involved in the Camden-Narellan zone appeal and contribute to securing volunteers. Every volunteer was so helpful and contributed to raising \$63,000 in the Macarthur area, which takes in Ingleburn, Campbelltown and Narellan-Camden. In our region, donations increased by 20 per cent over two years and they will go towards much-needed programs in our area. I thank Major Darrell Slater, Captain Phil Inglis, Captain Bryce Steep, Captain Lindon Kinder, Cheryl Kinder, Ken Barnard, Les Strong, Garry Cox and Sue Cox for their guidance and the opportunity to see firsthand the great work and huge effort that are applied to fundraising in support of our communities. There were so many dedicated volunteers that unfortunately I was unable to know all of them by name, as not all of them came through my office. However, I thank them for their efforts, which certainly did not go unnoticed.

I thank volunteers Andrew Macdonald, Jim Hickey, Carol Hickey, Selina Eagle and her wonderful children, Caitlin Hope, Tyler Murphy, Lauren Caines, Hannah Craig, Kristy Jackson, Amy Bulow, Jeri Shortland, Holly Stothard, Laura Dillon, Nicola Kwasniak, Olivia Garcia, Selena Heness, Jemma Gilbert, Reegan Curnoe, Emily Morgan, Brooke Mock, Hannah Ault, Tiasha Lawson, Jessie Tanner, Felicity Seymour, Andrew Gardner, Kate Mitchell, Amanda Portlock, Tanisha Kelley, Tayla Merrick, Abby Fawcett, Elizabeth Knowles, Laura Killer, Lucy Powell, Bridget Peters, Holly Devine, Emily Goolber, Georgia Forbes, Alycia Coleman, Natalie Perrin, Sophie Webster-Nokes, Paul Hillbrick, Emily Boyce, Jarrod Triggs, Corie Borg, Stephanie Ault, Tiarne Gruosso, Samuel Dukes, Taylor Alexander, Abbey Endres, Allicia Flanagan, Suzanna Moschetti, Monique Dugina, Danica Stevenson, Annalise Smith, Adam Antonelli and Kirsten Denman,

I also thank volunteers Isabella Flegg, Jessie Walker, Elizabeth Kell, Jaylen Welsh, Peter Sidgreaves, Andrew Eaton, Camden councillor Lara Symkowiak, Michael Morrison, Penny Fischer, Therese Fideli and Jim Riley. I also thank Bunning's Warehouse at Narellan, the Narellan Town Centre and Masters Home Improvements for allowing the Salvos to collect at static points at their establishments. I thank Superintendent Sean Gersbach, who is the Commander of Macquarie Fields Local Area Command, Jane McIvor from Sector Connect and Nicola Barnes from Camden Council for their help in getting the word to their organisations to ask for volunteers. The show of support from the people we doorknocked and the people who passed us by at static points was tremendous. Without the wonderful support of those generous people in our community who donated to the Red Shield Appeal, it would not have been the success that it was this year.

I thank Camden Rotary and its President, John Saunderson, for the club's tremendous show of support by donating \$500 to the Salvation Army Red Shield Appeal. Camden Rotary actively supports as many great causes as possible—close to home and not-so-close to home. I also bring to the attention of the House Camden Rotary's donation of a large amount of toiletries to the Matthew Talbot Hostel for homeless men in

Woolloomooloo, which can assist up to 600 men each day. The efforts and exceptional examples of community spirit and support from groups such as Camden Rotary and their eagerness to jump on board to achieve fantastic outcomes for charitable organisations like the Salvation Army should be commended. It is a comforting feeling to know that the Salvos are there. I could not think of a more appropriate slogan than "Thank God for the Salvos".

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.49 p.m.]: In acknowledging the words of the member for Camden I point out that only months ago it was my great privilege, together with the member for Auburn, to attend the opening of the new \$6 million facility for the Salvation Army at Auburn. It was a wonderful event. I shared dinner with its members on Saturday night and fronted up for another service on Sunday morning. It was a great pleasure to meet Commissioner James Condon and his wife and all the wonderful people at that facility who work tirelessly for those less fortunate, not only in Auburn, not only in New South Wales but right around the world. We are fortunate to have the Salvation Army and we thank them for their tireless commitment.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I endorse the comments of the Parliamentary Secretary and the member for Camden. The Sallies do a fantastic job.

MACEDONIAN HUMANITARIAN ASSOCIATION

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [5.50 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to inform the House of an important fundraising event I attended on 21 April this year. The event was organised by the Macedonian Humanitarian Association to raise funds for four individuals with significant medical conditions. The function was held at Ilinden Soccer Club at Rockdale and was attended by more than 450 people. The soccer club is home to many functions for the Macedonian community and it is a great venue to bring everyone together. The Macedonian Humanitarian Association is a local association dedicated to charitable activities and fundraising for important causes. It focuses specifically on social welfare issues within the Macedonian community both here and overseas. This particular fundraiser was to assist for four people who reside overseas. One was Natasha Nikolvska, a seven-year-old girl with chronic epilepsy who cannot walk or speak. It costs her parents €1,000 a month to pay for her medication.

Vesna Boceska is a young mother with lung cancer. She has undergone chemotherapy but her ongoing medical costs are in the order of €2,500 per month. Without medication her condition is likely to worsen and the drugs in question are not available as part of the publicly funded medication regime in Macedonia. Todorka Naumoska, a 31-year-old woman with liver failure, has to travel to Turkey for a transplant. This will cost her up to €80,000, 80 per cent of which will be covered by the Government. She must raise the rest of the money herself. Ivana Pavleska is a 25-year-old woman with leukaemia. After initially going into remission her cancer has returned and her medical costs exceed €2,000 a month. These four people, who are struggling with medical expenses, will benefit from the \$33,743 that was raised at the function held on 21 April. Each person will receive around \$8,500, which will go toward their medical costs. The function was a great result and an example of the strong community spirit that exists in the Macedonian community in Sydney.

This community spirit is exemplified by the other charity functions that have been held, such as the Macedonian Medical Association function that was held in Parliament House only two weeks ago. I thank the organisers of the event, particularly Zoran Becvarovski and Tatjana Nedelkoska, who kindly provided the details of each person I mentioned earlier. Events such as this give us the opportunity to reflect on how lucky we are in Australia to enjoy good health and to spare a thought for those in need in our own communities and abroad who are not so lucky. For many people, each day is a struggle to find money for medication and medical treatment, which often involves sacrifices in other areas; it can have a very serious impact on a person's quality of life. We all have a part to play in lending a helping hand, and I congratulate the Macedonian Humanitarian Association and the Macedonian Medical Association on their ongoing commitment and dedication to the community both here and overseas.

SCHIZOPHRENIA

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [5.53 p.m.]: Mental illness is a condition that continues to affect more and more people each year, so I am pleased to highlight the Government's proactive approach to tackling this medical condition. The Minister for Mental Health has a real understanding of mental health issues. Prior to becoming the Minister, he was the shadow Minister for Mental Health. During that time he made himself aware of all the complexities of this condition. Minister Humphries knows everything there is to know about mental

health and its ramifications for individuals and their carers. Recently I had the pleasure of hosting the Minister for Mental Health in my electorate of Drummoyne. During his visit I accompanied him to All Hallows School in Five Dock to meet some of the young children who are involved in the Mini Vinnies program. I do not know if members are familiar with this initiative, but it is fantastic—it is similar to a junior version of St Vincent de Paul.

The initiative gives children—some as young as seven—the opportunity to get involved in a program to help feed the homeless in Sydney. Once a month, the children from All Hallows School in Five Dock are involved in a food delivery run to the city. While they do not have direct contact with the homeless, they are able to offer messages of hope. Parents and children at the school put together toiletry packs for residents of the Matthew Talbot Hostel that contain messages of hope that are written and illustrated by the children. The Minister was so impressed with the program and the enthusiasm of the children that when he returned to his office he agreed immediately to provide funding for the program through his department. It is a well-known fact that many of the homeless are suffering from mental health issues. It is wonderful to see these young children extending their help. At the same time it also makes them aware that not everybody is as fortunate as they are. The Minister also pointed out that in his experience, having contact with the community is an important part of the recovery process for mental health patients.

In another positive step in the challenge to deal with mental illness, only this week the Government launched its 1800 mental health line. This is a fantastic initiative and I take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister once again on its introduction. This service will, for the first time in this State, provide every resident with direct telephone access to expert mental health advice. This is a Minister who cares and a Minister who understands the complexities of this dreadful affliction. Yesterday I attended the Concord Centre for Mental Health at Concord hospital to hear Minister Humphries launch the mental health line. The announcement was met with a rousing endorsement from mental health professionals who work at the hospital. The service will operate 24/7 to ensure that people with a mental health problem as well as their families and carers can access the care they need whenever and wherever they need it.

Importantly and for the first time, the mental health line will provide people in need with access to expert mental health advice by dialling a single phone number. People who are worried about mental health issues can then speak directly to a mental health professional and be directed to the most appropriate care. The mental health line will be used to give advice about clinical symptoms, the level of urgency for care, and local treatment options for service providers, such as general practitioners, police and ambulance officers. Once again I congratulate the Minister for Mental Health on his dedication to his portfolio and for his generosity to my electorate of Drummoyne in both his service and his time.

TRIBUTE TO HARRY SPRINTZ

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.58 p.m.]: I am sure if I asked members of the House about their communities, all of them would have stories of local people making valued contributions to their region and to our State. Today I recognise the achievements of Mr Harry Sprintz, a local architect whose career continues to be a shining example of innovation, change and creativity. Recently I had the opportunity and great privilege to launch Harry's book *House Adaptation—Practical guidelines for informed choices in adapting a family home for accessible living and a home for life*. The launch took place on 14 April 2012 at the Kiama Community College. As the title indicates, this book provides the architectural profession and the wider community with options on how to best manage the place you call home when age becomes a factor in life. There are many great observations in the book but I really enjoyed reading Harry's introduction, in which he writes:

Freedom of choice like most things in life is, almost certainly a good thing, but with the exercise of this freedom of choice comes a degree of responsibility to make, where possible "informed" choices if one is to achieve the quality of life and human happiness that is almost universally desired.

The primary purpose of this book is to assist in those "choices" by providing a body of basic information along with the rationale underpinning that information. The ranges of choices that are presented in selecting a house from existing housing stock are both extensive and potentially complex.

Governments of all persuasions have encouraged people to stay in their homes for as long as possible, making adaptive housing options and solutions a necessity. Harry's book provides a repository of knowledge for the information people need to extend the relevant life of the family home. Whilst acknowledging Harry's contribution, I take this opportunity to inform the House about a little of Harry's history. Harry Sprintz was born in 1934 in the United Kingdom. He was educated in Yorkshire, and earlier Lincolnshire, whilst an evacuee

during World War II. In 1951 he returned to his native Ulster to commence part-time architectural education and articulated pupilage in Belfast. He later qualified and registered as an architect, and settled in Australia in 1956. He performed military service in the Royal Engineers between 1953 and 1956 and later in the Royal Australian Engineers Army Reserve from 1957 to 1970, serving as a troop commander and later a squadron commander, and finally Assistant Divisional Commander [ADC] to the 3rd Infantry Divisional Commander.

Harry commenced initial private practice in Melbourne in 1966 with architect partners John Burgess and Alex McAndrew, and moved to Bowral in 1971 with planning partner Ralph Brading. He was awarded the Architects Board of New South Wales Byera Hadley Post Graduate (Travelling) Scholarship for architecturally related research in 1996. He completed a full-time two-year Masters Research Degree in Design/Research for Disability at London's Guildhall University in 1998. Registered as an architect in three States, he was elevated to Fellowship of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects in 2006. He was a foundation member of the Design Institute in 1958 and received Life Fellowship in 1997. He was awarded a Design Institute of Australia Gold Citation in 2002 for lifetime contribution to design.

Harry has travelled extensively overseas during the past 40 years, representing the Design Institute of Australia at the International Year of Disabled Persons planning conference in Houston in 1975 and presenting papers at the NeoCon Chicago for the Asia-Pacific Rim design review in 1990, the International Financial Institutions conference in Norway in 1992 and the International Year of Disabled Persons conference in Israel in 1980 and in Dubai in 1997. He is a former Chairman of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects network and in 2011 was appointed to the Building Professionals Board of New South Wales dealing with complaints related to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992.

Harry's work has continued to be recognised and the Design Institute of Australia selected Harry to be included in the Design Institute of Australia Hall of Fame. This award is for his lifetime work as a leading architect, disability access and aged care planner, together with his 54 years of service to the design profession, including his research, teaching, local honorary community work, along with his continuous authorship and advocacy of accessibility design issues in the built environment. Of those who enter the professions, few can truly be referred to as having made that profession better and stronger as a result of their participation. Harry Sprintz continues to make a contribution. On behalf of the House, I thank him for his tremendous effort, intellect and contribution.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [6.03 p.m.]: Last week from 14 to 20 May numerous individuals and organisations recognised Schizophrenia Awareness Week. The week sought not only to raise awareness of schizophrenia and mental illness in general but also to acknowledge and reflect on the countless number of people across the country who care for someone with schizophrenia and who advocate for this issue to become a political priority. According to the Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW, a not-for-profit organisation, schizophrenia is a condition characterised by disturbances in a person's thoughts, perceptions, emotions and behaviour. It affects approximately one in every 100 people worldwide and first onset commonly occurs in adolescence or early adulthood.

Schizophrenia is not a single illness. It is in fact a cluster of illnesses which have overlapping signs and symptoms. It is therefore important to acknowledge the unique experience of each person living with schizophrenia. Despite the hardships faced by people living with schizophrenia, medical advances are providing hope, but more must be done by both governments and communities. I will ensure that that happens. Unlike other illnesses, people who live with a mental illness are often subject to discrimination and stigma. This is startling, considering that one in five Australians has a mental illness—or will be affected by a mental illness at some stage in their life—and given Australia's status as one of the world's most advanced and prosperous countries. Surely, people from outside Australia looking in would expect better from Australia and Australians.

Having schizophrenia or a mental illness does not affect a person's ability to work, have a family or enjoy life. In my electorate Sean and Kerrie McArdle, OAM, of Berowra provide hope to many in the community who are affected by mental illness. Sean has schizophrenia and his wife Kerrie has provided the loving and attentive care required to ensure that Sean lives a happy and fulfilling life. But it is not just their willingness to get on with life that inspires me and those around them; their contributions to the community are truly amazing. A couple of months ago a local magazine, the *Bush Telegraph*, published a story highlighting the contribution of Sean and Kerrie to our troops serving overseas. Sean and Kerrie met and encouraged local

businesses to donate food and other goods to parcels packaged by Sean and Kerrie. Subsequently, more than 270 parcels were posted to our troops in Afghanistan, East Timor and the Solomon Islands. Such commitment and service should provide all Australians with a sense of optimism and hope.

Schizophrenia is a complex illness that affects all communities. As a result, it needs to be addressed by a range of stakeholders. Too often, people impacted by mental illness become disillusioned with government authorities due to insufficient service delivery and incompetence. However, people fail to understand the power of humanity in a liberal democracy, and that through cooperation and mobilisation positive outcomes can be achieved. I call on all sectors of society—governments, not-for-profit organisations, corporations and individuals—to get involved and to help address schizophrenia and mental illness. Governments need to develop appropriate policies, in consultation with key interest groups, and commit the necessary funds. Not-for-profit organisations must continue their much-needed advocacy efforts to ensure that the relevant authorities and decision-makers are held accountable.

I call on business leaders to demonstrate leadership by informing their employees about schizophrenia and mental illness, and empowering them to address concerns. All corporations should have a mental health policy that is both compassionate and empathetic. Employees should have the confidence to speak about these issues with their colleagues in a trustworthy and understanding manner. But such a work culture must be initiated from the top. Individuals must be more open about mental illness and its implications. Millions of people nationwide suffer daily in isolation because of barriers created by our society. But a simple conversation with a friend can be a positive first step in addressing mental illness.

We need to debunk the myths and misconceptions associated with schizophrenia and mental illness in order to ensure that those who are affected do not feel alone, as well as enable Australia to continue to advance and prosper in a dignified manner. In the time remaining I acknowledge that on this day last year I made my inaugural speech in this House. During my speech I spoke about a young bloke, Mike Powell. Mike Powell committed suicide at this time last year. He was a young bloke who, as the cliché says, had so much to live for. Mental health touches all of us in this place and outside in some way. I want my Government to lead Australia in addressing the issue of mental health. I hope to ensure that we do that during my time in this place.

NORSK HYDRO ALUMINIUM SMELTER CLOSURE

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [6.08 p.m.]: Today I speak with a heavy heart. Three hundred and forty-four is the number of jobs that will soon disappear from the employment landscape of the Hunter when the Norsk hydro aluminium smelter finally closes its doors, which is expected to be in approximately three months. Yesterday morning the people of the Hunter woke to the news that the smelter would enter into dialogue with the workforce about the closure of the plant. At the beginning of this year the hydro aluminium plant reduced its workforce by 150 workers and cut production by 30 per cent. It also closed potline No. 1, the oldest of its potline infrastructure. In the ensuing four months it has continued to operate potlines Nos 2 and 3, desperately searching for efficiencies and savings and building a business plan for the future.

When I spoke with management yesterday morning they went to great lengths and placed great emphasis on the efforts of the workforce doing everything humanly possible to secure a future for the plant. The three key elements of a business plan for an aluminium smelter are, firstly, the price of aluminium on the London Metals Exchange, secondly, the price of the Australian dollar and, thirdly, the price of electricity. Obviously, the first two are macro-economics and are beyond the control of this House or this State. But the third element is the price of electricity—and this factor is a plague on this Parliament. In late 2010, at the last minute, the New South Wales Labor Government failed to sign off on a long-negotiated price for future electricity.

This contract would have ensured that the plant had electricity from 2017 to 2027. The current contract expires in 2017. That was Labor's mistake and problem. In the lead-up to the March 2011 election, a broad range of Coalition members made bold and definitive statements about their intention to make sure that Norsk Hydro got its contract and electricity. Those members included five current Ministers, the Premier and the Deputy Premier, all of whom made various visits to the plant and stood side by side with workers. Since the election nothing has happened. This now is the Coalition's mistake and problem; and it is a plague on the Parliament.

With this in mind, it is vital that at this point in time we should not, and I do not, lament on past misgivings for which both parties are guilty. It is crucial that we talk about the way forward and the future. Today in this House I call on the Premier to mobilise his Government and departments to achieve a jobs plan for

Kurri Kurri. The obvious agencies to include are TAFE, the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services, and Treasury. The Premier should recognise the significance of the problem for the State's manufacturing workforce and take a hands-on approach. Those agencies should report whatever steps they take directly to the Premier. This action must happen immediately, not next week or next month. Action needs to start today—in fact, it needed to start yesterday.

Yesterday, today and tomorrow 344 workers and families are unsure of their future. State and Federal governments must act now. Recently the New South Wales Government awarded a Sydney Ferries manufacturing contract to a Victorian company, overlooking a tender placed by Newcastle firm Forgacs. This example is the very action now required to support the Hunter. Had that contract been awarded to Forgacs, it would have recruited more workers and would have looked to those being sacked from the hydro aluminium smelter. As has happened in the past, much will be made of whether the carbon tax caused the problem. The hydro aluminium smelter lost \$36 million in the last financial year, \$12 million in the year prior, and looks like losing somewhere in the vicinity of \$70 million this financial year. None of those past financial statements features the carbon tax as relevant.

The London Metals Exchange currently has aluminium priced at \$2,000 a tonne; it used to be \$3,300. The price has fallen 40 per cent. For much of the past two decades the Australian dollar traded at around 70¢ to 80¢ against the United States dollar, but that has changed in the last couple of years. Indeed, this is an unfortunate and tragic perfect storm. If one or two of these factors had existed, the hydro aluminium smelter at Kurri Kurri could have had a future. I drove this issue during my March 2011 election campaign to get elected to this place. I spoke on this issue in my inaugural speech and have done so on a number of occasions since. I have sought meetings with the Premier, but have been refused. I sought a meeting with the Minister for Resources and Energy, who welcomed me and spent time talking through the process—I thank him for that. He assured me that the hydro aluminium smelter had had a power price put to it. I ask the Premier to now get involved in finding jobs for the 344 sacked workers.

LIVING VOLUNTEER SCHEME INC.

TRIBUTE TO BARBARA HOLBOROW, OAM

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.13 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about a wonderful organisation in my area known as LINC'S—Living IN CommunitieS. This organisation is run by Carolyn Byers, a wonderful friend of mine, and its patron is none other than my predecessor and former member for Hawkesbury, Kevin Rozzoli. Living IN CommunitieS provides outreach programs for women in need across the Hawkesbury region. Approximately 30 or 40 local women are educated and trained to attend on young mothers or anyone needing a helping hand in an hour of need. This organisation provides a wonderful opportunity to sometimes fill the voids that government and other agencies cannot. A few years ago it was my great pleasure to attend a Living IN CommunitieS annual general meeting at which the guest speaker was none other than the remarkable Barbara Holborow. It is ironic that, unfortunately, Barbara Holborow passed away this week.

Barbara Holborow spoke at that meeting about her great love of children and her years as a Children's Court magistrate. She spoke about the young mothers confronting her who she said were no more than children themselves—some 16, 17 or 18 years of age with no idea of how to look after their babies. On several occasions Barbara had the choice to remove children from their mothers, but instead sought guidance and counselling to help them. She said there was no rule book for mothers and these babies, as she called them, were having babies and trying to care for them without any idea of what to do. Barbara found counselling services and encouraged mothers to keep their children. But Barbara also was a staunch disciplinarian and did not hesitate to remove children and place them into care if the parents did not care for them appropriately.

Barbara always said that there should have been a department for children, and I could not agree more, to ensure that all kids had opportunities to grow up and enjoy the wonderful aspects of life that we all so often take for granted. I could not agree more with those sentiments. After Barbara spoke at the meeting I mentioned that I could never stop appreciating the wonderful opportunities afforded to me as a member of Parliament, the places I visited and the people I met, but that this moment in time was one I would never forget. Barbara Holborow was an outstanding individual. We exchanged contact details and parted. Only a few weeks later Barbara contacted me. She had great friends, a mother and father, who had four children in their care. The children's mother had given birth to her sixth child. The eldest child was 18, out of foster care and working.

This remarkable young couple had decided to take on board all four children and the one thing they wanted to do was to keep the baby with its siblings. They went to extraordinary lengths to contact the eldest sibling. Every Sunday they lunched together so that those kids, who never knew a mother or father, experienced a loving and caring environment. Barbara said to me, "Ray, this baby has to stay with these people." So I wrote representations to the then Minister for Community Services, all to no avail. It saddens me greatly that after this family jumped through all the hoops and attended all the meetings to find out whether they were capable of caring for another child, who was the sibling of the four children in their care, they were denied access to the baby. I could not believe that decision. It broke my heart and Barbara's heart. To this day I am greatly saddened that, unfortunately, the Department of Community Services does not get it right.

Not for one moment will I stand here and pretend that these decisions are easy, because they certainly are not. However, after all that Barbara Holborow achieved in her life as a Children's Court magistrate she, unfortunately, resigned because she was so upset with the system. She had a common sense approach; she was tough. As Father Chris Riley said this week, she was stubborn. Damn right she was stubborn—in getting outcomes for kids because she adored them. The last thing she said to me was that we all have a responsibility for our children. That is most true. Barbara Holborow was a great lady. This week Australia did not just lose an advocate for children; it lost a great patriot and great person. Vale Barbara Holborow.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.18 p.m. until
Tuesday 29 May 2012 at 12 noon.**
