

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 29 May 2012

The Speaker (The Hon. Shelley Elizabeth Hancock) took the chair at 12 noon.

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GRANVILLE ELECTORATE LAW AND ORDER

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [12.10 p.m.]: As the member for Granville it is my duty to inform the House about the recent spate of drive-by shootings and their effect on the local community. My electorate has been in the spotlight recently and has become the focus of adverse media attention as being the home of gun-related crime in this State. I put on record that that is not the case. The electorate of Granville has a high proportion of Middle Eastern people. They are good people. They are family oriented and they are law-abiding citizens. They are not, and should not be automatically, associated with drive-by shootings or bikie gang wars. In response to the concern in the community over the growth in the incidence of drive-by shootings I invited the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mike Gallacher, to visit the electorate and talk to the people.

We walked through the Merrylands shopping precinct together and he made the observation that drive-by shootings are not about race but about crime. He also assured local business owners that the Government is doing something about it. Let me take this opportunity to point out that in my electorate of Granville 22.2 per cent of people were born overseas, and 24.5 per cent speak Arabic at home. These are gentle, law-abiding people. They are not people who create destruction or harm on our streets with gun-related crime. As the police Minister pointed out, drive-by shootings are mostly executed by young apprentices to outlaw motorcycle gangs who have to prove they were worthy of becoming members. I believe the community is now looking to its cultural leaders and is willing to support the police in their efforts to put an end to this violence once and for all.

I have served in local government in the Granville and Parramatta area for the past 25 years and now serve as the State member for Granville. I assure members of this House that I know the community well and I understand the issues and challenges facing the broad cross-section of the population. Only this month a senior lecturer at Charles Sturt University, Mr McDermott, noted that the spiralling rise in shooting in Sydney's western suburbs demanded action. He said that action had to come from the Government, the police and the community so that people would be safe living in the area. Mr McDermott believes it is not just the well-organised bikie gangs but a range of criminals and business that have access to guns. Ironically, 17 April 2012, a day on which five separate incidents of shootings were reported in Sydney, was the day the Bureau of Crime Statistics released its latest findings. I assure the House that the people of Granville are good people, and they believe they deserve better media coverage and better understanding and recognition.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.13 p.m.]: On behalf of the Government I commend the member for Granville for drawing the attention of members to the total unacceptability of drive-by shootings. In particular, I endorse the member's comments about members of the community coming forward to assist the police in their investigations. I am sure all members would agree that that is important, because police rely on local people to come forward to give whatever information they can to assist police with their inquiries.

MULTIPLE SCLEROSIS 24 HOUR MEGA SWIM

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [12.14 p.m.]: Multiple sclerosis [MS] is a disease that impacts on many electorates, including my electorate of Blacktown. The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Australia 24 hour mega swim will this year be celebrating its twelfth anniversary. It is remarkable to look back and see just how rapidly this dynamic charity event has grown. The first mega swim, held in 2001, was started by Carol Cooke as a way to engage people with the issues associated with multiple sclerosis and to raise funds to directly help those living with multiple sclerosis. What began with \$22,000 being raised in a single pool in Victoria has since ballooned into an event being run at multiple locations throughout the year along the eastern seaboard, bringing in more than \$1 million, with more than 4,000 people participating in the swim and many thousands more supporting this worthy charity.

The mega swim's blossoming from relatively humble beginnings into the fundraising behemoth we know today has been no accident: Carol Cooke has continued to provide inspirational leadership and drive to reach ever higher and give just a little bit more to those living with multiple sclerosis. Carol is a woman with one of those truly remarkable tales of human spirit. A Canadian by birth, Carol moved to Melbourne after falling in love with an Australian, and this is where she received the unwelcome news that she had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The doctors told her bluntly to get her affairs in order before she became incapacitated, but I do not think their assessment took into account her incredible determination.

Displaying steely fortitude where others might find themselves abandoning hope, Carol embarked on a journey which has now seen her raise more than \$3 million to assist other people living with multiple sclerosis. Carol turned the devastating news that she would have to live the rest of her life with the unpredictable and debilitating symptoms of multiple sclerosis into a gift for the benefit of all those affected by multiple sclerosis, and I do not believe there could be a finer ambassador for this cause. I understand that, apart from being a champion swimmer and all-round athlete, Carol has recently been selected to represent Australia in the London 2012 Paralympics, and I am certain we will see some outstanding results there from this truly exceptional person.

The fight against multiple sclerosis is a battle on two fronts. On the one hand the Multiple Sclerosis Society is faced with the daunting task of undertaking the quality research and investigation needed to minimise the impacts, provide solutions to some of the issues, and hope against hope to one day wipe out this terrible condition. Simultaneously, Multiple Sclerosis Australia is a support group, providing everything from counselling, teaching life skills, and providing direct financial assistance to people living with multiple sclerosis. Part of this is just letting people with multiple sclerosis know that they are not alone. Events such as the mega swim help to bridge the gap and create community awareness and understanding. I will be participating in the multiple sclerosis mega swim on Saturday 23 June this year, along with my team, which I acknowledge in the House today.

My parliamentary colleague Steve Whan, John Wilton, Ian Poole, Dr John O'Neill and his daughter Felicity O'Neill, Robert Hayter, Michael Radalj, Ian Keating, Patrick See, Gary Emmerton and my brother Andrew will all be diving into the pool to raise money for Multiple Sclerosis Australia's Go for Gold scholarship program, which provides money for people living with multiple sclerosis to go out and pursue opportunities in society in areas such as sport, education, music, the arts, employment or travel that would not otherwise be available to them. I would appreciate any support members might be willing to offer for this incredible charity, and I thank those who have already provided generous donations to our team or any others participating. I have received donations from members on both sides of the House, for which I say thank you. The multiple sclerosis mega swim 2012 is set to be the biggest ever, and I encourage everybody here to take part and get active, in the hope that one day we will see an end to multiple sclerosis.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.18 p.m.]: On behalf of the Government I acknowledge the contribution of the Leader of the Opposition in drawing the attention of members to the plight of people suffering from multiple sclerosis. The multiple sclerosis mega swim 2012 sounds like it will be a fantastic success. I was pleased to hear the member say that quite a few members will be participating in the swim and note the bipartisan nature of our support for people who suffer from multiple sclerosis.

GUNDAGAI MULTIPURPOSE SERVICE

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [12.18 p.m.]: I raise in the House today an issue in my electorate about the Gundagai multipurpose centre. Gundagai District Hospital was built in 1904 but by its centenary it was recognised that it would no longer be able to meet the future health needs of the Gundagai community and the need for a replacement health facility was identified. Gundagai Shire Council raised the issue in 1999, and I raised this with the New South Wales Minister for Health at the time and on subsequent occasions.

In early November 2002 then shadow Minister for Health Jillian Skinner and I toured health facilities in the Burrinjuck electorate. While we were in Gundagai I again raised with Jillian Skinner the need for a new health facility in Gundagai. I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, for seeing this project through. It is just so wonderful to be part of a Government with such a dedicated Minister for Health who is particularly dedicated to regional health. Sometimes the delivery of a new service takes more than a few months or a few years. That is certainly the case with the Gundagai multipurpose service: it has been a long time coming. Today the Gundagai multipurpose service is so well advanced that I am confident to tick the "done" box on my "to do" list.

The Gundagai multipurpose service, weather permitting, will be opened in October this year. This health facility is a single-storey building that will house 12 acute care beds, 18 residential care beds and 19 residential low-care beds. Included in the integrated health service will be two respite beds and one palliative care suite. The building's footprint covers 5,000 square metres; it will contain also a level-two emergency service and a range of diagnostic support and community health services. Construction of this new facility for Gundagai has cost \$13.2 million. The biggest allocation for this project, \$11.4 million, was made in the first budget handed down by the O'Farrell-Stoner Government. The previous State Government allocated \$3.2 million for this project in the 2010-11 budget, and managed to spend \$1.7 million of that allocation.

I take this opportunity to recognise everyone who has been involved with this project from the word go. The construction of this multipurpose service by the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is the largest State infrastructure investment in Gundagai since at least 1994. It is also many times the total capital investment in State infrastructure in Gundagai made during the whole period of the previous Government. I am a long-time supporter of improved health facilities in Gundagai and of a new hospital building. Gundagai Shire Council's social plan for 2004 to 2009 again highlighted the need for a replacement hospital, and identified a multipurpose service as the best option. This need was recognised with the development of the Gundagai Health Service Plan by the Greater Southern Area Health Service and its endorsement by a public meeting in December 2005.

I take this opportunity to recognise the excellent health professionals working in the Gundagai region, including Paul Mara and Virginia Rice, two outstanding physicians who are doing a lot to service the Gundagai region. Much work has been done by a whole lot of people in the meantime to get this project off the ground. By September 2008 the firm Sirius Economics was appointed to oversee the planning for the project, and the plan was submitted to the State Government for approval. Finally, in the 2010-11 State budget funding was allocated. The new Gundagai multipurpose service is under construction on the site on the eastern boundary of the existing hospital's grounds, with access from Tor Street.

The building is adjacent to the Uralba Hostel and the Gundagai ambulance station. Construction of the much-anticipated building began last year, the first concrete pour taking place on 18 October. By early December the erection of the structural steel framework was starting, and the final shape of the building was discernible by early February this year. The company undertaking the build, Joss Constructions, expects to meet its deadline of 20 August. Work still to be undertaken includes electrical, plumbing, data services and the completion of painting and joinery. The construction itself has brought a significant economic boost to the economy of Gundagai, bringing in 70 to 80 subcontractors for the past six months and employing nine local contractors. Local firm Tegra has provided the majority of the concrete.

The greater Gundagai region is eagerly awaiting the opening of the new multipurpose service. But the decommissioning of the old hospital building will bring some sadness as it has played such a significant role in the lives of many locals. Gundagai Hospital staff are planning to produce a pictorial history of the old hospital and hold a dinner dance on Saturday 29 September to welcome the new hospital and a farewell the old.

I commend the residents of Gundagai for their patience during this long and drawn out process; and I thank members of the community who have directly contributed to the completion of this state-of-the-art health facility, those who have contacted me in relation to this matter and those who have worked so hard to see its completion.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.23 p.m.]: I congratulate the very hard-working member for Burrinjuck on advising the House about the multipurpose service at Gundagai, and I congratulate the member on her lobbying efforts to put this service in place. As the member indicated, the service will open in October this year. The O'Farrell Government has contributed more than \$11 million of the more than \$13 million involved, which reflects our commitment to regional health.

SHOALHAVEN MENTAL HEALTH FELLOWSHIP

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [12.24 p.m.]: I speak this afternoon on the opportunity I had last Friday, 25 May, to attend once again the annual Shoalhaven Mental Health Fellowship fundraising dinner, which aims to support people within the South Coast community who live with a mental illness. This year's guest speaker was Associate Professor Anthony Harris, President of the Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Incorporated and Deputy Director of the Brain Dynamics Centre. The Shoalhaven Mental Health Fellowship is one of the region's leading providers of mental health care within the South Coast. This year marks the fellowship's twenty-first birthday. The annual fundraising dinner provided an opportunity to support patients and sufferers. Tribute was also paid to the hard-working men and women of the fellowship, both past and present, for the tremendous work they undertake each and every day within our community.

The Shoalhaven Mental Health Fellowship also undertakes an annual open art prize, an open art competition to help raise awareness of mental health and illness in the Shoalhaven region. Everyone is able to participate. This year's theme is "Out of the darkness—into the light". The \$1,000 first prize and the \$500 People's Choice Award will be presented tomorrow. I pay particular tribute to Jon Strang of the fellowship, who has been a tireless advocate for improved mental health facilities across the Shoalhaven. I also acknowledge Mr Anthony Turner and Mr Matthew Sproule: they too are very strong advocates. I acknowledge as well the committee that organised the fellowship dinner on Friday night. Prior to each State, Federal and local government election the Shoalhaven Mental Health Fellowship organises candidate forums specific to mental health issues and ensures that the issues raised remain front and centre throughout each campaign.

The Shoalhaven Mental Health Fellowship works in conjunction with other mental health providers across our region, including the Richmond Fellowship, Nowra GetTogether, The Junction and Helping Hands as well as other community-based organisations such as the St Vincent de Paul Society. From 14 to 20 May was Schizophrenia Awareness Week, which provides the community with an opportunity to reflect on the impact that schizophrenia has on those who live with it and on the broader community. While only 1 per cent of the population will experience this debilitating mental illness, a staggering 42 per cent of Australians will experience some other form of mental illness in their lifetime, and 62 per cent of them do not seek help.

The Government is committed to providing seamless and supportive access to treatment and services for people with schizophrenia and other mental illness. The O'Farrell Government has honoured its election commitment of providing \$2 million towards Lifeline and has begun work on establishing a Mental Health Commission, which will consult with the sector and with families and carers, and provide policy advice on this area. In fact the Government's Mental Health Taskforce recently conducted a forum in Nowra, within my electorate, allowing locals to have their say directly and share their firsthand experiences with the local mental health network.

Non-government organisations operating on the South Coast such as Helping Hands, The Richmond Fellowship, Shoalhaven Mental Health Fellowship and The Junction had an opportunity to participate directly in the process of rebuilding mental health services across our region and the State. Most recently, the Government has established a new 1800 011511 Mental Health Line, which will ensure that people with a mental health problem, their families and carers can access the care they need whenever and wherever they need it. The Mental Health Line is a groundbreaking service that will, for the very first time, provide people on the South Coast with seamless access to expert mental health advice through a single telephone number.

This service really does mark a new era of mental health care in New South Wales: having access to this line will mean that there will be somebody available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help. Anyone on the South Coast with a mental health issue can use the Mental Health Line to link with a mental health professional and be directed to the most appropriate care. The New South Wales Government is supportive of the Commonwealth's commitment on 28 October 2011 of \$18.5 million for 20 subacute mental health beds at Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital as part of the national health reforms. I understand that the subacute beds are to be located in a separate building on the grounds of the Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital, and therefore the Commonwealth is working with the State Government to ensure the beds are delivered in an appropriate and timely manner.

I wrote to Federal Minister the Hon Mark Butler, MP on 19 April 2012 and I am still awaiting a response to that correspondence regarding the provision of those mental health beds. I look forward to working with community organisations across the South Coast to ensure that adequate mental health services are provided for all. I congratulate all of those who were involved in the committee for Friday night's Shoalhaven Mental Health Fellowship fundraising dinner, which was enjoyed by everyone, raised a lot of money and, as always, is looked forward to by members of the community, members of Parliament and the stakeholders.

TARRAWANNA PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [12.29 p.m.]: Today I speak about Tarrawanna Public School, a school in my electorate that is small in size but large in spirit, and its efforts to ensure that the education provided to its students is first rate. Under the leadership of Norma Blinkhorn, the school has around 130 students and provides a range of programs. During the past 12 months I have visited the school a number of times; indeed, I am a frequent visitor because the school is doing tremendous things within the local community. Tarrawanna Public School engages with students across the globe through its Korean sister school relationship program, one of the first of its kind to be undertaken in the local area.

The program, driven by the school leadership, educates local students about the challenges, experiences and lives of Korean students. I believe this fantastic program will be a model for programs throughout New South Wales. A week or two ago I was pleased to join, in a bipartisan way, the member for Strathfield, Charles Casuscelli, on a visit to Tarrawanna Public School to talk about this very important program. I am sure that he too was impressed with the work being undertaken at the school. Recently I was able to provide the school with a grant of \$15,000 to upgrade its canteen under the Community Building Partnership Program. Unfortunately, that funding will not be available next year because the program has been cut by 25 per cent.

The Government regards that type of funding as inappropriate, but fortunately the school was able to obtain it this year. I have written to inform all the community groups in my electorate that the Government is cutting vital grants funding by 25 per cent. One of the strengths of the Tarrawanna school is verse and public speaking and in the past few years the school has won first prize for verse speaking at the Wollongong Eisteddfod. From discussions with Principal Norma Blinkhorn and having seen it firsthand, I have been amazed at the literacy skills of students at a very young age developed through the use of verse and public speaking. The school is embracing public speaking and verse competitions not simply to expose students to broader competitions but to enable students to enhance their literacy skills.

This important tool allows students who may not be able to learn through the traditional method of textbooks and written form to grasp the skills they need to communicate every day through verse and public speaking. I am extremely proud of the school's achievements. I pay tribute to Norma Blinkhorn and Glen Boyd, President of the Tarrawanna Parents and Citizens Association. Glen is a strong advocate for his local school, which is small but has fantastic leadership at parent, staff and teacher levels. I am extremely proud of this school for the great things it is achieving. I encourage all members to have a look at the Tarrawanna Public School website and encourage their local schools to emulate some of the many great initiatives that this school is undertaking in my local community.

TAMWORTH PONIES IN PINK CHARITY EVENT

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.33 p.m.]: Today I want to update my colleagues on a special event that took place in my electorate on Sunday 20 May 2012. It was the Ponies in Pink charity event for the McGrath Foundation and Ronald McDonald House Tamworth, organised by Team Penning Australia

Tamworth at Koobah near Tamworth. During the two-day event there was plenty going on, including an auction that raised \$3,695. In team penning a team of three riders work together to separate three cows from a herd of about 20 and then muster those cows into a pen in about two minutes. The cows have coloured ribbons attached and the riders have to cut out three cows wearing the same coloured ribbon.

Debby Stocks, Secretary of Team Penning Australia, organised a celebrity team, of which I was proud to be a member. I joined with Kylie Eakin from Ronald McDonald House Tamworth and Kimberley Sherwood, a Radio 2TM newsreader, to form the team. There is no doubt that there is an art to this sport, with plenty of skill required by both horse and rider—in my case the horse alone. I was told to wait in the middle of the arena for my horse to arrive. I knew I was in trouble when he came galloping into the ring and started performing tricks: rearing, spinning around, taking a bow on one knee, and lying down pretending to be asleep and not getting up again. This horse was special.

I climbed aboard the horse named BJ; he was a dream to ride. Then I found out why he was so special: he was the star of the movie *Australia*. He was the horse that galloped off the boat onto the wharf; he was the horse that Hugh Jackman and Nicole Kidman rode. It was indeed very special for me to ride him. He is owned and stabled locally by Rodger and Cheryl Grant of Koobah Performance Horses. I thank them very much for allowing me to ride such a magnificent animal. It was just like driving a car: When I lay the reins to the left around went BJ; when I lay the reins to the right he went that way; when I urged him along he took off; and when I gently leaned back in the saddle he pulled up. He was a dream to ride. He made a novice look half decent.

Tamworth is well on the way to becoming the equine capital of New South Wales. With more and more equine events taking place, organisations and societies are calling Tamworth home. In fact, tomorrow one of the richest working horse events in Australia will get underway at the Australian Equine Livestock and Events Centre, the National Cutting Horse Association Futurity. People come from all over Australia and internationally for this particular event, injecting \$3.5 million into the local economy of Tamworth over 11 days. I am very proud that Destination NSW has teamed up with Glen Morgan of the National Cutting Horse Association and Tamworth Regional Council to sponsor this event and to ensure that it stays in Tamworth for the foreseeable future.

The equine industry plays a major role in our economy all year round and I encourage all my colleagues to find some time to visit the Tamworth electorate to check out these equine events. I thank Team Penning Australia and Debby Stocks for the invitation to participate and for raising funds for the McGrath Foundation and Ronald McDonald House Tamworth through this magnificent event, Ponies in Pink. I said earlier that the time limit was two minutes to cut out three cows, pen them and hold up one's hand. Just for the record, my team—Kylie, Kimberley and me—penned our three cows in the third round in one minute and 28 seconds. I thank Rodger and Cheryl Grant for the opportunity to ride BJ and I thank Team Penning Australia for the invitation to participate in the event. I encourage everyone to pop out to Tamworth and check out this fantastic part of New South Wales. I look forward to supporting another fundraising event again soon.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.38 p.m.]: Once again I commend the member for Tamworth for drawing the attention of the House to yet another exciting fundraising event in his electorate, Ponies in Pink, which raises money for the McGrath Foundation and Ronald McDonald House Tamworth. I thank him also for drawing attention to the competition involving the mustering of cows and congratulate Kylie, Kimberley and the member on being able to round the cows up in one minute and 28 seconds. That is a fantastic effort. Having spent a lot of time in my youth mustering on a fairly big cattle station, I am more than aware of the challenges associated with cattle mustering. As a horseman, I express my envy at the member for Tamworth being given the opportunity to ride BJ, the horse used in the movie *Australia*. He is a fantastic animal. As the member said, the equine industry is very important to the Tamworth electorate. My brother has a quarter horse stud and over the years he has performed in many quarter horse events in the Tamworth area. I congratulate the member for Tamworth on his efforts.

ROZELLE VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [12.39 p.m.]: Today I speak about an important development issue that will have significant impacts in my electorate. In 2010 the owner of the former Balmain Leagues Club site proposed a development which included a structure of five storeys and 11 storeys. As mayor on Leichhardt council I was on the joint regional planning panel which unanimously rejected the application because of its

size, design and traffic impacts. In the dying days of the former Labor Government, the proposal was declared a major project under part 3A, which means it will now be decided by a panel of government appointees, the Planning Assessment Commission.

The current Government did not support Leichhardt council's request to return the decision for this development back to the community, and I am very disappointed with that response. The current owner and developer of the site, Rozelle Village Pty Ltd, has submitted a new proposal, which one would imagine would be smaller and more modest but it is, in fact, significantly larger. It doubles the number of apartments to 304, triples the commercial floor space, and increases parking spaces to 834. The total gross floor area of the development is now 54,979 square metres. The plan includes excavation of eight basement levels and the construction of a five- to six-storey podium and three residential towers—two towers of 26 storeys and one of 32 storeys. The towers are linked, so the developer is describing them as one tower. This proposal is totally out of step with the pattern of development in the area of Rozelle, which comprises predominantly two-storey buildings.

Despite those increases, the leagues club will still comprise less than 5 per cent of the total development. I am a strong supporter of the Balmain Leagues Club and I support sustainable and appropriate development of the former club site. In May more than 500 residents attended a public meeting on this matter and passed a resolution strongly in support of the return of the club but not in support of a development that is almost twice the size of a development that was unanimously refused by the joint regional planning panel. I am particularly concerned about local business. I am a very strong supporter of our local business; it is one of the things that make my community great. There are well-founded concerns that this development will cripple Darling Street in particular.

The new plan includes 13,971 square metres of retail floor space. The existing total retail floor space in the entire Rozelle strip is less than 12,000 square metres, so the proposal is for almost 2,000 square metres more. The developer's own economic impact assessment states that Balmain and Rozelle traders will suffer a loss of up to 11.2 per cent, equal to \$20.4 million in turnover relative to turnover otherwise achievable in 2016. There are also concerns that the developer's economic impact assessment report underestimates the performance of the specialty stores in the proposed development compared with the performance average of Sydney specialty outlets. This underestimation has allowed the developer to downplay the impacts on small business in my community. I note that the Balmain Rozelle Chamber of Commerce is strongly opposed to the development.

The development exceeds the planning controls for height, bulk, scale and density and is not in keeping with the village feel of the surrounding suburbs. There are also significant privacy and overshadowing issues. Local streets are already heavily congested and Victoria Road is a very slow-moving major arterial road. This development will further slow down traffic on Victoria Road and will further reduce the performance of the road network in surrounding streets. I also note that the development requires the removal of parking spaces on Darling Street and Victoria Road, which will also impact on local business that requires parking for their businesses.

Providing new housing stock is a critical task of local and State governments, but there is no strategic reason why this development should proceed. Leichhardt council has reviewed the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy and the Sydney Towards 2036 document, and the New South Wales Department of Planning confirmed on 21 July 2010 that the methodology council used to calculate residential capacity was sound. The Department of Planning said that the outcome of the residential development strategy analysis demonstrates that council "can meet its obligations and targets contained within the Metropolitan Strategy and the Draft Inner West Subregional Strategy and maintain the character and style of development currently being approved pursuant to controls in LEP 2000".

The council will meet and, in fact, will exceed by almost 20 per cent the new housing dwelling numbers required by the Government. We should be providing new housing, but this development is not critical to meeting the Government's targets. It is important to note that council recently concluded a development process on the former Carrier air-conditioning site in Rozelle, rezoning it from industrial to residential—a very positive outcome. Residents and businesses should be putting forward their views very strongly. I call on all residents to make submissions to the Planning Assessment Commission. More than 500 people have already expressed their views at a public meeting and I encourage all residents to attend a council meeting to be held at 6.30 p.m. on 6 June at Balmain Town Hall and to participate strongly in this debate. I acknowledge and commend the local residents who are fighting for their local community, for small business and for a sound future for Balmain-Rozelle.

TRIBUTE TO JULIE SUTTON

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [12.44 p.m.]: Today I pay tribute to a well-known person in my area of Davidson who has dedicated more than 30 years to the community through local council service and a range of other community groups. I welcome Julie Sutton today in the gallery. Julie Sutton was first elected to Warringah Council in 1980, in the days of shires and shire presidents. She served on council until 1985 and then from 1987 to 2003. In 2008, after a period of Warringah being under the control of an administrator, Julie again put her hat into the ring for the 2008 council election and she was returned in C Ward.

Julie served Warringah for some years as deputy shire president, and in 1985 she was elected as Her Worship the Mayor—the first female leader of Warringah Council. She served on many council committees, including those supporting the Forest Community Association, Glen Street Theatre, Garigal National Park and the preservation of Narrabeen Lagoon. Over the past 30 years the Warringah Council community has been an area of great change and development. It has seen suburbia extending into the bush, a young population needing schools, recreation facilities and employment, and strong employment growth, as well as transport problems and social challenges associated with the influx of young citizens into the local area. In her time on council Julie has seen much. I commend her strong commitment and perseverance over so many years of service during a time of great change, with much of it relevant for leaders such as Julie to address.

Julie has told me openly that her father was in the Communist Party and that she was chucked out of the Labor Party for voting for a colleague to be president of Warringah Council against instructions from Labor caucus. Julie had earlier stood for the Labor Party in the seat that I now hold, once attracting around 40 per cent of the vote. However, that does not deter me from recognising her enormous contribution to our local community. Julie grew up in Newcastle and attended the universities of Newcastle, New England and Macquarie, completing a Master of Arts (Honours) and a Diploma of Education. She became a teacher of languages in the Hunter region before moving to Warringah and working at Forest High School, Davidson High School and finally Killarney Heights High School for 21 years. Julie's move from the Hunter to Warringah was certainly a gain for Warringah. I know that the member for Wakehurst, the Minister at the table, shares that sentiment.

I understand that Julie is still on the school council of Forest High School. She has recollected to me how as a teacher at Forest High School in 1965 schoolchildren used to smoke on the adjoining open space, then known as the "hospital land"—a facility of which 47 years later we are at last about to see construction commence on the northern peninsular. Julie is a loyal supporter of the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service and Surf Life Saving, and she is patron of many local sporting, cultural and community groups. As a marriage celebrant she has officiated at more than 3,500 ceremonies, including ceremonies for a number of celebrities. One such celebrity was the Australian football team goalkeeper Mark Schwarzer.

Julie tells the story that on meeting Mark she asked what he did. His reply of "play football" was met with her response, "I didn't ask what you did on the weekend. What's your proper job?" At the time Mark was earning more per week than many people earn in a year. Julie is retiring from Warringah Council at the end of her current four-year term, having served her community through the council for most of the last 32 years. I am personally inspired by Julie's dedication to her community and I wish her well for her final months on council and for her future generally. I was pleased to put forward Julie as a very worthy nominee for the Woman of the Year award. Certainly she is Woman of the Year in my electorate and she has been nominated as a deserved candidate for the New South Wales Woman of the Year award. Thank you, Julie.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [12.49 p.m.]: I thank the member for Davidson for bringing to the attention of the House Julie Sutton's contributions to the community. It has been my pleasure to listen to his contribution. Julie Sutton is a mother, a teacher, a councillor, a past State Labor candidate, a civil celebrant and first and foremost a community crusader. Julie has done a lot for our local community on the northern beaches. I have sat with her at Forest High School events and heard about her years of continuous service to local schools and other community groups.

Julie may have been a Labor candidate but these days she is an Independent, although I am sure her involvement in community started back in those earlier days. Julie is beyond politics and everyone on the northern beaches values her. Julie has worked as a marriage celebrant and has also officiated at funerals of friends and family members of mine who have passed away. Her dignified and respectful approach endears her

to the local community. On behalf of the community of the northern beaches, together with the member for Davidson, I thank Julie for her amazing contribution to the northern beaches. We are very lucky to have had Julie Sutton as part of our community for so long.

DAVID RIXON FUNDRAISING DINNER

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [12.50 p.m.]: In March 2012 Senior Constable David Rixon was tragically killed while on duty protecting the people of his community. He left behind his wife and six children. On Thursday 17 May, as a guest of the Premier of New South Wales, I attended the David Rixon Fundraising Dinner. The night was a mixture of light entertainment, remembrance and tribute, as we all came together to raise funds for Senior Constable Rixon's family. As I sat and enjoyed the company of my parliamentary colleagues, watching the entertainment and participating in the fundraising, I could not help but think about some police officers I had met just a few weeks earlier. On Thursday 1 March I visited Revesby Police Station to congratulate and show support for my local police officers on the 150th anniversary of the NSW Police Force.

At the fundraising dinner I could not help but think about those men and women who, bravely and with honour, put their lives on the line each and every day to keep us all safe. Parades and accolades cannot express the level of gratitude that the community owes to each and every police officer in this State. But the most sobering thought for me that night was remembering the eight new probationary police officers that I had met just a few days earlier. On Monday 7 May I visited Bankstown Local Area Command to welcome eight new officers, following their graduation from the Goulburn Police Academy the previous Friday. I met eight fresh-faced young men and women eager to serve and protect, regardless of the risks they will face to protect our community. The men and women of the NSW Police Force not only deserve our thanks and praise but also have a right to expect our support. Given that, I was particularly annoyed when the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Toongabbie and the member for Bankstown recently visited East Hills in my electorate, stood outside Revesby Police Station and made unsupportable claims.

I was not annoyed that they came to my electorate; I was annoyed that they came to my electorate to undermine the public's confidence in the police. They came to my electorate to scaremonger and to lie about crime in the East Hills electorate. Their visit to my electorate was a cheap political stunt. At the time of their visit there had not been a single drive-by shooting within the East Hills electorate. In fact, based upon crime statistics, East Hills is classified as an area of low crime. The same cannot be said for the Bankstown electorate, which is a crime hotspot and a virtual no-go area because of criminals and thugs. Ironically, just a few days after their covert visit to my electorate there was a multiple stabbing at Bankstown.

Labor had 16 years to do something—anything—about crime in New South Wales. They did not, so we are. We have employed 309 new police officers and introduced legislation to support them. This Government is providing the support needed to make New South Wales both great and safe. The additional police officers are not just a win for the community, they are a clear demonstration that the O'Farrell Government has made good on its election promise. On Thursday 1 March 2012 I was honoured to be able to extend my heartfelt thanks, congratulations and support to Superintendent David Eardley and his officers at Revesby Police Station. On Monday 7 May I was honoured to be able to welcome eight new police officers. Today I am equally honoured to be able to extend my thanks and support to every police officer in New South Wales, and I encourage all members of the community to do the same.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.55 p.m.]: I support the member for East Hills in recognising that police officers put their lives on the line every day at work. I thank him for his tribute to Senior Constable David Rixon and for informing the House about the fundraising dinner organised by the local community for the family of Senior Constable David Rixon. The Government is employing 309 new police in the NSW Police Force and our aim is for all commands to have 90 per cent operational capacity. That means that instead of some commands having only 80 per cent operational capacity with 20 per cent of police officers not available for active duty, in the not too distant future commands will have 90 per cent operational capacity. This Government supports our police officers and the communities they serve and protect.

TRACKER RILEY CYCLEWAY EXTENSION

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.56 p.m.]: Last Friday, on behalf of the wonderful Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, I had the pleasure of assisting the Mayor of Dubbo, Mathew Dickerson, to open the Tracker Riley Cycleway extension in Dubbo. The cycleway

incorporates a bridge linking two parts of Dubbo that are divided by the mighty Macquarie River. The bridge bears the name of a family who were long-time landholders of an adjoining property and who worked hard to build up the community. It is named the Shibble Bridge. Today I pay tribute to members of the Shibble family for their outstanding contribution to Dubbo over so many years.

The Shibble family's association with the city of Dubbo began in 1941 with the purchase of the property "Miriam". With the property purchase, George Shibble set to work with sons Joe and Col to create a large and productive dairy farm. As a young man Joe served in World War II, and later in life Col served as a Dubbo councillor from 1987 to 1999. Both men were actively involved in the Dubbo community in sporting clubs and community groups such as the South Dubbo Progress Association. As the family grew, the riverbank was an important recreation spot for them. The area is remembered fondly by the many family members who were present at the opening last Friday. It was both a joyful and solemn affair for the family, who farewelled beloved family member Col Shibble just 12 months ago.

Now the famous Tracker Riley Cycleway links two of the city's premier tourist attractions, Taronga Western Plains Zoo and our historic Dundullimal Homestead. It creates a 12.5 kilometre cycleway loop of the Macquarie River via its foreshores and recreational space areas and Macquarie Street on road cycle lanes. For those who do not know, the Tracker Riley Cycleway is named after Alex Riley, who was the first Aboriginal police tracker to reach the rank of sergeant and to receive the King's Medal. The legendary Tracker Riley is beloved throughout my electorate. His tracking skills helped to break a cattle-thieving ring in 1913. He also assisted in the recapture of two escapees from the Dubbo jail. In 1918 Tracker Riley found a barefoot six-year-old girl who had been lost for 24 hours in the mountains near Stuart Town. Those are just some of his many accomplishments in a wonderful career.

The cycleway extension was a joint project between Dubbo City Council and the local Bicycle User Group, which have been active participants in the Rail Trail Working Party that was set up to develop the project. Based on the merit of the proposal and demonstrated community support, council was able to secure \$793,000 in Federal Government funding and \$392,000 in State Government grant funding to go towards the \$2.088 million project. Council surveys show that almost 60 per cent of the Dubbo community lists walking as their primary physical activity, and cycling is not too far behind. For those who want to stay fit, Dubbo is a good place to live.

Dubbo is also blessed with many strong community groups, one of which is the Bicycle Users Group, affectionately known as BUGs. Its members include Kathy Furney and Doug Gott, who are wonderful community members. The group immediately became an advocate for further improving the city's cycleways and was joined by Councillor Peter Bartley to strategically extend them to parts of the city devoid of this type of facility. There is no doubt that if the Dubbo Bicycle Users Group had not come up with its idea—and pushed it along so vigorously—the rail trail bridge and cycleway extension would not have happened until well into the future, if at all. This exciting new cycleway extension is a fine example of how the three levels of government have aided in delivering on the needs and aspirations of the communities they serve.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [1.01 p.m.]: I thank the member for Dubbo for drawing the attention of the House to the Tracker Riley Cycleway extension that he assisted in opening recently. I also note the contribution of the Shibble family to the Dubbo community. I endorse the member's comments about Alex Riley, who was the first Aboriginal to become a sergeant and who made a great contribution to policing all those years ago. As the member said, this project is a good example of a Federal, State and local governments partnership. I commend the member for Dubbo for raising the issue in the House.

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [1.02 p.m.]: This week marks Macular Degeneration Awareness Week 2012, which runs from Sunday 27 May to Saturday 2 June. This year's theme is "Keep your family in the picture". I am pleased to speak about macular degeneration because I know that many elderly residents in the Rockdale electorate may have the early symptoms of degenerative disease, and early detection is vital. It is important that we increase awareness and encourage our constituents to have an eye test. More than 800,000 Australians have some form of macular degeneration. It is the leading cause of blindness and loss of vision in Australia. Unfortunately, recent research commissioned by the Macular Degeneration Foundation has

revealed that we underestimate the role that family history plays in its development. This is a cause for concern, especially considering that 50 per cent of those with a family history of macular degeneration are at risk of developing the disease.

I will touch briefly on how macular degeneration occurs. The macular is located in the centre of the retina, which is responsible for processing visual stimuli, particularly detailed vision. Macular degeneration begins with retinal pigment epithelium [RPE], which is a layer of cells found underneath the retina. The retinal pigment epithelium passes essentials such as oxygen and sugar to the retina and passes waste products away. When the waste products do not get cleared away there is a build-up underneath the retinal pigment epithelium, known as drusen. Macular degeneration progresses and vision loss occurs because retinal pigment epithelium cells die or the cells do not stop blood vessels growing into the retina. When this occurs central vision is lost, but peripheral vision remains intact. For those present who are particularly interested, there are two types of macular degeneration: the wet, which involves a sudden loss of vision, and the dry, which involves a gradual loss of vision.

Unfortunately, some people mistake the symptoms of macular degeneration as just part of the aging process. This is incorrect. If someone has difficulty reading, distinguishing faces or seeing at night they may be in the early stages of developing macular degeneration. Another common symptom is when a dark patch or empty space appears in the middle of a person's vision. Those over the age of 50, those who smoke, or, as I mentioned earlier, those who have a family history of macular degeneration have an increased risk of developing the condition. I encourage those who fall into these categories to consult their local eye specialist. There are some simple things the Macular Degeneration Foundation encourages, such as having an eye test, not smoking, maintaining a healthy lifestyle, and eating a healthy and well-balanced diet.

A healthy diet includes limiting the intake of fats, eating fish a couple of times a week, and eating dark green leafy vegetables and fresh fruit and nuts. The foundation also recommends that people adequately protect their eyes from exposure to sunlight. As someone who has a relative suffering from macular degeneration, I know all too well how it impacts upon people's lives. I strongly encourage residents in Rockdale who are over 50 and have a family history of macular degeneration to see an eye specialist. My electorate office displays the informative pamphlets provided by the Macular Degeneration Foundation. Macular Degeneration Awareness Week is a commendable initiative and I encourage residents in Rockdale to "Keep your family in the picture".

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [1.06 p.m.]: I thank the member for Rockdale for raising the issue of macular degeneration, which is quite close to my heart. My mother, who died at the age of 93, had macular degeneration for the last seven or eight years of her life. Being an avid reader, it was a huge problem for her because she could no longer read as she had done all her life. Another point that must be made in relation to this issue is that we are all living longer. The points that the member made about getting an eye test and living a healthy lifestyle and so on are accentuated by the fact that we know we will live longer and we therefore have an increased likelihood of developing macular degeneration. I thank the member for his contribution. Like him, I also urge people over the age of 50 to have an eye test to determine whether they are experiencing the onset of macular degeneration and attempt to do something about it. I know that surgery has advanced a lot in relation to potential cures for macular degeneration. I encourage people to get their eyes tested, particularly if they are beyond the age of 50.

BONNYRIGG BANDAGED BEAR BREAKFAST

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [1.07 p.m.]: On Wednesday 2 May I attended the Bandaged Bear Breakfast at Bonnyrigg Sports Club in support of the Children's Hospital at Westmead. The Bandaged Bear Appeal is the signature fundraising appeal for the hospital. Through this appeal the hospital attempts to raise funds to provide much-needed lifesaving equipment, services and resources for sick children and their families. The Children's Hospital at Westmead is world renowned for providing the best care for sick children and their families. This specialist care, combined with community education, advocacy for improved child health and groundbreaking research into childhood illnesses, is blended within a positive, caring and healing environment.

The hospital's need for funds is ever increasing. As such, the hospital has to raise about \$30 million every year in order to provide essential services to ill children. Some of the children at the hospital have been there since birth. Others need ongoing treatment, operations and rehabilitation services—many of them for the rest of their lives. Assistance comes from the community through a variety of activities, including the Bandaged Bear Breakfast, which is heavily promoted throughout the community in March every year. The Bandaged Bear Appeal not only raises funds but also increases community awareness, and the breakfast was a good example of those goals being achieved.

In the past year nearly 29,000 sick children were admitted to the hospital and, on average, they stayed slightly more than three days. More than 735,000 consultations took place in the outpatient clinics and about 15,000 operations were performed, including approximately 50 liver, kidney and bone marrow transplants. About 50,000 patients presented at the emergency department, which is one of the busiest in the State. The Newborn Screening Service tested more than 100,000 babies for more than 30 potentially life-threatening disorders and provided consultations for the establishment of similar services across South-East Asia. More than 113,000 calls were answered by the Poisons Information Centre, which is Australia's only 24-hour poisons advice service. In addition to the State funding that the hospital receives, it needs at least \$25 million each year, and that comes in the form of community donations.

Donations, marketing programs, sales of merchandise and bequests pay for the ever-growing demand for new equipment, research and services for sick kids, as well as funding almost 200 staff positions in front-line patient care and research activities. Community support is extremely valuable and vital to maintaining the high standard of care provided at the hospital. The Bandaged Bear Breakfast at Bonnyrigg was hosted jointly by Fairfield Local Area Command personnel and the Bonnyrigg Sports Club as part of the annual Bandaged Bear Appeal fundraising program. A large number of community groups, organisations and local businesses acknowledged the appeal and attended the breakfast. This included members of the local community, Fairfield Police Local Command personnel, local businesses and sponsors. The target at the event was to raise \$10,000.

I am happy to report that about \$8,000 was raised at the breakfast through donations, raffles and the sale of merchandise. However, with further donations in the following days the target was thankfully reached. Among guests at the event were the Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione, and a number of senior police officers from Fairfield Local Area Command, representatives from Westmead Hospital and Bonnyrigg Sports Club management, and a number of community leaders and organisations. I commend the efforts of Fairfield's crime prevention officer Constable Ece Hasan, Milica Milic from Westmead Hospital and Jason Woods from Bonnyrigg Sports Club for their hard work in coordinating and organising this successful appeal.

BLUE MOUNTAINS GRAMMAR SCHOOL VERTICAL GARDEN

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [1.12 p.m.]: As the member for Blue Mountains I have been to many interesting and unusual events and openings. I would classify the opening of the vertical garden at the junior school of Blue Mountains Grammar School at Wentworth Falls as one of the most fascinating that I have attended. When I received the invitation to attend the opening I had visions of planter boxes up a wall. What I found was an innovative use of technology that truly impressed me. The idea for the garden came from one of the primary teachers, Mrs Lori Gerrard. While she was holidaying in France, Lori and her husband came across a huge wall of living plants in the centre of Paris. She described the great mass of green plantings as a small paradise in the middle of a concrete jungle. At the time—a few years ago—she had not seen anything similar anywhere else in the world.

As fate would have it, in 2010 Lori attended a school environment network meeting. It was there that she met Tom Colley from the University of Western Sydney, who told her about the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils' Water in the Landscape grants program. At the time, Lori's year 5 human society and its environment class was studying the impact that lack of water has on communities around the world. She and her class discussed the vertical garden she had seen in Paris and as a team they applied for a grant to build one at their school. Fortunately, they were successful with the application and the next stage was to make the project happen. To do that they needed to find someone with a strong horticultural background who was also familiar with the concept of vertical gardens.

The students were clear that they wanted not only a vertical garden but also a sustainable one. After a year-long exhaustive search they found Peter Abell, a horticultural consultant, plant breeder and photographer who teaches part-time at TAFE and lives at Kurrajong. Peter took up the challenge and suggested that garden designer Mr Danny Townes assist. Once the plans were approved by the school's building committee, Peter and Danny set to work. When I spoke to Peter at the opening he explained that there were many challenges in the design of the project. First, there was no other such project anywhere to give them guidance. As far as Peter knows, this type of vertical garden has not been created in any other school environment so it had to be purpose built. Peter and Dan had to adapt and use established technology innovatively in what was, in a way, a pioneering project. Peter explained that the closed system they designed required only occasional fertilising whereas open systems require materials to be channelled in continually.

The wall, which covers about two metres by three metres, has a water tank to collect water from the school building to feed the system. The pump attached to the tank uses solar power that is generated using solar panels on the roof of the school building. The wall has two watering systems and a grid on one side where plants are inserted. A variety of species has been planted, including exotics and natives, some of which have been specially grafted by Mr Abell. Plants have been placed according to their water requirements; that is, plants that need a lot of water and like wet feet have been placed at the bottom of the wall, and those that require less water have been placed at the top.

This garden celebrates local flora and Peter plans to include some very rare species that are unique to the Wentworth Falls area. The wall has been designed with education and aesthetics in mind and it will be a fantastic teaching tool. The children are encouraged to touch the wall and the plants. Lori Gerrard's mathematics group has already been measuring the growth of various leaves and plants and students have already observed how plants are growing upwards despite the fact that they were planted almost horizontally. I congratulate Blue Mountains Grammar School juniors for creating such a wonderful teaching and aesthetic vertical garden, which is enhancing the student learning experience at the school. I commend this project to the House.

PAWS IN THE PARK FUN DAY

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.17 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a wonderful event held in my local community. This year's Paws in the Park event will be held at the Bicentennial Equestrian Park, without a doubt Camden's premier community and sporting facility. It would seem not a week goes by when this wonderful horse arena, spread over nearly 200 picturesque acres, is not utilised with hundreds, if not thousands, of competitors, family and supporters of whatever event in attendance. The facility is maintained by the extremely hardworking and community-minded members of the Camden Men's Shed. Only last month the extremely honourable Minister Humphries visited the men's shed and left most impressed by this unique and hardworking group of men.

It would be remiss of me not to mention them all by name and to thank them for their efforts. They are: Peter Standen, Doug Almond, Bob Batten, Stephen Butler, Colin Calver, Les Camilliri, Jeff Dye, Neville Kennedy, Vern King, Les MacDonald, Stephen McKinlay, Raymond Monahan, Peter Munns, James Norris, Roger Smith, Ron Taylor, Graeme Watson, Robert Wheeler, Patrick White and Alan Withers. But back to Paws in the Park. The first event, which was held last year on 23 October, was an outstanding success, with more than 800 much-loved four-legged family members in attendance and close to 1,500 of the two-legged variety. Without a doubt this was the most successful inaugural event held in Camden Council's history.

This event was so successful because of the outstanding committee formed by Camden Councillor Lara Symkowiak, Councillor Debby Dewbery and me, and as a result of the wonderful support, expertise and hard work of Councillor Symkowiak, Councillor Dewbery, Colleen Richard from the Sydney University, Matt French from the RSPCA, Matt Jeffrey from the RSPCA, Lorraine Barnes from the Renbury Farm, Ted Gillroy from Macarthur Lions, Stuart Ollis from Macarthur Lions, Peter Standen from the Bicentennial Equestrian Park, Steve Ferguson from the Macarthur Veterinary Group, Michelle Burrell, who is the editor of the wonderful *Camden-Narellan Advertiser*, Geoff Green and Ian Gannell from Camden Council, Carey McIntyre, who was formerly of Camden Council but is now of Kiama council, and Camden Council ranger Michelle Gallo. I must single out Emma Robilliard, who has done an outstanding job and was tireless in her efforts as Camden Council's media and public relations guru. Emma really threw herself into this event—well done, and thank you.

The event consisted of three-kilometre and five-kilometre dog walks, 35 pet-related stalls, behavioural advice, demonstrations, dog registrations, discounted microchipping, free veterinary checks, competitions, doggy show bags and more. The council managed a scan-and-win competition, allowing dog owners to scan and upgrade their pet details, and 304 dogs were scanned on the day—a tremendous outcome. The event raised just over \$4,000, which will go towards pet education in the Camden local government area. The event succeeded in showing what an important part pets play in modern society and within our local community. Paws in the Park demonstrated the importance of delivering positive messages to the public and brought together groups and individuals with a common interest.

Royal Canin sponsored Dr Katrina Warren to appear on the day. Dr Warren was surprised at the size, attendance and organisation of this inaugural event. She heaped praise on the success of the day. Events such as this could not take place without wonderful sponsors. Last year's sponsors were: the naming sponsor, Narellan Town Centre—and I congratulate Tony and Ron Perich and Arnold Vitocco on their sponsorship—the

Macarthur Veterinary Group, Macarthur Lions, Camden Council, the veterinary science faculty of the University of Sydney, Renbury Farm Animal Shelter, Royal Canin, the *Camden-Narellan Advertiser*, Master Pet, Funnells Electrical, Macarthur Credit Union, Fairdinkum Pet Supplies, Pets at Peace, and Well Fed Pets.

I am very happy to say that a resolution approving of holding this year's event was passed at Camden Council last Tuesday night on an initiative led by councillors Symkowiak, Funnell, Dewbery and me. We all wanted the wonderful Paws in the Park to become an annual event, but it was not to be. However, there was support for it to be held again this year. The committee will meet next Monday to start to plan what will be a truly outstanding community event. We are looking forward to making this year's Paws in the Park a wonderful event.

THIRLMERE PUBLIC SCHOOL SUPPORT THE TROOPS CAMPAIGN

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.22 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a fantastic initiative that I was privileged to be involved with recently. The Support the Troops campaign, which is championed by Federal member for Macarthur, Russell Matheson, is an initiative aimed at bridging the divide between our brave men and women who are on active duty overseas and Australian communities. While they are overseas serving their country with pride, many soldiers who are on lengthy deployments are unable to experience the little things that we often take for granted. Simple pleasures such as reading newspapers, wearing new stocks, munching on Aussie favourites, such as Tim Tams and Smith's crisps, and quality time in the comfort of our own homes are all things that our troops miss out on. When Russell informed me of the plan to send care packages to the troops who are serving in various theatres of conflict, such as Iraq, Afghanistan and the Solomon Islands, I commended his efforts. The plan was advertised in local newspapers.

Local schools had the opportunity to send packages overseas filled with all the things that children could think to send to bring some joy to those who are currently serving. In true testament to the community spirit that is alive and well in both Wollondilly and Macarthur, several packages were sent. It was not until Thirlmere Public School, which is situated just down the road from my office in Tahmoor, received a reply that students fully appreciated the importance of their gesture. I must admit to feeling a part of something truly special when Russell invited me to attend the reading of the reply letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Brendan Cox. Seeing the faces of the children as their teacher read the reply from Lieutenant-Colonel Cox, knowing that they were responsible for sending packages, was truly amazing. That day Russell and I were very proud local members, watching the next generation doing their bit. If I may, I will read an excerpt from the reply by Lieutenant-Colonel Cox:

G'Day, I am a deployed member serving in Afghanistan that just received one of the best parcels a soldier could from Australia. A gift packed by children I do not know, arranged by a teacher I have not met and sent with the best wishes and thoughts of a nation worth fighting for.

Could you please let Ms Jenny Budd and the children of Kindy and Year 1 at Thirlmere Public School know that their care package has arrived (13 May 2012). Party politics aside ... a great act by an elected representative.

Thankyou to you and particularly the teachers and students at Thirlmere Public School, who have demonstrated in one small box what being Australian is all about ... supporting your mates.

I have had many pleasures in this job since taking office just a year ago, but this is one moment I was proud to experience. My invitation to attend the ceremony reminded me of the importance of never forgetting the power of a simple gesture and the continued sacrifices that others make on a regular basis for the betterment of our nation. It also reminded me of the importance of assisting our children to be part of something larger than their classroom, something removed from the curriculum, and showing them that they can contribute, however big or small their contribution may be, to the shaping of our nation. Evidence of this can be found from statements made by the children of Thirlmere Public School, a number of which I will read into *Hansard*:

We sent the soldiers some special packages because they fought for our country.

To make sure the soldiers come back safely—they are fighting for us.

And my favourite:

We sent the packs because we care about them.

Those simple truths are often overshadowed by the debate surrounding Australia's involvement in war, but regardless of that debate we must not forget our Defence personnel. We must not forget their sacrifices and we must not forget the simple gestures that can often make their deployment a little more bearable. I draw these matters to the attention of the House because I want to place on the public record how proud I am of Thirlmere Public School and other members of the Wollondilly community who sent care packages. I urge other members of the House to promote this initiative over coming months to bring a little joy to those who are currently serving and making sacrifices for the rest of us. I thank Jenny Budd and Mary Hawkins, who are two great teachers in the Wollondilly community, for helping the kids. I also thank the principal, Steve Lord, for allowing Russell and me to share the experience, and for doing an excellent job at the Thirlmere Public School. But, most importantly, I thank the kids of Thirlmere Public School for their support for the troops and for allowing Russell and me to spend some time with them. They were very well behaved and well mannered, which is a credit to their teachers, the school, their principal, their parents and to their community. They are truly remarkable.

GOSFORD GRAFFITI ART PROJECT

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [1.27 p.m.]: I commend a project that is underway in my electorate, the Gosford Graffiti Art Project. Graffiti is a contentious issue that we debate long and hard in this Chamber. I know from my experience as a councillor that it is a contentious issue. But this project is a little different. The Gosford Graffiti Art Project, which is part of the New South Wales Premier's Student Volunteering Awards, gathered a team of people together for a joint initiative to tackle graffiti in the Ettalong Beach business area. The New South Wales Premier's Student Volunteering Awards gives students an opportunity to serve their communities, to acquire new skills and to meet new people.

As part of the awards, the Gosford Graffiti Art Project coordinator, Charlie Trivers, linked his team in a joint initiative with students from the Brisbane Water Secondary College Umina Campus to design and paint a mural on a rear shop wall that fronts a local council car park in the Ettalong central business district. The purpose of the initiative is to deter graffiti artists at that site. The building is on the corner of Ocean View Road and Broken Bay Road in Ettalong and is highly recognisable. It is a dry cleaner's establishment that is called Drop Your Pants, which is very famous in Ettalong and attracts a lot of patronage because of its unique name. However, the problem with the rear of the building that fronts the car park is that it has been the target of numerous hits by graffiti tag artists. History tells us, particularly in the city of Gosford, that where we have been able to place community murals the incidence of graffiti and tagging decreases considerably, and that has been of great benefit.

The mural produced by those young people was a work of art depicting some of the local icons. It included Lion Island, the Ettalong beach ferry, the Rip Bridge and the beach. It was a collaborative effort, involving not only the Gosford Graffiti Art Project but also local shopkeepers, students from Brisbane Water Secondary College and other community members. The Gosford City Council and Rex Mayes—the owner of the drycleaners—have been forced to repaint the rear wall of the shop on at least 44 occasions in the past few years. Repainting the wall every couple of months after it was trashed with graffiti was a time-consuming and expensive exercise. Gosford City Council spends nearly \$250,000 every year to repair the damage incurred by such acts of vandalism. It has difficulty keeping on top of the problem.

The idea of a mural was raised during a conversation between Mr Mayes and Charlie Trivers of the Gosford Graffiti Art Project, and they wasted no time in enlisting the help of some talented art students in years 7, 8 and 9 from Brisbane Water Secondary College. Lea Lawler from the college did an excellent job of coordinating 11 art students who worked over three days to complete the mural. The college allowed the students to set up a practise wall so that local businesspeople could see what the proposed "art works" would look like at the end of day. The businesspeople were impressed with what they saw and were pleased to think that such a mural would be on display in the central business district. When Rex Mayes, the owner of the drycleaners, saw the finished product he said, "This is awesome."

The idea behind community murals is to minimise graffiti tagging—graffiti vandals do not seem to be attracted to leaving their tag on them. Those responsible for the mural have asked Gosford City Council to coat the mural with a graffiti-proof coating so that if it is tagged, the graffiti can be washed off. The mural is a great example of collaborative community spirit. The people who produced the mural worked with the community and with the shopkeepers. I congratulate Charlie Trivers and the Gosford Graffiti Art Project team, Gosford City Council, Brisbane Water Secondary College art students, their coordinator, Lea Lawler, and the businesspeople of Ettalong on finding a proactive way to deal with graffiti vandalism in our community.

Private members' statements concluded.

[*The Deputy-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) left the chair at 1.32 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.*]

NEW SOUTH WALES PRESS GALLERY PRESIDENT

The SPEAKER: I inform members that Kevin Wilde has been appointed president of the New South Wales Press Gallery following the departure of the former president, Mark Tobin. I trust all members will join with me in wishing Kevin all the best in his new role and thanking former president Mr Mark Tobin for all his dedicated and hard work.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that the Deputy Premier will answer questions directed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast, and that the Minister for Citizenship and Communities will answer questions directed to the Minister for Education, both of whom are absent from the Parliament today.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[*Question time commenced at 2.20 p.m.*]

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that government debt has blown out by \$1.9 billion since he became Premier yet infrastructure spending is down \$1.5 billion, why has he taken out a mortgage on New South Wales but failed to build anything?

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. I could hardly hear that question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I cannot see the shoes of the Leader of the Opposition but I assume they are red. The character Dorothy in the *Wizard of Oz* wore red shoes.

[*Interruption*]

I certainly do not want to know what colour tights the member interjecting is wearing. I will leave that alone.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I heard overnight an odd line from the Leader of the Opposition that I thought was inherently inconsistent. On the one hand he claimed the debt had blown out by \$1.9 billion, an issue I will come back to—

[*Interruption*]

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has asked the question. He should now listen to the answer.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —and on the other hand he condemned us for not spending another \$20 billion on infrastructure projects. He does not know whether he is Arthur or Martha, or perhaps Dorothy or Don. All I know is that he has the worst treasury spokesman in the history of this State. Let us go to the premise of the question, which was about an alleged blowout in debt of \$1.9 billion. I have the best Treasurer in the history of this State.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Which standing order has been breached?

Mr Michael Daley: Standing Order 129. If he was the best, he would not be number 11 in the pecking order.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is a spurious point of order. The member will resume his seat.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I appreciate that contribution from the member for Maroubra because on 3 June 2008, when he was Minister for Finance in this place, he said, "It is prudent financial management for the Government to pay down debt where it can." From that time and until Labor's last budget, total State sector net debt more than doubled from \$21.77 million to \$42.5 million. This is another case of "Don't do as I say." The fact is that in its half yearly report released in December 2010, Labor forecast that this June debt would be \$47 billion. Under the Liberals and Nationals debt for June 2012 is around \$39 billion to \$40 billion—in other words, between \$7 billion and \$8 billion less than it would have been if the people of this State had been stupid enough to re-elect those opposite. The premise of the question is wrong.

Secondly, in the budget delivered last year by the Treasurer we committed to more than \$60 billion of infrastructure spend across the board—and I will have more to say about rail and other issues shortly. That is a 12 per cent increase on what was proposed by those opposite and at a time when the Federal Government's Building the Education Revolution and other economic stimulus capital funding are winding down. While the Federal Government is vacating the field because its stimulatory package is coming to an end, we have stepped up to the mark.

[Interruption]

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am sure the member for Lismore would beg to differ with the reaction of those opposite in relation to health facilities in his electorate. I know the member for Tamworth and the member for Dubbo would beg to differ because of what is happening in their electorates. The member for Wagga Wagga would vociferously oppose any suggestion that the Minister for Health is not spending money, given the progress of Wagga Wagga hospital. I know the same can be said about the Kempsey, North Shore and Hornsby hospitals.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Hornsby is listening because Hornsby hospital is finally getting some funding. Whether it be funding for those hospitals or the \$300 million being spent on the South West Rail Link and a similar amount being spent on the North West Rail Link, or the billion dollars being allocated for health capital works this year, it is an indication that we are getting on with the job and doing so responsibly. The new forecast is for more funding going to infrastructure than that which was proposed by Labor because this is a government that delivers.

RAIL TRANSPORT

Mr TONY ISSA: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the Government encouraging train travel?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind Opposition members that interjections are disorderly at all times. If they continue to interject, I will place them on calls to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Granville for his question and for his determination to ensure that people in his electorate have the best possible access to the rail system. The member for Granville, just like the Minister for Transport, is a person who delivers.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind Opposition members of my previous ruling. I call the member for Maroubra to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The people opposite promised everything—rivers of gold.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: They promised action on public transport from 1988 onwards. They made promises that, if delivered, would have made Dubai and Abu Dhabi look like villages in comparison to Sydney. Of course, they were promises not delivered.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Even for the Leader of the Opposition, the most stationary transport Minister in the State's history, nothing ever left the station. Today we seek to shed light where he shed darkness. Where the previous Government failed to make progress, the Minister for Transport is succeeding in delivering transport improvements that people across this city want.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am delighted to inform the House—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —that today we announced that the New South Wales Government will build nine new commuter car parks and interchanges to provide more than 1,200 additional car spaces at train stations across the CityRail network. These facilities will be built at Granville, Canley Vale, Padstow, Sutherland, Kiama, Lindfield, Moss Vale, Oak Flats and Gordon.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: They will help to take cars off the roads because surveys show that up to 40 per cent of motorists said, "Give us safe parking, give us car spaces near the stations and we'll get out of our cars and get on to the train system." It is a big issue for motorists and for those irregular users of the rail network we want to convert to regular commuters. Whilst those opposite carp and complain time and again—that is, those who had 16 years to deliver the sorts of improvements we are talking about—we are getting on with the job. More than \$170 million will be spent on 1,200 new car parks and nine projects across the CityRail system. It is great news for those who use the public transport system and for those whom we want to make better use of the system.

For the benefit of the hardworking member for Granville, I advise that there will be a new car park at Granville to provide 40 additional spaces, but there will also be a new bus interchange to enable passengers to more easily make their connections between bus and train. Sutherland will have 300 additional car spaces; Padstow will have 89 additional spaces; and Canley Vale will have 70 additional spaces. There is even more good news for the member for Kiama, because Kiama will have an additional 40 car spaces. The member has had some pretty good public transport wins recently—a new station at Flinders and a trial of quiet carriages on his line, an initiative about which his community is very keen.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will come to order. I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. I call the member for Keira to order for the third time. There is too much audible conversation in this Chamber. I have called the member for Keira to order on three occasions already. I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Keira from the Chamber.

[Pursuant to standing order the member for Keira left the Chamber, accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]

The SPEAKER: Order! If members continue with their disruptive behaviour, they can expect to follow the member for Keira. I call the member for Fairfield to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Moss Vale will have an additional 50 spaces; Oak Flats—and this should be good news for at least one member opposite—will have an extra 230 spaces. What great news for the southern Illawarra residents who take the train to work every day and even for those who travel shorter

distances. There is even good news for the North Shore, an area starved of investment by those opposite for 16 years, with additional car spaces being provided at Lindfield and Gordon. Those substantial infrastructure improvements come as part of the Government's \$770 million Transport Access Program to deliver improvements to commuters across the system.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is a shame that visitors in the public gallery today are witnessing such disruptive behaviour. All members who have been called to order already are now deemed to be on three calls to order. I caution Government members that some of them are very close to being placed on calls to order. I remind all members that interjections are disorderly at all times. I warn the member for Murray-Darling and the member for Drummoyne, who have been conversing with the member for Wollongong when Ministers have been answering questions, that they too will be removed from the Chamber if they continue with that type of behaviour. I am about to give the call to the Leader of the Opposition to ask a further question, which I and the Minister to whom it is directed need to hear. Accordingly, I will have removed from the Chamber any members who interject while he is asking his question.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that he promised to be the infrastructure Premier, why does he not get on with the job of building New South Wales and release his list of infrastructure priorities today?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Therein lies one of the reasons those opposite lost office on 26 March last year. Just get on with it! The most famous example of that is the two-stop Sydney Metro in relation to which \$500 million was spent at breakneck speed to deliver not a single centimetre of rail track or tunnel—that is, half a billion dollars that could and should have been invested in roads, rail and other infrastructure across this State. In an attempt to save the former member for Balmain, those opposite pressed ahead without doing the fundamental work.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We were very clear. We went to the election promising to establish Infrastructure NSW, a body that would take the politics out of infrastructure in this State because it was that type of decision—made not for the public interest but for political interest reasons—that wasted half a billion dollars. I just announced commuter car parks and rail interchanges worth \$170 million. We could almost have funded 25 such projects with the \$500 million that those opposite wasted, because of no work and no preparation, on a rail line that never saw a centimetre of track built. We committed to allowing Infrastructure NSW to put in place a 20-year infrastructure strategy—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —with five-year plans attached to budget, designed to ensure that projects met the interests of the State principally around economic infrastructure so that the public could be assured that whatever dollars we had available—and we are certainly trying to make dollars available to fund those projects—were being spent wisely on projects that were in the interests of this State and not in the interests of a partisan political party.

Mr John Robertson: What? Like the North West Rail Link?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: He is a slow learner. I seem to remember that one of the sideline debates during the campaign in the lead-up to the State election was around the North West and the Parramatta to Epping rail links. It was not as if it did not get an enormous amount of attention. It was not as if the Minister for Transport and I did not come out six months in advance and nail our intentions firmly to the mast. We said that our priority was the North West Rail Link.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that many of them are already on three calls.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I ask members to think about the question that the Leader of the Opposition asked. He said, "Why don't you get on and do it?" The Minister for Transport has done more in relation to the North West Rail Link in the past 14 months than those opposite did in 10 years. To those in the

gallery who are still awake I say that the fact is that the North West Rail Link, promised successively by those opposite at past elections, was meant to be up and running by 2010. When we got to office we assumed that the planning and detailed work for that link had been done. That was our first mistake in government. When Gladys Berejiklian, the Minister for Transport, opened the cupboard, out fell the taxi vouchers, the plastic credit cards and the union membership cards, but there were no plans about how to build the North West Rail Link. What we are doing, whether with the North West Rail Link or the South West Rail Link, is getting on with the job. What we are doing with roads across western Sydney is getting on with the job. What we are doing with health is building the hospitals that were promised by those opposite, particularly in country areas, but never delivered. What Infrastructure NSW is doing is—

Mr John Robertson: Nothing.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. I warn the member for Canterbury that she is already on three calls to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Infrastructure NSW is doing precisely what people voted for it to do, and that is to set out the State's 20-year infrastructure strategy. Under our last budget, \$60 billion is going into infrastructure—12 per cent more than those opposite invested—importantly at a time when Federal stimulus funding is starting to run out in this and other States, so that we can take up the slack to ensure not only that the people of this State get the infrastructure promised by those opposite but never delivered, and that we are determined to deliver, but also that the construction sector has projects that it can focus on as well to ensure that there is employment across the State.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that those who have been called to order already are now deemed to be on three calls to order.

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What is the New South Wales Government's response to the Commonwealth's proposed Murray-Darling Basin Plan?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Murray-Darling for his question on a matter of great importance to all who eat or use food or fibre grown in our great food bowl, the Murray-Darling Basin. And included among them are the members opposite. They may not be aware of it, but much of the food they eat is grown in the Murray-Darling Basin. To say that this Government is disappointed with the revised basin plan produced by the Commonwealth Murray-Darling Basin Authority is a major understatement. After listening to regional communities and their concerns about this draft basin plan, this Government, led by my colleague the Minister for Primary Industries and assisted by a number of our parliamentary colleagues, presented to the Murray-Darling Basin Authority a sensible and realistic way forward. Our submission was based on extremely productive meetings with farmers, civic leaders, Indigenous representatives, small business owners and agribusinesses in places such as Finley, Leeton, Forbes, Dubbo, Narrabri, Moree, Corowa and here in Sydney.

Regrettably, the revised plan that the authority has come back with fails to address the key issues that we highlighted in our submission. We sought an end to the blunt and simple instrument of water licence buybacks until the Commonwealth had given real priority to meeting environmental outcomes more efficiently and effectively. We suggested to the Commonwealth that the best way to do that was through infrastructure, environmental works and measures, and a review of operational and physical system delivery rules. We also told the Commonwealth, on behalf of all the communities that rely on water in the Murray-Darling Basin, that once the infrastructure and other measures I mentioned had been implemented, we would seek a 3 per cent limit on further Commonwealth licence buybacks per valley per decade, and this would provide sufficient time for rural communities to adjust.

We also sought a fair and equitable sharing of the significant downstream reductions between catchments and States; and we asked the Commonwealth to commit to a structural adjustment package to assist impacted communities, and sought a longer time frame than 2019 to meet the new sustainable diversion limits. Above all of this, we believe there is no great need to rush through this ill-informed process. Huge quantities of water are flowing through the Murray-Darling system right now, which means there is more than ample time for the Gillard Government to take a deep breath, set aside the ideological urgings of The Greens, and have a good hard look at the implications of what it proposes to do in the basin. We in the New South Wales Government are simply not interested in a rushed job.

Mr Nathan Rees: There's no danger of that.

Mr ANDREW STONER: It may be that the member's sole purpose in life is to act as a warning to others.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: My point is taken under Standing Order 130. The Deputy Premier is not only debating the question, but is suggesting the Opposition would say he is rushing something. We would never do that.

The SPEAKER: Order! I thought the member would get round to showing his was a humorous point of order. That is not a point of order. The Minister is being relevant.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I suggest that the member for Mount Druitt would be the last person to rush anything. The revised plan of the Murray-Darling Basin Authority either fails to deliver or is silent on the key issues raised by this Government on behalf of New South Wales communities. There has been no change to the sustainable diversion limits of 2,750 gigalitres for surface water. Now we see that, against the expert advice of New South Wales hydrogeologists, the Murray-Darling Basin Authority proposes to reduce the extraction limits on groundwater, continues to require a 2015 review time frame, and also continues to overlook the socio-economic impacts on our regional communities.

In the next week or so the Minister for Primary Industries will be meeting with her Federal counterpart, Minister Burke, and the other basin jurisdictions, and she will continue to advocate strongly the New South Wales position on the basin plan. A lot of good infrastructure works can be undertaken that will benefit our communities and the environment—the Federal Government just needs to get the necessary funding out the door. I want to make this very clear: we will continue to work constructively with the Commonwealth and the other States towards sensible outcomes for the Murray-Darling Basin; but we simply cannot, and will not, compromise the economic, social and environmental sustainability of our regional communities.

GUARDIAN TRAIN SERVICES

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Can the Minister guarantee that no late-night Guardian train services will be cut in next month's budget, given that she has already abolished weeknight patrols on CityRail trains?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I may have something more to say about this matter later in question time, but I am very happy to take the question. Unfortunately, when it is a question of supporting the police and our community, or supporting union bosses, the Labor Party always chooses the union bosses. Not a single person in the community, apart from union bosses, would suggest that police are not best placed to take over security on the transport network. And are they not doing a sterling job? Since 1 May a new Police Transport Command has been established: 300 officers who previously reported to separate local area commands now report to a dedicated Police Transport Command. I am pleased to say that they have made hundreds of arrests on our network since the command began operation on 1 May. Members on the other side do not know what they are talking about. A few months ago when we announced that we would establish this new Police Transport Command the Leader of the Opposition congratulated the Government on its initiative.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point, taken under Standing Order 129, relates to relevance. The question is specific: it asks whether the Government is going to abolish Guardian late-night trains; it does not ask about police.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition knows I cannot direct the Minister to be specific. The response has been relevant to the question. There is no point of order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Leader of the Opposition does not like to be reminded of it, but I remind the House what the Leader of the Opposition said when we announced that police would be taking over security on our Police Transport Command. The member put out a statement on the same day, and I believe he also made a stand-up statement as well, saying:

The New South Wales Labor Opposition supports having police patrol our CityRail network.

It is not up to the Labor Party or union bosses to determine how security is managed on the public transport network; it is up to police. This Government has given police, as it is responsible to do, the right to determine how to ensure security on our public transport network. The question gives me yet another opportunity to reinforce that, when it comes to police or when it comes to the community, the Labor Party is failing to support police and the communities.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Bankstown will cease interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Labor Party is yet again reverting to form and supporting the union bosses. But worse still, not only did the Leader of the Opposition support the announcement that police would be taking over security, Mr Middle Manager over there accused me of stealing their policy. He interjected in this House on the very day of the announcement saying, "You stole our policy." Perhaps Mr Middle Manager and the Leader of the Opposition need to speak to the member for Fairfield and the member for Wollongong, who criticised the fact that police were coming onto the network. Those two members got together with some of their union bosses and tried to politicise this in their local newspapers.

The community is sick to death of that. The community wants police to be given authority to take over security on the public transport network. We know that nothing replaces police presence on our network; police are best placed to take on security measures on the public transport network. It is not only around railway stations and on trains that police will have a presence but also across major interchanges and wharves—a great initiative. I urge the Labor Party to put politics aside. We know that those opposite are very sensitive about this issue, but I urge them to back the police and the community and not allow the unions to scaremonger. The Labor Party and every member of this House should be supporting our police and should be supporting the community, not the union bosses. The Leader of the Opposition as the Minister for Transport had an appalling record. He said this was a good initiative. He should stop listening to the union bosses.

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: I ask that the Minister be directed to refer to the member in an appropriate way.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECURITY

Mr DARREN WEBBER: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. What is the Government doing to increase security on the public transport network?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Wyong for the excellent question, which allows me to provide the House with further detail about specific initiatives to improve security on the public transport network. As I said in my previous response, this Government will always put the community and safety first. I am very proud that we announced that police would be taking over security across the entire transport network because we on this side of the House, and I would hope those on that side of the House, know that nothing is more effective than a dedicated police command with a full complement of police powers. Every member of this House should agree that that is fact. The Police Transport Command was established on 1 May, and police have already begun both covert and overt operations to clamp down on crime and antisocial behaviour—issues that we know matter to the travelling public. For too long the public told Labor governments—but they did not listen—to fix up security on the transport network. Labor ignored the challenge.

We on this side of the House listen. We listened to what commuters said and we listened to what police said. We are very pleased to have made this very important decision. I am very pleased to provide further details to the House of recent operations and activities of police since they took over the Police Transport Command on 1 May. Police will now be located in three primary metropolitan hubs—one in central, one in south-west Sydney and one in north-west Sydney—and in seven satellite hubs. This will please many local members, those seven satellite hubs include areas in the Hunter, the Central Coast and the Illawarra. This is not just about Sydney; it is about our regions and making public transport safe wherever and whenever commuters travel. More than 600 dedicated police officers will patrol our trains, buses and ferries, along with 150 transit officers who will detect fare evasion and deal with other compliance issues.

As is appropriate, the police—the experts—will be in charge of managing this transition, as they should be. It is not up to the Labor Party or union bosses; it is up to the police to determine how safety should be dealt with on the rail network and across all modes of transport. Unfortunately, the Labor Party has demonstrated yet again its failure to support police in this very important task. I have already brought that to the attention of the House. I have already indicated that on the day we made the announcement the Leader of the Opposition, Mr Middle Manager, said he agreed with it, but since the union bosses have been in their ears a number of them are now spruiking what the union bosses are saying rather than listening to what the police are saying and to what the community wants. Unfortunately, the Labor Party is predictable.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: So are you.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I have hit a sore spot there. I had hoped that every member of this House would back our police and back our community when it comes to safety across the transport network. I am very pleased to say that throughout the weekend a number of uniformed and plain-clothes officers from the Police Transport Command executed an operation—

[Interruption]

They do not want to hear what the police have been up to. Some Opposition members do not know there is a problem because police have not been providing safety on the transport network. Throughout the weekend a number of uniformed officers and plain-clothed officers executed an operation targeting criminal and antisocial behaviour on hundreds of our train, bus and ferry services. During the two nights of the operation 54 people were arrested and 59 charges were laid for offences including assault, supply and possess prohibited drug and offensive behaviour. Police also conducted 290 person searches, 190 people were issued with move-on directions and 420 rail infringement notices were issued. The Deputy Commissioner of Police, Nick Caldas, said the arrests during the weekend operation were on top of the hundreds of arrests Police Transport Command officers have made and charges they have laid this month in day-to-day operations since they took over on 1 May. He said:

The Police Transport Command will continue to plan and implement operations based on crime linkages and trends, to ensure officers are deployed to the right places at the right times and effectively utilise available resources.

[Extension of time granted.]

This Government will continue to support the police and allow them to get on with the job they have been tasked to do, and we will continue to deliver the transport improvements the community expects and deserves. Today I again issue a challenge to those opposite: Put politics aside, back our police and back the community. That is very important.

WARATAH BONDS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. How many individuals or entities have taken up Waratah Bonds and how much capital has been raised, to date, with Waratah Bond issues?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is fantastic to get a question that is kind of financially relevant. That program is underway and all the details will be revealed. Those opposite will see those details as part of the budget. We are very happy to do that. We are very happy to pursue a strategy—

The SPEAKER: Order! An Opposition member has asked the question and Opposition members should listen to the answer.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are very happy to pursue a strategy that diversifies debt. We have said that regularly and consistently, but the Opposition does not understand that. This week there has been a fantastic revelation: Those opposite have suddenly realised that next week is the budget week so they had better start talking about economic stuff. When the Opposition starts talking about economic stuff it gets very scary. The Leader of the Opposition said the Opposition needed a benchmark speech to lay out its economic credentials so that the people understand the Opposition's position. The Leader of the Opposition decided to give such a speech, and I was interested to know where he would do that. Where would one give such a benchmark speech? How could the Opposition tell the people of Australia what it is doing in relation to economics and fiscal strategies?

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Either the Treasurer wants to tell us the details or he wants to hide them. It is a very simple question: How many bonds were issued and how much money has been raised?

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Diversification of debt is very important. Where would the Opposition give that speech? Did the Leader of the Opposition give it in the Sydney Institute?

Government Members: No.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: No, it was not given there. Was it at the Lowy Institute?

Government Members: No.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: No, it was not there either. Was it given to the Committee for Economic Development of Australia [CEDA]?

Government Members: No.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Was it given to the Institute of Public Affairs?

Government Members: No.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Australian Business Economists would be perfect, but no, it was not given there. Where did the Leader of the Opposition give this landmark speech on economics? He gave it at the Australian Labor Party's Central Policy Branch. That was where he was going to tell the world about the budget. He got everyone into his backyard and said, "I'm going to give a speech on economics. Everyone take notes". I have a simple tip for the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Treasurer: If you are going to make a statement on economics; if you are going to pretend you are interested in economics—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: I am sure the Treasurer thinks he is amusing and entertaining—

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

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. How many and how much—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury knows that I cannot direct a Minister to answer a question specifically. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: One would think that if the Leader of the Opposition were going to do that he would at least ask one question on the budget during the year, but Opposition members are yet to do that. What has Mr Ten Per Cent—the member for Maroubra, who gets about 10 per cent of things right—done about debt? We heard the Premier hit him out of the park on the subject of debt. We heard that not only did Labor forecast a debt of \$47 billion but the O'Farrell Government has delivered—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Is this the same point of order as the one taken previously?

Mr John Robertson: It is the same point of order. For a bloke who has only 2 per cent of the Treasurer's responsibilities he should be very careful about bandying that figure around.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The O'Farrell Government has delivered 17 per cent less debt than those opposite forecast. In relation to infrastructure, the Premier has outlined project after project after project across members' electorates. There are so many he could implement. What is the Opposition's record on infrastructure? What was the former Government going to do about the North West Rail Link? It was announced in 1998 and it was due to be completed in 2010.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Is the member's point taken under Standing Order 129 relating to relevance?

Dr Andrew McDonald: He's a number 11 batsman and he is missing a lot, but my point of order is under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I can only direct the Treasurer to be relevant, and his answer is relevant to the question asked.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I did miss a lot actually. But I will come back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! If members continue with this type of disruptive behaviour I will stop the clock and allow the Treasurer to continue his answer for another two minutes.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I will not go through the former Government's record on infrastructure; we all know what it was. We have heard the Premier outline what we are doing, we have heard about debt and we have heard the Premier talk about jobs. The Leader of the Opposition has on his website, "NSW has the highest unemployment rate in the nation." The second-best unemployment rate under an O'Farrell Government is 4.9 per cent. [*Time expired.*]

FREE COMMUNITY HEALTH CHECKS

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. What has the Government done to deliver on its commitment to provide free community health checks?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Coogee for his important question. He and I recently launched the Know Your Numbers campaign at a pharmacy in his electorate. A number of women in the Chamber are wearing red in honour of the Heart Foundation's Go Red for Women Breakfast, which was held this morning at the Parliament and hosted by the Minister for Women, Pru Goward. The breakfast was held in order to raise awareness of the problem of heart disease among women. Most people do not realise that heart disease is a bigger killer of women than cancer is. The idea is to try to raise awareness for women and the population generally about heart disease risk factors and the things that we can do to prevent heart disease.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. This is a serious subject.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: It is a serious subject. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will listen to the answer in silence.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Last Thursday during Heart Rhythm Awareness Week my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Health organised for a blood pressure test to be available in the Parliament in order to raise awareness of atrial fibrillation. Members learnt how to take their pulse and the importance of checking it on a regular basis. I know a number of my colleagues took part in that. As I said, the member for Coogee and I recently launched the Know Your Numbers program at Walsh's Village Pharmacy at South Maroubra. That is the community health checks component of the community pharmacies plan that our side of Parliament promised before the last election. We have done it in conjunction with the National Stroke Foundation.

I am also grateful to the Pharmacy Guild for its contribution and involvement. A total of 750 pharmacies will be engaged across New South Wales to provide an estimated 150,000 free health checks over the next four years. These tests will check blood pressure and other factors and people will be asked questions about their risk factors. For example, modifiable risk factors include smoking, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, physical inactivity, excess weight, depression, social isolation and lack of quality support, and HIV. Of course, family history is another factor. Everybody should know their family history of heart disease. If someone has been ill or died as a result of heart disease their family members must take further action to ensure that they regularly check their cholesterol and blood pressure. As the Minister for Women pointed out this morning, all of us in this Parliament should make sure that this message gets out to the most vulnerable in our community.

We must spread the message to Aboriginal women, women of different cultural backgrounds or poor socioeconomic status and women in remote and rural areas that there are things they can do to make sure they stay as healthy as possible. The health check program that is being run through pharmacies involves blood pressure measurement and a validated questionnaire regarding lifestyle risk factors for cardiovascular disease and type two diabetes. I recommend that everyone go along to their pharmacy and ask about the program. Even if people do not participate in the program they should take the questionnaire home for family members or others who may be at risk.

Over the next four years \$7.26 million will be invested in this project and 750 pharmacies will be engaged. Government members believe this program will make a big difference to many people throughout the State. It will encourage healthy lifestyle modifications to reduce risk factors and will identify people who have a risk and refer them to their general practitioners for follow-up and further treatment. I am pleased to advise the House that many people at risk of certain diseases have already been identified and referred to their general practitioners. I have been congratulated by many doctors who have said that this is an extremely worthwhile project. I thank the Heart Foundation, the Stroke Foundation, the Pharmacy Guild and everyone who is participating in this program.

STRIKE FORCE EMBLEMS REPORT

Mr NATHAN REES: My question is directed to the Premier. Last night the Premier sensibly committed to releasing the Strike Force Emblems police report. In light of that promise, why did Government members in the other place vote only moments ago to stop the release of the report?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Because what I said last night was that on Friday I had asked the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, Justice Levine, to provide me with advice as to whether the report could be released. Justice Levine is a properly qualified and independent judicial officer who has not been previously connected with anything to do with the report. I do not know what went to air last night because I did not see the broadcast, but yesterday I was asked by Channel 7 about my concerns. One of my concerns relates to police informants mentioned in the report who may be still in jail and whether the release of their names may put them at risk. That is an issue which I presume Justice Levine will consider when he determines whether the report should be released.

There is nothing inconsistent with what the upper House has just done and what I asked Justice Levine to do. I remind the House that last week the Minister for Police referred to Justice Levine the recommendations of the Emblems report. The Minister asked Justice Levine to provide him with advice as to whether those recommendations had been implemented, and whether the recommendations could be released. On Friday I wrote to Justice Levine and said that in the interests of openness and transparency I wanted his advice as to whether the report in its entirety could be released. That is the advice I have asked an independent judicial officer to provide, the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission. It is not a decision I propose be put to the upper House.

CARBON TAX AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government. What impact will the carbon tax have on local councils?

Mr DONALD PAGE: I thank the member for Menai for her question and acknowledge her longstanding interest in local government. It is appropriate that the member has asked this question, considering that Sutherland Shire Council will be hit with a carbon tax bill of at least \$411,000 just in extra rates, courtesy of Federal Labor's carbon tax. As the carbon tax hammer starts to fall, council rates across New South Wales will rise by at least \$14 million. That figure does not come from the Government but from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. I can inform the House that the tribunal has said that 11 per cent of the 3.6 per cent rate peg for this year is directly attributable to the carbon tax.

I said the impact on councils is at least \$14 million because this is only the tip of the iceberg. These amounts only include the increase in council rates as determined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. There, of course, will be additional carbon tax costs to councils from landfill, water treatment and other services that councils offer. Only this morning the mayor of Sutherland Shire Council said that the impact of the carbon tax on her council will be about \$2 million. The mayor said, "The Federal Government is not

helping families." Of course, the New South Wales Government agrees with her. In addition, the General Manager of Campbelltown City Council said this morning that the carbon tax also will affect the council's rubbish collection service, bringing the total extra cost per local household to \$19.50 a year.

The carbon tax is a tax on ratepayers in Sutherland, Campbelltown, western Sydney—all of New South Wales. The carbon tax will certainly impact ratepayers in western Sydney, and the money will come directly out of their back pocket. According to the tribunal, western Sydney councils will be hit with a cost of at least \$3 million. Blacktown City Council will be slugged \$459,598. Canterbury and Bankstown councils will be slugged \$517,000. Liverpool council will be slugged \$300,000. Fairfield council will be slugged \$267,000. I wonder whether members opposite will stand up for the ratepayers in their electorates or squib it and remain silent.

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

Mr DONALD PAGE: In the Illawarra, the picture is just as bad. The Wollongong City Council will need to collect additional rates because it has been slugged \$478,000. The Shellharbour City Council will be slugged \$110,970, plus an additional \$27 a household for waste disposal, and the list goes on. I have a complete list of the impact on every council in the State.

Mr Mark Coure: Tell us more.

Mr DONALD PAGE: I will not have sufficient time unless I obtain an extension. One thing is clear: our worst fears regarding Federal Labor's carbon tax now have become a reality. It is not only local government authorities that will have to pay increased energy bills. On average, the electricity cost will increase by approximately \$182 for each household across the State. Council rates will also increase. It is extremely disappointing that the local government sector was left out of the consultation process in relation to the Federal Government's carbon tax. Indeed, I do not think the Federal Government gave any consideration whatsoever to the local government sector.

Approximately 10 days ago I pointed out in relation to landfill in places such as Tamworth that there will be an increased cost of approximately \$1.2 million for waste disposal in landfill. The response by the Acting Prime Minister, Wayne Swan, was, "We will defer that for 12 months. We concede you have a point and we will put it off for 12 months." Of course, as the figures I have stated indicate, it has not been put off; however, it indicates that the Federal Government had not calculated the impact of the carbon tax on local government authorities. Although I do not often agree with the member for Heffron, I must say that I agree with her comments on the carbon tax 100 per cent. I remind members of what she said on 2 May 2012 about the carbon tax and Prime Minister Julie Gillard's broken promise:

Even ALP branch members ask me in dismay, "Why did she do it when she said she wouldn't?"

Reducing, lessening the impact, or possibly revoking the carbon tax: if she stays, it is the one act of contrition she needs to make. It is her last option for a Hail Mary pass.

[Extension of time granted.]

The member for Heffron was talking about her own Prime Minister. She went on to state:

In doing so, she would tell the people of Australia, "I am sorry, and I am listening to you."

As I said, I do not often agree with the member for Heffron, but I agree with her call for the Federal Government to abandon the carbon tax, because the impact on ratepayers across the State and particularly on the local government sector will indeed be significant.

Question time concluded at 3.12 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.12 p.m.]: As honourable members know, we anticipate that on Tuesday 12 June the budget will be presented—the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills. To facilitate presentation of the budget I formally move:

That on Tuesday 12 June 2012 standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide for the following routine of business prior to 2.15 p.m.:

- (1) at 12 noon the Speaker takes the chair;
- (2) the introduction and second reading speech on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills;
- (3) the giving of General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices); and
- (4) at the conclusion of the giving of General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) the Speaker shall leave the chair until 2.15 p.m.

A number of members already have requested an arrangement to allow for private members' statements to be made during that period. Because the budget will be handed down at 12 noon, during discussion it was considered more appropriate that members be permitted to make private members' statements during the week. The Government will facilitate that during normal Government Business time. I will hold discussions with the Opposition Whip and the Government Whip to facilitate those arrangements. Members will not lose their right to make their private members' statements in accordance with the previously existing arrangements. However, after 12 noon the budget will be presented on Tuesday 12 June.

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

Motion agreed to.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 18/55", dated 29 May 2012, together with the minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 17/55, dated 22 May 2012.

Report ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Stephen Bromhead.

PETITIONS

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

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**.

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**.

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

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

Pet Shops

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

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

Teacher Selection Procedure

Petition requesting a review of the current teacher selection procedure and Professional English Assessment for Teachers [PEAT] testing, received from **Mr Richard Torbay**.

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

The Hon. Robyn Parker—Garigal National Park—lodged 2 May 2012 (Mr Brad Hazzard)

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

By leave and pursuant to resolution the Speaker identified that General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 696, 697, 699, 701, 703 to 710, 712 to 714, 716, 718, 720, 721, 723 to 726, 728 to 738, 740 to 764, 766 to 771, 773, 774, 776, 777, 779 to 782, 784 to 786, 788 to 790, 792 to 794, and 796 to 801 had been reclassified as General Business (Community Recognition Notices).

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

PACIFIC UNITY FESTIVAL

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the Pacific Unity Festival as a gathering of Pacific communities and the general public to celebrate the multicultural diversity of Australia and to raise awareness of Pacific communities, their businesses, sport and the support services that are available to help the community.
- (2) Notes that the ninth Pacific Unity Festival brought together sport, food, arts, community service stalls and live performances and was held, for the first time in Western Sydney, at Lidcombe Oval on 19 November 2011.
- (3) Congratulates the organising committee and the festival founder Lee Hemi.

ROYAL NATIONAL PARK

Mr LEE EVANS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the staff and management of Royal National Park on the completion of the restoration of the dance hall and amenities at Audley.
- (2) Recognises the hard work of all members of staff of Royal National Park in maintaining and running the oldest national park in the southern hemisphere.

CAMPBELLTOWN YOUTH AMBASSADOR JOSHUA COTTER

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Joshua Cotter, of Glen Alpine, on winning the Youth Excellence in Community Service and the honour of being the 2011 Youth Ambassador at Campbelltown Rotary's Youth Excellence Awards.
- (2) Acknowledges the remarkable work Joshua has done as Campbelltown Youth Ambassador and commends his passion for the issues of youth in the Wollondilly/Macarthur region.
- (3) Notes the dedication Joshua exhibits within our community to ensure the voices of the youth in our community are heard through initiatives and forums.

"NAVIGATING TEENAGE DEPRESSION" INFORMATION SESSION

Mr BRYAN DOYLE—That this House congratulates the Rotary Clubs of Macarthur and the Black Dog Institute for holding a community information session "Navigating Teenage Depression" at Campbelltown on 16 November 2011.

SYDNEY MARDI GRAS

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes the rebranding of the Sydney Mardi Gras as a more inclusive event, reflecting the diversity of the Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender, Queer, Intersex (LBGTQI) community, and promoting the power of diversity in the wider community.
- (2) Congratulates Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras for its efforts to promote understanding and equality for LBGTQI citizens within the wider community.
- (3) Recognises the benefits of the annual Sydney Mardi Gras parade, including bringing over \$30 million to the New South Wales economy annually.

YOUNGCARE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House notes:

- (1) That there are 6500 young people, requiring 24-hour care, who due to a lack of appropriate alternatives live in aged-care facilities.
- (2) That Youngcare is seeking to make available more facilities for young people who require ongoing support.

CHLOE MCCARTHY GOLFING ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates teenage golfer Chloe McCarthy, of Cumnock, on winning the East Lakes Junior Open.
- (2) Notes that Chloe gained her early love of golf on Cumnock's nine-hole sand green course and travels to Mudgee to gain further experience.
- (3) Acknowledges the inspiration she provides to other children who live in rural areas that only have very basic facilities to start their sporting careers.

BLUE GUM HILLS REGIONAL PARK TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House notes:

- (1) The wonderful achievements of the Blue Gum Hills Regional Park and congratulates it on its 10th anniversary celebration.
- (2) The celebrations focussed on the theme of maintaining and strengthening ecological health through biodiversity.
- (3) That groups such as Our Green Corridor, Trees in Newcastle, the Hunter Bird Observers Club, the Wilderness Society, Wetland Care Australia, the Tom Farrell Institute for the Environment (Newcastle University), Newcastle City Council and NSW Fire Brigades took part in the celebrations.

SAILABILITY NSW

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the important work done by Sailability NSW in teaching children with a disability how to sail, as well as, to be social and interactive.
- (2) Commends Sailability NSW for its ongoing program of lessons at Kogarah Bay.

SPEEDWAY CHAMPION SAM MASTERS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sam Masters, of Jesmond, on his recent British Premier League title in Speedway, the highest individual rider achievement for competitors in the sport's second tier of racing.
- (2) Notes that, at 20 years of age, Sam is the youngest person to win this title.

BENDIGO BANK, NORTH RICHMOND BRANCH

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the board, management and staff of the North Richmond Branch of the Bendigo Bank which recently celebrated 10 years of providing banking services to the communities of the Hawkesbury.
- (2) Notes that the North Richmond Branch of the Bendigo Bank has donated over \$700,000 to not for profit community causes.

- (3) Acknowledges the contribution given by the honorary board over the 10 years, including, Bob Brierley and the late Bob McCallum as founders and manager Denise Handcock in establishing and managing the local community bank.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr LEE EVANS—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Sutherland Shire Community Transport recently celebrated its 20th anniversary.
- (2) Notes this largely volunteer organisation provides vital transport for the elderly and incapacitated.
- (3) Congratulates the staff and volunteers and looks forward to celebrating future anniversaries.

WOLLONDILLY ROAD TRAFFIC VICTIMS COMMEMORATION

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Wollondilly Road Safety Group at Wollondilly Shire Council and all those involved in organising the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, which was held on 20 November 2011 at Picton Botanic Gardens.
- (2) Acknowledges all the volunteers who help at traffic accidents and groups, such as the Rotary clubs of Wollondilly, who provide education to high school students.
- (3) Pays respect to all those lives, especially young people, that have died on Wollondilly Roads over the years.

NEWCASTLE CHAPTER OF BIKERS AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House congratulates the Newcastle Chapter of Bikers Against Child Abuse for its endeavour to keep Hunter children safe, especially, Boyd ("Torro"), Shane ("Sumo"), Jan ("Patience"), Ian ("Dobbo"), Mick ("Bubba"), Siropan ("Poojar"), Willy ("FJ"), and Astrid ("Assy").

BEST HERITAGE BUILDING AWARD RECIPIENT STEPHEN GEE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates:

- (1) Mr Stephen Gee, of Concise Architectural Drafting Designs, Glenmore Park, for winning the Best Heritage Building Award, for the restoration of a house under a heritage conservation order.
- (2) All Western Sydney winners at the Sydney Regional Branch of the Building Designers Association of New South Wales Awards.

WATER BOARD BOWLING CLUB AND WOMEN'S BOWLING CLUB FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Water Board Bowling Club and the Water Board Women's Bowling Club for celebrating its 40th anniversary on 19 November 2011.
- (2) Acknowledges club president, John McDonald, women's president, Frances Webb and all trophy winners.

BEVERLY HILLS INTENSIVE ENGLISH CENTRE

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre held a Spring Music Fusion Festival and opened a new library on 28 October 2011.
- (2) Commends the work of the Beverly Hills Intensive English Centre in teaching English to students from overseas to help their integration and further their education.

SMART INFRASTRUCTURE FACILITY

Mr RYAN PARK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the team at the SMART Infrastructure Facility, which was recently opened at the University of Wollongong.
- (2) Notes the new facility recently won a Master Builders Australia Excellence in Construction Award for tertiary buildings and congratulates the builders and contractors who have built this world class facility.
- (3) Congratulates the former State Government and the Federal Government on their partnership with the University of Wollongong to create this facility.

GULGONG GOLF CLUB

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Gulgong Golf Club for its outstanding corporate days that the club has conducted to raise money for local charities, including recently \$7,000 for the Gulgong Rural Fire Service.
- (2) Notes that the club was built by volunteers on the mullock heaps that were a relic of gold rush days and that today the club has more than 100 members.
- (3) Acknowledges the valuable sporting facility that the club provides to the town and its support for the local community and wishes it well in its future activities.

HAWKESBURY COMBINED PROBUS CLUB

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the importance of community based organisations for providing venues for seniors to meet in a social setting, exchange ideas and arrange a variety of social functions for members to participate in.
- (2) Notes that the Combined Probus Club of Hawkesbury has a membership of 170 members and thanks the President and Executive Committee for their work.

HOCKEY PLAYER MARIAH WILLIAMS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mariah Williams, of Hunter Sports High School, on being selected in the School Australia under 16 years girls hockey team to compete in international matches.
- (2) Notes that in the recent National Schools Championships, held in the Newcastle, Mariah was named the Player of the Championships.

CAMP KOOKABURRA

Mr LEE EVANS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Camp Kookaburra on its service to families dealing with mental illness, especially Pamela Brown on her management of the organisation.
- (2) Notes it provides respite camps to children dealing with a sibling or parent with mental illness.
- (3) Wishes Camp Kookaburra well in their expansion plans into the Illawarra, North Coast and West.

EID AL-ADHA FESTIVAL

Ms NOREEN HAY—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Hussein Salem and the Illawarra Muslim community on the 4th annual Eid al-Adha Festival held recently in Wollongong.
- (2) Acknowledges that the festival brings Muslims of different cultural backgrounds and the general community together to acknowledge and celebrate one of the most important days of the Islamic calendar.
- (3) Notes the celebration is based on the Abrahamic tradition of self sacrifice and submission.

DR MELINDA NEVE OBESITY RESEARCH

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Doctor Melinda Neve, a researcher at Newcastle University, on winning the Penn Foundation Post Doctoral Research Fellowship into Obesity.
- (2) Notes the funding of \$40,000 over two years will be used to conduct research into online weight loss and maintenance programs for overweight and obese adults.

OATLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the important role played by public schools in educating young people and providing them with a positive learning environment.
- (2) Congratulates Oatley Public School on the School Fair held on 5 November 2011, which was attended by students, parents and other members of the community.

RACE FOR KIDS CHARITY DAY

Ms NOREEN HAY—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Marianne Saliba, Margaret Bowen and the Disability Trust on hosting the Race for Kids Charity day at Kembla Grange Race Track.
- (2) Acknowledges the many sponsors who contributed to making the race day a success particularly Bears Auto Hospital, Macey Insurance Brokers, Illawarra Toyota Fleet, Akele Kinnas and Co., The Redlam, Harvey Norman, Kids Fund and Fitness 4 All.
- (3) Notes the outstanding work and services provided by the Disability Trust to those in need and their families across the Illawarra.

GOFOR GULGONG ORGANISATION

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the "Gofor Gulgong" organisation that for 10 years has raised funds to provide "gofors" to people who have restricted mobility.
- (2) Notes that the organisation was the brain-child of the late Ron Ross, of Gulgong, and now has a stock of 40 "gofors".
- (3) Acknowledges the valuable service that "Gofor Gulgong" provides for the communities of Gulgong and Mudgee and wishes it well for the future.

SALVATION ARMY WILLS DAY

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the sixteen Newcastle and Lake Macquarie solicitors, including lawyers from Baker Love Lawyers, who volunteer at the annual Salvation Army Annual Wills Day.
- (2) Notes the Wills Day allows people to have simple wills drawn up and will also raise funds for Clulow Court which provides crisis accommodation for women.

ST MARYS SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE DANCE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates:

- (1) St Marys Senior High School on receiving 16 call-back nominations for HSC dance.
- (2) Students Maricar Dela Cruz, Yuki Nakamura, Holly Walters, Lydia McDonald, Jacqueline Parks, Tanya Riebel, Amafea Asemaga and Raymond Parreno, and dance teachers Donna Sayah and Mel Jacka for their efforts.
- (3) St Marys Senior High School on achieving its highest level of call-back nominations in a single year.

LIFESTYLE SOLUTIONS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Lifestyle Solutions creates employment opportunities for people with disabilities or mental illness.
- (2) Congratulates the outstanding work of the Wallsend Community Nursery and Tony Still, the general manager of Lifestyle Solutions Social Enterprise, for the Lifestyle Solutions Work Assist Program.

ANZAC COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Pays tribute to our service men and women who have served Australia.
- (2) Acknowledges the Anzac Community Grants Program launched by the Minister responsible for Veterans' Affairs on 11 November 2011 at Granville Soldiers Memorial Park.
- (3) Notes that the Anzac Community Grants Program, established by the Premier, assists young people and migrant communities to develop a greater understanding of the Anzac story.

PROFESSOR PETER GIBSON ASTHMA RESEARCH

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House congratulates the work of Professor Peter Gibson, conjoint professor and John Hunter Hospital staff specialist, and his team for the development of a treatment which may halve asthma attacks in pregnant women.

PICTON BREAST CANCER FUNDRAISING EVENT

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Picton Branch of the Commonwealth Bank for hosting cupcake sales and the Quintessential Cafe for donating the cupcakes to raise money for breast cancer organisations.
- (2) Notes how important fund raising events are in helping to battle breast cancer.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Mr LEE EVANS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates all Rural Fire Service (RFS) volunteers.
- (2) Recognises the work that the Southern Region Headquarters, in Heathcote, plays in co-ordinating Rural Fire Service resources in fire emergencies.
- (3) Wishes all RFS volunteers and staff a safe summer.

WORLD DIABETES DAY

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes that World Diabetes Day on 14 November 2011 raised awareness of this important public health issue and congratulates everyone who participated in the day.
- (2) Encourages all Members to raise awareness of diabetes in their communities, which is now one of the fastest growing chronic diseases.

MUDGEES INDOOR SWIMMING COMPETITION

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Notes that five Mudgee indoor swimmers, Alyisha Beckingham, Georgi York, Luke Beckingham, James Newall and Thomas Smith recently competed successfully in competition at Glenbrook.
- (2) Congratulates: Alyisha Beckingham, seven medals and a meet record in 200m breast stroke; Georgi York, 9 medals and meet record in 50m freestyle; Luke Beckingham, 2 medals and eight personal best times; James Newall, 1 medal; and, Thomas Smith, four personal best times.
- (3) Congratulates Coach Mick O'Sullivan for his dedication in fostering junior sport in the Mudgee area.
- (4) Wishes the Mudgee Indoor swimmers all the best in future competitions.

(SYDNEY MAGAZINE) FOOD HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE ROLAND MELOSI

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates:

- (1) Roland Melosi, of Montecatini Specialty Smallgoods, on being inducted into the Sydney Magazine Food Hall of Fame.
- (2) Roland, his son Giovanni and Len Barone on their passion and entrepreneurial flair in starting and operating their business.

WOLLONDILLY GARDEN COMPETITION WINNER TANIA APPS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Tania Apps for winning the Wollondilly Garden Competition "Best Children's Garden" 2011.
- (2) Notes that in five years she has transformed her garden into a magical wonderland for children.

RIVERWOOD POLICE STATION

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes Riverwood Police Station Open Day, on 29 October 2011, promoted a positive relationship and openness between the community and local police force.
- (2) Commends the work of the police at Riverwood Police Station.

WESTERN REGION DRAGON BOAT REGATTA

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the outstanding success of the third Western Region Dragon Boat Regatta held on Lake Canobolas and the record 400 participants this year.
- (2) Congratulates Pearl Butcher, founder of the Colour City Dragon Boat Club, her team of helpers, and Dragon Boats NSW, for making the day a success.

U-TURN THE WHEEL PROGRAM

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the NRMA, Wollondilly Shire Council and Picton Rotary Club on the success of the U Turn the Wheel program for Year 11 students at Picton High School and Wollondilly Anglican College.
- (2) Notes the program gives students an understanding of the risks of driving, particularly the use of mobile phones and driving under the influence.

NSW CARERS AWARD RECIPIENT BRIGITTE KRSTANOSKI

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Brigitte Krstanoski on being awarded the NSW Carers Award for her work caring for her son Tony.
- (2) Recognises the work of the Nepean Area Disability Organisation, which nominated Ms Krstanoski for the care and support she extends to others.
- (3) Congratulates all recipients of the NSW Carers Award and acknowledges the hard work of those and other carers.

ST GEORGE MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE CULTURAL FOOD FAIR

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the Cultural Food Fair hosted by St George Migrant Resource Centre on 20 November 2011.
- (2) Congratulates the St George Migrant Resource Centre on this important event in celebrating the multiculturalism of our community through food and shared traditions.

CAMPBELLTOWN ROTARY TAFE ACHIEVER OF THE YEAR GERARD SMITH

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Gerard Smith, of The Oaks, on winning the Rotary Club of Campbelltown TAFE Achiever of the Year Award for 2011.
- (2) Acknowledges the hard work and dedication that Mr Smith has demonstrated over the last 3 years to win this award.
- (3) Notes the record attendance and the success of the 2011 award ceremony.

BRINGELLY SPORTS CLUB AWARDS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates:

- (1) Tracey McGrath, of Bringelly, on receiving the Bringelly Sports Club's annual Netball Sportsmanship Award.
- (2) Ellie McCracken, of the Bringelly Gumtrees, on winning the Bill Robertson Encouragement Award.
- (3) Bringelly's Green Team on winning the Ainsworth Family Trophy for the most successful team of the year.

HURSTVILLE WRITERS GROUP

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the Hurstville Writers Group held an awards event on 29 October 2011.
- (2) Commends the Hurstville Writers Group on its continuing work to promote literature and arts in the community.

FISHER'S GHOST FUN RUN AND AUTISM

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Fisher's Ghost Fun Run for raising funds and awareness of autism.

- (2) Acknowledges Aspect Macarthur for its ongoing efforts to cater for our children suffering autism.
- (3) Notes the support and courage of families affected by autism.

MOTHERHOOD PROJECT FOUNDER SUSAN MYIHTOI

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Susan Myihtoi on the publication of her book, *The Diamond Polishers*, which tells the story of Susan's upbringing in an orphanage in Indonesia.
- (2) Acknowledges Susan for establishing the Motherhood Project, a foundation that supports children living in orphanages in third world countries.
- (3) Acknowledges Susan for her work with Children in Australia in conjunction with Fusion Western Sydney.

APPIN KEEP AUSTRALIA BEAUTIFUL AWARD AND BICENTENARY

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the township of Appin in receiving the Keep Australia Beautiful Award.
- (2) Acknowledges the Appin Chamber of Commerce and all those involved in winning the award.
- (3) Notes the hard working individuals including the Appin Chamber of Commerce, the Bicentenary Festival Committee and other members of the community who entered the Bush Spirit award to celebrate 200 years of settlement in Appin.

PENSHURST MARIST HIGH SCHOOL

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the Graduation Mass and Dinner held on 21 November 2011 to commemorate the end of school for students at Penshurst Marist High School.
- (2) Congratulates the students and wishes them all the best for their future endeavours.
- (3) Notes the work of local high schools in raising money for Oatley community groups.

PRUDENCE AWARD RECIPIENT JOHN NOLAN

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates John Nolan, from Penrith Anglican College, on winning a Prudence Award for answering the highest number of consecutive questions correctly at the Australian Mathematics Competition.

BARGO PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Bargo Public School for winning the 2011 garden competition.
- (2) Acknowledges the hard work and effort of the Principal Anne Bunga, teachers and staff at Bargo Public School in creating the gardens.
- (3) Acknowledges the students who come in before school, lunchtimes and after school to work on the 20 gardens that the school maintains.
- (4) Notes that Bargo Public School has been involved in the Wollondilly Garden Competition, best school garden award, for the past several years.

GEORGES RIVER LIFE CENTRE

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the successful Men's Breakfast held by the Georges River Life Centre on 5 November 2011.
- (2) Commends the Georges River Life Centre for actively promoting issues of men's health and well being.

CA TECHNOLOGIES CAREER INTRODUCTION DAY

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Brittany, Emma, Jessica and Tiara, of Glenmore Park High School, for taking part in the Career Introduction Day at Software Company CA Technologies.
- (2) Commends CA Technologies for its interest in developing the skills of young female students.

MACQUARIE FIELDS POLICE AND COMMUNITY ABORIGINAL DEBUTANTE BALL

Mr BRYAN DOYLE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the success of the Macquarie Fields Police and Community Aboriginal Debutante Ball held at Leumeah on 19 November 2011.
- (2) Congratulates the debutantes, their escorts, elders and police from Macquarie Fields and Campbelltown.

CAMERON LOUREY AND MATT PARDY OUTWARD BOUND TREK

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Cameron Lourey and Matt Pardy, of The Oaks, who trekked through Namadgi National Park as part of the Outward Bound adventure.
- (2) Thanks the Lions Club of Tahmoor for supporting and funding the boys to participate and learn about self-confidence, perseverance and self development.
- (3) Acknowledges the good work of the Lions Club and its support to the wider community of Wollondilly, especially youth.

ST GEORGE DIVISION OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes that St George Division of General Practitioners held its annual general meeting on 4 November 2011.
- (2) Congratulates the St George Division of General Practitioners on its work to promote community health and its participation in community projects such as the Men's Shed.

CAMPBELLTOWN PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr BRYAN DOYLE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Campbelltown Performing Arts High School on its performance of the musical "Zombies" on 18 November 2011.
- (2) Commends Principal Robyn Pulbrook for her dedicated service to education.

ST JOHN AMBULANCE AWARD RECIPIENT LINDSAY BAWDEN

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Lindsay Bawden on his recent 'Save a Life' award from the St. John's Ambulance Service, presented by Her Excellency, the Governor Professor Marie Bashir.
- (2) Notes that Lindsay saved the life of a colleague by performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation after his heart stopped.
- (3) Acknowledges the support and service that other members of St John's Ambulance Service provide to the residents of New South Wales.

PORT MACQUARIE PINK LADY VOLUNTEERS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the contribution of the Port Macquarie Pink Lady volunteers as an invaluable resource to the Port Macquarie Base Hospital.
- (2) Commends in particular the 5 "Pink Men" (Des Joseph, David Naldrett, David Butterfield, David Woodhams and Chris Dwyer), who work alongside the almost 100 Pink Ladies.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENT DR ABU BAKAR JAAFAR

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Dr Abu Bakar Jaafar on winning the University of Newcastle's Convocation Medal for Professional Excellence at the 36th annual alumni awards.
- (2) Notes that Dr Jaafar graduated as a mechanical engineer in 1974, specialised in environmental science before working as a maritime expert, and served as an adviser to the United Nations and the Malaysian Government on maritime issues and the continental shelf.

RIVERWOOD COMMUNITY CENTRE

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Riverwood Community Centre on its festival held on 22 October 2011, which was attended by many members of the community.
- (2) Commends the work of the Riverwood Community Centre in providing much needed support to the vulnerable and disadvantaged in the community.

MARRICKVILLE WHITE RIBBON DAY EVENT

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT—That this House:

- (1) Notes the White Ribbon Day event was held on 22 November 2011 at Jarvie Park, Marrickville.
- (2) Notes that White Ribbon Day is an important opportunity for the community to renounce violence against women.
- (3) Congratulate Nicole Ryan and Multi Mix Mob for organising the Marrickville White Ribbon event.

MICHAEL ROBAR SPORTING ACHIEVEMENTS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 15 year old Michael Robar, of Glenmore Park, on his successful selection in two representative sporting sides.
- (2) Acknowledges Michael's dedication to softball and being selected to represent New South Wales in the national titles next year.
- (3) Congratulates Michael for also being selected for the Penrith Panthers Harold Matthews under-16 rugby league team.

INDIGENOUS NETBALLERS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the New South Wales indigenous netballers whose talents were on display in October 2011 at the Charlestown Koori Netball Tournament.
- (2) Commends this tournament to all locals as an entertaining display of top netball talent.

SYDNEY TO THE GONG CHARITY BIKE RIDE

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates cyclist Courtney Danyi, of Tahmoor, who rode in the Sydney to Wollongong charity bike ride and raised \$250 in sponsorship.
- (2) Thanks all those involved for providing support to those affected by multiple sclerosis.
- (3) Acknowledges the effort and support shown by the wider community for supporting such an event.

BOOKFEST

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Lifeline Newcastle and Hunter on its annual Bookfest which raises funds for its many services.
- (2) Wishes Lifeline Newcastle and Hunter a successful 2012 and offers its support to this organisation.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AND HUNTER TAFE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House commends the partnership between Newcastle University and Hunter TAFE to allow researchers and training specialists to work together on emerging energy and resources productivity and sustainability issues.

JAPANESE STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS BRADLEY TURNER AND NICOLA STAYMAN

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Bradley Turner and Nicola Stayman, of Harrington, for their inclusion in the Japanese JENESYS exchange program.
- (2) Notes the program aims to promote research exchanges with East Asian countries and Bradley and Nicola are part of 180 students selected to travel to Japan to participate in the program.

SHORTLAND TO WALLSEND LANDCARE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the wonderful achievements of the Shortland to Wallsend Landcare, on receiving three regional Landcare awards at the 2011 State Landcare Awards.
- (2) Notes the group won the Community Landcare Award, the Urban Landcare Award and its volunteer coordinator won the Champion of the Catchment Award.

BLACKHEATH RHODODENDRON FESTIVAL

Mrs ROZA SAGE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Blackheath Rhododendron Festival committee, led by President Sabine Erica, for making the 2011 festival such a success.
- (2) Acknowledges the success of the Debutante Ball as the finale to the Blackheath Rhododendron Festival.

MACARTHUR CREDIT UNION FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Macarthur Credit Union on its 40th anniversary, providing 40 years of security and banking assistance to the residents in the Macarthur region.
- (2) Commends the Macarthur Credit Union for providing \$30,000 to a variety of community groups including a grant to the Wollondilly SES for temporary lighting towers and the Oakdale Men's Shed.
- (3) Notes that the Macarthur Credit Union employs over 120 staff, many from the local area.

FOOD WITHIN FOUNDERS ALICIA AND NEIL MARTIN

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates:

- (1) Alicia and Neil Martin for founding Food Within, a micro-enterprise that provides families with cheap but healthy groceries in exchange for volunteer work and where families learn to budget, cook and live healthily.
- (2) The Martins on the official opening of their new warehouse in Orchard Hills.

CREATIVE ART SCHOOL

Mr GLENN BROOKES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mona Goubran, Director of the Creative Art School, for organising the inaugural Young Talent Art Exhibition held on 30 October 2011.
- (2) Recognises the work of the Creative Art School in supporting the artistic development of children.
- (3) Encourages the Government to continue its support for the creative arts.

DR IAN SEPPELT SEVERE BRAIN INJURY RESEARCH

Mrs TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates intensive care physician Dr Ian Seppelt for being awarded the 2011 Nepean Medal for his work in analysing the effects of the decompressive craniectomy procedure, a surgery designed to reduce the pressure after a severe head injury.
- (2) Thanks Dr Seppelt and his team for their courage and dedication in exploring and challenging conventional medical mindsets in the treatment of severe brain injury and the hope that this research, which is also being explored in the UK, will stimulate new ideas and breakthroughs in the treatment of severe head injuries.

REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S PRIMARY VISUAL ARTS COMPETITION WINNER KATE HADLEY

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kate Hadley, in year 4 at Bargo Public School, for winning the Regional Director's Primary Visual Arts Competition for her painting of a tree in her front yard.
- (2) Notes that the \$500 scholarship will allow Kate to purchase art supplies to sustain her passion.

REVESBY BLUE LIGHT DISCO

Mr GLENN BROOKES—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the excellent work being undertaken within the community by the Revesby Blue Light Disco.
- (2) Acknowledges Gloria Hansen and all of the volunteers of the Revesby Blue Light Disco for their dedicated work to the youth of the electorate for the past 28 years.
- (3) Congratulates Councillor Khal Asfor, the Mayor of Bankstown City, for hosting a Mayoral Reception for the volunteers of the Revesby Blue Light Disco on 23 November 2011.
- (4) Encourages the Government to continue its support for the work of blue light discos.

LINKS SHELL COVE GOLF COURSE

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the management and staff at the Links Shell Cove Golf Course on its involvement in the Sustainability Advantage Program since 2009.
- (2) Acknowledges that Links Shell Cove has managed to achieve significant energy savings in their water and electricity use resulting in annual saving to the club of over \$16,000.
- (3) Notes the outstanding commitment of Links Shell Cove to reducing power costs, promoting resource savings and conserving our natural environment.

TRIBUTE TO COUNCILLOR FAVORITO

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the resignation of Canterbury Council's longest serving councillor, Mr Favorito.
- (2) Thanks Mr Favorito for his contribution to the Canterbury community over the past 27 years.
- (3) Wishes Mr Favorito and his family all the best for the future.

INTERSEX DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Intersex Day of Remembrance was commemorated on 8 November 2011.
- (2) Acknowledges the importance of raising awareness about the challenges faced by intersex people.
- (3) Commends Organisation Intersex International Australia for its role in supporting and lobbying for the rights of intersex people.

FISHERMAN'S WHARF RESTAURANT, KIAMA

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the management and staff at Fisherman's Wharf Restaurant, Kiama on its involvement in the Sustainability Advantage Program.
- (2) Acknowledges that Fisherman's Wharf Restaurant has achieved energy saving of 6.7 megawatt hours of electricity and \$1,406 per year.
- (3) Notes Fisherman's Wharf Restaurant's commitment to reducing power costs, promoting resource savings and conserving our natural environment.

COOKS RIVER VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Welcomes and congratulates the newly elected office bearers of the Cooks River Valley Association.
- (2) Welcomes the new President, Judy Pincus, Vice President, John Butcher, Secretary, Nadia Wheatley, Treasurer, Richard Grayson and new Executive Members, Judy Hood, Julie Corkery and Peter Munro.
- (3) Acknowledges the great work undertaken by the Cooks River Valley Association, which aims to rehabilitate the Cooks River and improve the community's access to and relationship with the river.

NATIONAL STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE WEEK

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Notes that National State Emergency Service Week was marked on 7 to 13 November 2011.
- (2) Recognises the contribution of volunteers at the Canterbury State Emergency Service Unit and thanks them for their hard work and dedication.
- (3) Acknowledges the important role they have in helping people during floods, storms and other emergencies.

BLUEHAVEN AGED CARE FACILITY

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Manager Sonya King and the staff at Bluehaven Aged Care on its involvement in the Sustainability Advantage Program dating back to 2008.
- (2) Acknowledges Bluehaven Aged Care has achieved energy savings of a 10 per cent deduction in water use and a 22 per cent reduction in its electricity use.
- (3) Notes Bluehaven's outstanding commitment to reducing power costs, promoting resource savings and conserving our natural environment.

KOREAN SOCIETY OF SYDNEY DONATION

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the donation by the Korean Society of Sydney, of a pair of hand carved totem poles, at a special ceremony in Croydon Park.
- (2) Recognises that these totem poles are the first of their kind in Sydney.
- (3) Notes the totem poles mark 50 years since the establishment of full diplomatic relations between Australia and the Republic of Korea.

BERRY RURAL CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY LTD

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Berry Rural Co-operative Society Limited on its successful Centenary Celebration Dinner held on 19 November 2011.
- (2) Acknowledges the hard work and sacrifices of the board, suppliers, management and staff of the Berry Rural Co-operative Society Limited.
- (3) Notes the commitment of the executives during the centenary year, including Chairman Mr Timbs, Deputy Chairman Mr Miller, Manager Mr Abbott, Mr Bowley, Mr King, Mr Forsyth and Office Manager Mrs Watson.

CANTERBURY CHILDREN'S FESTIVAL

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Canterbury Children's Festival for a successful and enjoyable day held on 5 November 2011 at Harcourt Public School, Campsie.
- (2) Notes the day had many stage performances, activities and a variety of multicultural food stalls.
- (3) Acknowledges that the festival began in 1999, with the aim to promote peace and harmony within the community and to encourage understanding between different cultures, faiths and religions by teaching children its positive values.

KIAMA BLOKES BREAKFAST

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Andrew Chatfield for organising a successful Kiama Blokes Breakfast on 19 November 2011 to celebrate International Men's Day.
- (2) Acknowledges the contributions made by Councillor Brian Petchuler, Deputy Mayor of Kiama Municipal Council, local musicians Jedd Fraser, Max Fletcher and David Christopher and Dr Andrew Dalley.
- (3) Notes the sponsors who supported the event included North Kiama Neighbourhood Centre, Kiama Municipal Council, Ultra Tune Wollongong, Haworth Music and International Men's Day.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.

Community recognition notices agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Business Lapsed**

General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 87 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**State Infrastructure**

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.18 p.m.]: Madam Speaker—

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Hawkesbury needs no assistance from Government members.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: The reason this motion should be accorded priority is that it deals with two of the most important aspects of infrastructure concerning western Sydney and north-western Sydney, namely, the North West Rail Link and the Erskine Park link road. The motion will highlight the failure of the Leader of the Opposition when he was the Minister for Transport to lay one centimetre of track for either the North West Rail Link or the South West Rail Link, which are two of the most important strategic transport links in the growth areas of Sydney.

All members on this side of the House should be proud. Just over a year ago they pledged to their communities that they would advocate for better infrastructure in their areas. Today every member on this side of the House has been vindicated because the Government has committed to a record spend of just over \$62 billion, an increase of \$7 billion on what the previous Government committed to in the last four years. I can look the people of north-west Sydney squarely in the eye and be satisfied that we will honour a commitment to one of the most important pieces of infrastructure, that being the North West Rail Link. When members on this side stood in front of their communities 12 months ago they stood by the Premier.

The Premier said that we would make decisions based on needs and not on politics, as was the case with the North West Rail Link in the past. Never has one seen a greater political football than what the former New South Wales Government did with the North West Rail Link. It was promised in 1998 and then cancelled. It was promised again and cancelled. It went back and forwards like a political football. The former Government had no commitment to complete that rail link. Yet just over 12 months ago Premier O'Farrell stated quite clearly to the people of New South Wales that we will make commitments on the basis of needs and not on the basis of politics. There was nothing more genuine in that statement than what the Premier said about Blacktown, in committing \$300 million to fund the upgrade of Blacktown Hospital. Did we get so much as a thankyou from the Leader of the Opposition? Members should support me today, because this motion deserves to be accorded priority. *[Time expired.]*

Community Building Partnership Program

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.21 p.m.]: I move that the following motion be accorded priority:

That this House:

- (1) Recognises the vital importance of the Community Building Partnership program in western Sydney.
- (2) Notes that local projects funded in 2011 include:
 - (a) \$22,000 to the Parramatta Mission to build a social space for homeless and disadvantaged youth;
 - (b) \$40,000 to the Ashfield Baptist Church to refurbish its hall;
 - (c) \$32,000 to the King Tomislav Croatian Club in Smithfield to build a new outdoor area; and
 - (d) \$98,000 to the Schizophrenia Fellowship of New South Wales in Campbelltown to build a new training and workshop room at Harmony House.
- (3) Supports the maintenance of funding at current levels for the Community Building Partnerships program in the upcoming State budget.

This motion deserves priority because the Treasurer is getting ready to tell the community organisations of this State that they are on their own. Already Mike Baird has taken this State from a \$1.3 billion surplus to a string of deficits as far as the eye can see. He has been responsible for a 30 per cent debt explosion since March 2011 and is now in an all-out panic to preserve the State's triple-A credit rating. The voters of this State are asking: What is the point of amassing debt if we get nothing to show for it? The O'Farrell Government is borrowing money. By failing to invest the money it has given New South Wales a mortgage but it is not building the house. In next month's budget the Treasurer will slash services and jobs when he should be redoubling his efforts to stimulate the economy, to fund local projects and to get the concrete trucks moving and the tradies on the job.

There is no greater example than his disgraceful decision to cut the Community Building Partnership programs by \$50 million over four years. The member for Maitland today put out a press release calling this fantastic news, which just goes to show how out of touch she is. Today I issue a plea to Government members from western Sydney. We learned at the weekend that the men's sheds will be saved, but does that mean the local soccer club will miss out? Will Meals on Wheels miss out on its new kitchen? Which community groups will go away empty handed as a result of this wretched, mean-spirited decision? Which ones will be left crying at our electorate office front doors?

It is time for Government members from western Sydney to stand up and be counted. The member for Granville should stand up for organisations such as the Parramatta Mission. The member for Strathfield should stand up for community linchpins such as the Ashfield Baptist Church. The member for Smithfield should stand up for beloved organisations such as the King Tomislav Croatian Club. The member for Campbelltown should stand up for mental health recovery centres such as Harmony House, which received \$98,000. These projects brought smiles to the faces of people. They bring our community together and they create jobs. This Government is leaving people high and dry and destitute because of the miserliness of the Treasurer. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion of the member for Hawkesbury be accorded priority—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 64

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

Noes, 21

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

Pair

Mr Piccoli

Mr Furolo

Question resolved in the affirmative.**STATE INFRASTRUCTURE****Motion Accorded Priority****Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.32 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes:

- (1) the New South Wales Government is delivering the largest four-year spend on infrastructure in New South Wales history, including record investment in the North West Rail Link and Erskine Park Link Road; and
- (2) during his time as transport Minister, the Leader of the Opposition failed to deliver a single centimetre of new track on the North West and South West rail links, Sydney's most important missing rail lines.

On many occasions I have discussed in this House the importance of the North West Rail Link. Several times I have stated that it is my great pleasure to be part of a New South Wales Government that is getting on and delivering this integral link to the north-west areas, which have rapidly absorbed a massive amount of growth in the Sydney Basin over the past 15 years. The one missing strategic link has been the North West Rail Link. Strategic planning and the actions of the previous New South Wales Government do not correlate because for many years there was only political manoeuvring. However, now that this Government is getting on with the job, an estimated \$7.5 billion to \$8.5 billion will be invested in the North West Rail Link. I am proud to say that significant contracts have been released already, the corridor and stations have been identified, and there have been massive land acquisitions for those stations and car parking areas.

The previous New South Wales Government missed the fact that providing the North West Rail Link would alleviate heavy patronage on the western Sydney rail line that runs predominantly between Richmond, Strathfield and Sydney, and heavy traffic on Old Windsor Road, Victoria Road, Parramatta Road and Epping Road. To the shame of the former New South Wales Government, the North West Rail Link is being delivered some 14 years after it was originally promised. Another integral piece of infrastructure is the important western Sydney missing link to Mulgoa and Penrith: the Erskine Park Link Road—an integral link between the M4 and M7 for communities and the working population in those employment centres. The member for Penrith will speak more about that in due course. Often we consider infrastructure to be just heavy infrastructure: road and rail, sometimes bridges and airports. But there is much more to infrastructure. Sadly, social infrastructure gets overlooked, but this particular Government is building on it through a massive investment in education.

The Government is providing in its first term an extra \$60 million for school maintenance and infrastructure. The first budget allocated some \$289 million for school maintenance, representing an 11 per cent increase on the previous budget for school maintenance under the former New South Wales Government. As I said in my speech seeking priority for this motion, this significant increase in infrastructure spend of \$62.2 billion across New South Wales in this Government's current term is a \$7 billion increase on the previous four years under the former Government. Looking further into social infrastructure and social capital investment, we have our investment in ageing and disabilities. Through our good Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, Andrew Constance, \$2 billion has been committed in new growth funding to implement the second phase of Stronger Together, which will see the rollout of more than 47,000 new disability services and places between 2011 and 2016. [*Time expired.*]

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.37 p.m.]: If the Government were serious about debating economics, the identity of its lead speaker undermines that seriousness. One would not assign that task to the member for Hawkesbury. I move an amendment to the motion. I move:

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

"That the Government is delivering cuts to infrastructure spending, particularly to transport infrastructure and that this lack of spending is costing jobs in New South Wales."

The salient point to note is that after the Opposition released its paper yesterday and after the Leader of the Opposition's speech last night the Premier arrives in this place today with a killer response. Is it that bulldozers will be rolling out now on the North West Rail Link or the fast-tracking of the completion of the South West Rail Link? Is the Premier announcing a significant increase and commitment to match the Federal Government's spending on the Pacific Highway? The response is none of that. What do we get? We get 40 commuter car spaces at Granville, 240 commuter car spots at Oak Flats and a couple of other small announcements about commuter car parks in various places around the State with no commitment to a time line. On a Millennium train, for example, one carriage seats 104 people. Are the people of Granville supposed to say thank you to the Premier for 40 car spots?

There are 104 people seated and many more standing, and they get 40 car spaces at Granville. What a stunning comeback. I note that an entire paragraph—in fact, 50 per cent of the subject matter—of the Government's motion is directed to some sort of hidden criticism of the Leader of the Opposition. Government members need to realise a very salient point: They have now been in government longer than the Leader of the Opposition was Minister for Transport. Bad news, Barry—you and Gladys now own it. They have been in government longer than the Leader of the Opposition was the responsible Minister. They should get out of Opposition mode and start doing something. I wish I had 25 minutes to speak—if someone would like to move a 20-minute extension of time, I would be grateful.

Mr Troy Grant: Not for you.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I thank the member for Dubbo. I will deal with general government sector infrastructure spending. The facts and figures that I am about to give make a transparent mockery of what the Premier had to say in answer to criticisms during question time when he got the numbers wrong. Here are the correct numbers, which have been drawn from the budget and the monthly financial statements of Treasury. In 2010-11 there was a record budget for general government sector infrastructure spending of \$7.7 billion. What did we spend? We spent \$7.3 billion. Across the forward estimates, Labor spent \$7.3 billion. What has Barry O'Farrell promised? This year it is \$6.8 billion, next year \$6.7 billion, the year after that \$6.5 billion and \$5.2 billion for 2014-15. The Premier has not promised what we actually spent. In its first year of actual spending, from March to March, this Government spent \$1.5 billion less than our Government spent in its last year—\$5.8 billion was spent in Barry O'Farrell's first year and \$7.3 billion was spent in Labor's last year.

So far this financial year, only \$3.6 billion has been spent—half the budgeted amount after nine months. The Premier wanted to rabbit on today about total State infrastructure spending, so let me give him some figures. In the 2009-10 financial year there was a record budget under Labor of \$18 billion. What did we spend? We spent \$16.3 billion. What has Barry O'Farrell estimated? The figures are: \$15.3 billion, \$15.6 billion, \$16.4 billion and \$15.1 billion. When we account for inflation, we can see that he is not even promising what we actually spent. So for the Premier and his Treasurer to claim that they have a commitment to additional infrastructure spending is a simple and demonstrable lie. These figures are taken not from any paper issued by the Opposition, but from Treasury papers and Treasury websites that are owned—lock, stock and barrel, like the transport issue—by this Government. [*Time expired.*]

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [3.42 p.m.]: Given that members are not allowed 25-minute speeches on the motion, I will start with a disclaimer. It is fair to end this commercial break with Labor's infrastructure failures written and authorised by the member for Blacktown, John Robertson. If you were in government for 16 years and you left the State in its current condition, infrastructure planning must have been in a coma. That is how bad it is; that is the disgraceful legacy of the previous Government on infrastructure. In a short space of time the O'Farrell Government has managed to put the planning framework in place to get on with the job of building the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link. In greater western Sydney work has commenced on the Erskine Park Link Road. What a fantastic idea to build a road that connects major

infrastructure to places where people work. Who knows what might happen then? Businesses might invest in that land and create more job opportunities. That is a fantastic opportunity, is it not? But it did not start under the Labor Government.

What about making this city a destination? What about this Government's plan for the convention, exhibition and entertainment precinct at Darling Harbour? At Penrith we have seen investment in a new car park at Nepean Hospital, which will form an anchor for investment in new employment opportunities across the Penrith health and education precinct. Another good example in the Penrith area is the work being done on Victoria Bridge. Only last Thursday night—for the first time ever—we held a community consultation meeting to discuss the geographical location of a bridge. Real work is taking place in electorates across New South Wales. In south-western Sydney negotiations are taking place about the M5 widening. That is something the previous Government could never do. Labor told us it could not do it, but it is happening under this Government.

Whether it be the North West Rail Link, the South West Rail Link, bridges over the Nepean River, car parks at train stations and hospitals or four hospitals in regional New South Wales, this Government said it would focus on infrastructure and that is exactly what it is delivering. Whether it be in Sydney, in greater western Sydney, on the South Coast, on the North Coast or in regional New South Wales, these projects are real and they are taking place. All one needs to do is go to the electorates and listen to the people attending the meetings, listen to the people working on the North West Rail Link that will connect to the Richmond line, listen to the people planning the Leppington south-west extension, and look at the M5 East and M5 West widening. All those projects are underway. This Government is committed to infrastructure.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [3.45 p.m.]: It is interesting to sit on this side of the House and listen to the nebulous verbiage coming from Government members. They always talk about the past 16 years; they were so great they were in opposition for 16 years. Did they learn anything during that time? No, they did not. Infrastructure spending is down by \$1.5 billion. Has anything been built so far? The answer is no. There was a pre-election promise to build the M5 duplication. Has work started? No. What about the M4 East? No—just get a group together and wait until September for it to make a decision. The Government has a mandate—it has 69 members in this place—and it should be making those decisions, but it is leaving them to other people. The infrastructure will not be built. The North West Rail Link is all talk, no action—those opposite have not even been to Bunnings to buy a shovel to start digging.

Mr Michael Daley: And they are on special.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: And they are on special. Government members talk it up all the time but not a single piece of track has been laid. Speaking of track, let us consider the track record of the former Liberal Government under John Fahey. As Government members refer constantly to the past 16 years, what about the \$800 million airport rail link venture? Was that not a magnificent piece of infrastructure? Who was Minister Baird's chief of staff at the time? It was Barry O'Farrell. As the member for Maroubra would know, it was an absolute nightmare.

Mr Michael Daley: Nine hundred million dollars.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: It cost \$900 million. That was the legacy of the Fahey Government. Turning to the motion, Government members have had much to say about the Erskine Park Link Road. Dirt has been moved. The Erskine Park Link Road is a great project that was initiated by the former Labor Government. It is interesting to note that when the now Premier asked a question in opposition of former Premier Kristina Keneally, he could not even get the name right. He had no idea where it was—obviously the GPS signal was stuck on the North Shore. Did he know what the project was about? No, absolutely not—shame, Barry, shame. We know the Erskine Park Link Road links the M7 and the M4, as the member for Penrith said. As a member from western Sydney, I know that. But this Government can only dream about managing the construction of such a vital piece of infrastructure. We know how great the M7 is because who delivered it successfully? It was the former Labor Government. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.48 p.m.], in reply: It has been demonstrated this afternoon that Labor, formerly the New South Wales Government, has learnt nothing in the year that it has been in opposition. It is still playing politics. Look a little closer at Labor's record and its infrastructure spend and you see financial mismanagement and money wasted. At the end of the day we need to ensure that wherever we spend money we get value for it. I will address a couple of issues raised by Opposition members from their past—and not so long ago either. The humdinger was the half a billion dollars investment in the inner city metro—not a centimetre of which was delivered. Was that half a billion dollars budgeted? Absolutely it was budgeted. What did we, the people of New South Wales, get from that? Absolutely nothing.

One of Labor's public transport proposals that really would have helped people get on and off trains was the Tcard. Was \$100 million for this commitment included in its budget? It was, absolutely. But was the Tcard delivered? No, it was not. It was promised as far back as 2000, but was never delivered. Let us look closer to home at some of Labor's other investments. Labor included in its budget record spending on the Building the Education Revolution. But look at the scandals and the waste of money in public schools right across New South Wales. Buildings that should have cost New South Wales taxpayers and schools \$100,000 in fact cost up to \$1 million. Covered outdoor learning areas were rolled out. They were costing schools \$150,000 prior to the Building the Education Revolution program, but under that initiative they were costing almost \$800,000.

When considering budgetary spending and financial management we should look at the record, failures and history of mismanagement of the previous Government. Was that spending in Labor's budget? Absolutely it was. What was delivered by those projects? Absolutely nothing. That is the failure of the former New South Wales Government. In contrast, this Government has a record spend of \$62.2 billion over its term in office. The one thing that the New South Wales public can be absolutely guaranteed is that this Government will get value for money. We will deliver the car parks for Granville and Penrith, the \$300 million investment in Blacktown Hospital, the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link. But in addition the Community Building Partnership program, which is so vital for our communities, is delivering more infrastructure than any other government in the history of this country.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 64

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

Noes, 18

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

Pair

Mr Piccoli

Mr Furolo

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

FIREARMS AMENDMENT (AMMUNITION CONTROL) BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 10 May 2012.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [4.03 p.m.]: I support the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012, which will amend the Firearms Act 1996 to implement a number of reforms to strengthen the regulation of the sale of firearms ammunition in New South Wales. The first object of the bill is to prevent the sale of ammunition by a licensed firearms dealer to a shooter unless the purchaser is a registered owner of, or has a permit to acquire, a firearm that uses that ammunition. The amendment will further strengthen the current requirement that the purchaser must hold a category of licence or permit for a firearm that uses the ammunition. The second object of the bill is to require licensed firearms dealers to keep records of the sale of ammunition.

Whilst dealers currently must keep records of transactions that involve the sale of firearms and firearms parts, until now no such records have been required to be kept for the sale of ammunition. I find it astonishing that a person can buy ammunition without having to produce any evidence that it is for a firearm that the person owns or has permission to use. Beyond any documents produced in the commercial activities of a dealer, there is currently no way of officially examining any dealer transactions in relation to ammunition. That is unacceptable and that is the rationale for this bill. The number of shootings in Sydney has increased over a number of years and we know that many of those shootings involve organised crime.

If we are going to crack down on organised crime we have to ensure that criminals do not get their hands on ammunition. The measures contained in this bill will restrict the sale of ammunition by dealers to individuals who own a firearm that uses that specific category of ammunition, and firearms dealers will be required to record transactions of the sale of ammunition. They must produce those records when requested to do so by police. The amendments proposed in the bill will further restrict the potential for firearms ammunition to come into the hands of criminals, such as those involved in shootings in Sydney. Police will be able to access the records of ammunition sales held by dealers and that will assist in the course of their investigations.

These important measures will go a long way to enhancing the controls and improving the tools currently available to police in tackling crime involving firearms. The National Firearms Agreement 1996 stipulated that all Australian jurisdictions legislate to allow the sale of ammunition only for those firearms for which the purchaser is licensed and, in addition, that on the purchase of ammunition the relevant licence must be produced. A person will have to produce a licence to show that he or she is a licensed firearm user before that person can purchase ammunition. That has not been a requirement in this State until now.

Firearms licences in New South Wales only give information on the category of the licence held. By checking only the licence, firearms dealers have no way of confirming whether the person is purchasing ammunition for a firearm that person owns. This bill will amend the Firearms Act 1996 so that upon the sale and purchase of ammunition from a licensed firearms dealer the purchaser must hold and must produce a licence and a permit or notice of a registration of the firearm that uses that particular ammunition. This will help reduce the proliferation of ammunition into the hands of criminals by ensuring that the purchaser of ammunition is licensed to use a category of firearm for which the ammunition is specified and is also the owner of that firearm.

We know that about one in five firearms licensees do not own a firearm. They generally use their licence through registered or recognised rifle and pistol shooting clubs. To ensure that these individuals are not disadvantaged, the bill provides an exemption for club armourers—who are a class of firearms dealers—to sell ammunition to these licensed individuals who are members of the respective club for use in a firearm registered to that club. One may think that these are onerous measures for licensed gun owners, but it is essential to ensure that ammunition does not fall into criminal hands. I believe that the new requirements are a minor inconvenience for firearm holders when compared to the risk posed to community safety without such provisions.

It is also important that firearms dealers will be required to furnish to police any other information held by the dealer in respect to any ammunition purchased or sold by the dealer. These new provisions in the Act will be of great assistance to the police in their investigations. It may provide the evidence that is needed to bring a criminal before the court. To ensure that there is adequate lead time, particularly for the NSW Police Force to develop the necessary materials and create the forms for the register, and to ensure that dealers have enough notification, the bill provides that the Act will commence upon proclamation. This bill will result in a more stringent firearms regulatory environment and will ensure that our streets are safer. [*Time expired.*]

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.13 p.m.]: I note at the outset that the Opposition supports the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 but that it has some reservations about its efficacy. The bill is a symptom of a Government that is trying desperately to be seen to be fixing a problem without actually fixing it. As the shadow Minister for Police and Emergency Services said, the central flaw of this legislation is that once the ammunition leaves the shop door the Government has no way of tracking it. The bill does little to counter the secondary market of ammunition purchased legally but sold on the black market. Nor does this bill address the ongoing illegal importation or illegal local manufacturing of ammunition. It is for these reasons that the Opposition doubts that the bill will be effective.

As I have advised the House previously, the Opposition remains strongly supportive of the NSW Police Force and is committed to providing our police with the resources and the legislation they need to tackle crime. The Opposition recognises that controlling ammunition is a legitimate way of controlling gun crime. However, Opposition members fear that this bill may be insufficient to tackle the ongoing problem of gun crime in Sydney. I now turn to the bill. New section 45A requires licensed firearms dealers to keep a record of all sales and purchases of ammunition. I put to the Government that this proposal may simply encourage would-be criminals to purchase ammunition from unlicensed firearms dealers. If that happens, this proposal may have zero net effect on gun crime but impose an additional regulatory burden on honest small businesses.

Item [1] of schedule 1 to the bill will also require licensed firearm dealers to provide records to the police. This provision is aimed at increasing the transparency of the industry. The fine for non-compliance under section new 45A is 20 penalty units. I have asked the Government to consider whether this might be appropriate for those instances where non-compliance is linked to criminal activity, as opposed to where non-compliance might be an honest mistake. I put to the Government that 20 penalty units might be insufficient to discourage illegal behaviour. Item [2] of schedule 1 ensures that licensed firearms dealers can only sell ammunition to a purchaser who is licensed for a firearm that requires that ammunition.

The bill was considered by the Legislation Review Committee and included in Legislation Review Digest No. 2 for 2012, which was tabled in this place in February. The committee noted that the provisions within the bill that required individuals to provide personal details when purchasing goods may trespass on a person's right to privacy. However, the committee concluded that in the circumstances the public benefit in providing assistance to police to investigate criminal behaviour overrides this interest. The committee raised a similar concern about the provision to empower police to obtain records without the need to show reasonable cause.

However, given that the bill was designed to assist police in investigating and preventing criminal behaviour that endangers the public, the committee makes no further comment. I reiterate that the Opposition recognises that controlling ammunition is a legitimate way of controlling gun crime, but that in reality the bill will not tackle the ongoing problem of gun crime in Sydney. I have no doubt that Opposition members are not the only ones in this place who have concerns. I am sure members of The Nationals, including members representing the electorates of Monaro and Murray-Darling, also have concerns. Some of their constituents may also raise concerns with them, but at this stage I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [4.17 p.m.]: As has already been stated in this House, the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 has been introduced to allow for more stringent measures surrounding the purchase of ammunition, which is intended to assist police to tackle organised and other gun-related crime. New South Wales police have said that these measures will provide them with a solid base for collecting evidence about the transfer of ammunition between parties in cases in which no formal records have existed. Just about every day we read in the newspapers or see on our television screens members of our community, civic leaders and those opposite cry out for something to be done about gun-related crime in the community.

Trying to target organised criminals with these much tighter controls on access to ammunition is one way the police believe they can make a difference and ultimately make our communities safer. As legislators it is our responsibility to support all our law enforcement agencies, including our hardworking police, in their

endeavours to keep our communities safe and, in particular, address gun-related crime. Unfortunately, some groups of law-abiding citizens in our community have been caught in the crossfire, so to speak. Primary producers and sporting shooters are the two groups that have vigorously expressed to me their concerns and highlighted how they will be disadvantaged as a result of the unintentional consequences of the legislation.

I acknowledge that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place tabled a draft regulation that addresses some of the concerns of primary producers. In his second reading speech the Minister noted that the concerns, which were highlighted by his Nationals colleagues on behalf of the farmers and primary producers they represent, have been listened to and have been addressed subsequently in the regulations. However I have spoken to members of a number of sporting shooters groups in my electorate and I certainly understand the legitimate concerns they have raised. I have spoken to many of these members about the details of the bill. In most cases they are happy that we as a government are making it tougher for criminals, but they are not happy that they have been swept up in the issue. I will share some of the issues raised. The president of the Taree-Wingham Sporting Shooters Association states:

We are extremely concerned about the proposed bill and its probable negative implications.

It would seem unlikely that a person illegally in possession of an illegal firearm would be able to buy any ammunition for such a firearm from any business that is authorised to sell ammunition.

A firearm owner states:

In relation to the proposed ammunition changes, I find there are some very perplexing and worrisome problems that are going to surface that will do absolutely nothing to curb the drive by shootings in Sydney.

Again and again law abiding gun owners are penalised for the actions of the criminal few. Where are the statistics that show the majority of gun crimes are committed by licensed firearm owners?

Gun crime is largely committed by illegal firearm owners, changing the legislation regarding purchase of ammunition will have no impact on this criminal element at all.

The Port Macquarie Small Bore Rifle Club states:

Although we recognise that some action must be taken to stop the recent spate of drive by shootings in Sydney, we see this legislation as nothing more than a knee jerk reaction.

The vast majority of shooters in this state are ordinary, law abiding men and women and the members of this club are no different. We take our sport very seriously and are fully aware of the responsibilities gun ownership entails.

At present the process of purchasing ammunition requires the dealer to record the shooters licence number, the type of ammunition and quantity. This legislation will now require the dealer to see proof that we own the firearm and to record the shooters address.

There is no valid reason for the dealer to record the address of someone purchasing ammunition as the information is already held at the Firearms Registry.

And, finally, a professional shooter states:

Currently the Firearms Act already limits firearm owners to purchasing ammunition for firearms they are licensed to use. The proposed bill is designed to limit firearm owners to only be able to purchase ammunition specifically for the firearm they own.

This is a ridiculous imposition that will surely have no impact on those who commit firearm related crime, as it has been previously demonstrated overwhelmingly that those criminals do not have firearm licenses or own registered firearms anyway.

They are examples of correspondence my office has received on this issue. As I said earlier I have personally contacted everyone who has contacted my office and who has raised concerns about the bill. Unfortunately, the problems are not generated by members of those groups, or by primary producers, or by professional shooters: They are generated by criminals, and that is who we need to stop. The Australian Crime Commission and Australian Institute of Criminology say that although firearms are acquired illegally through various means, the only way to acquire ammunition in Australia is through legitimate dealers. Let me make it very clear: We have listened to the issues and objections raised by these law-abiding citizens and we are doing everything possible to reduce the impact on them through the regulations. My Nationals colleagues have had full and frank discussions on this issue and, through the Hon. Rick Colless in the other place, we have worked closely with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to address these concerns.

Issues concerning access to ammunition by sporting shooters and primary producers have been discussed by the newly created New South Wales Firearms Consultative Committee. The committee comprises representatives of many of the stakeholder groups who use firearms legally, as well as the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, and the Shooters and Fishers Party. The committee has considered the issues, established how legislation affects legitimate firearm users and reported back with recommendations on the regulations. As I have explained to the concerned legal shooters who have contacted me, the legislation will not come into effect until regulations have been reviewed and adopted.

If all people played by the rules, we as a government would not have to be taking the actions set out in this bill, but in order to achieve a safer community, we need to do just that. As the Minister for Police and Emergency Services acknowledged in the other place, the objectives of the Firearms Act and indeed most firearms legislation stipulate that firearms' possession and use is a privilege that is conditional on the overriding need to ensure public safety. This is about making our streets safer, our homes safer and our communities safer. I reiterate to primary producers and sporting shooters in my electorate that their concerns have been listened to—by me as their local member, by my colleagues who include the Hon. Rick Colless and by the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services.

As a member of the Liberals-Nationals Government, I am confident that primary producers and sporting shooters in my electorate will continue to be listened to and that a majority of their concerns will be addressed through the regulations associated with the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012. In conclusion, I thank the Minister for listening to the concerns expressed by The Nationals, for acknowledging in his second reading speech in the other place the unintended impact of this legislation on law-abiding firearm owners and, finally, for taking positive steps to reach a resolution.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.24 p.m.]: I support the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 because it aims to address the increasing spate of drive-by shootings and gun crime that has plagued the streets of western and south-western Sydney. The shootings that gathered momentum in the second part of 2011 have victimised the residents of my electorate of Fairfield. Since the O'Farrell Government came to office there have been more than 100 shootings in western and south-western Sydney. The shootings have taken place in the suburbs of Fairfield, Yennora and Guildford—suburbs that I represent in this House. The drive-by shootings and gun crime generally take place on local streets and in neighbourhoods. Bullets have been found in homes, local businesses and even inside the walls of a public school. Local residents have every right to feel afraid and let down by this Government over its failure to put an end to the gun crime.

I support this legislation because it attempts—I emphasise "attempts"—to address the gun crime epidemic in our community. I note in his second reading speech on this bill the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, made the point that the bill aims to provide additional support to our law enforcement agencies to tackle gun-related crime. However, I take issue with the Minister laying claim to this Government addressing the drive-by shooting epidemic in western Sydney in a strategic and proactive manner. It was not until February this year, when the number of drive-by shootings was fast approaching 50, that the Government realised that there was indeed a problem in western and south-western Sydney. By the forty-seventh shooting and after months of denial, the Government rushed the Crime (Criminal Organisations Control) Bill and the Crimes Amendment (Consorting and Organised Crime) Bill into the Parliament.

However, at the same time it is the same O'Farrell Government that by February 2012 presided over the loss of 14 uniformed officers from the Fairfield Local Area Command since September 2011. That begs the question: Has the O'Farrell Government been strategic and proactive in addressing the drive-by shooting epidemic or, as I suspect, is it busily implementing reactive policies because it has been caught sleeping on the job. I point also to the practical effect of this bill. It does not introduce a new instrument to tackle gun crime in New South Wales. Instead it will supplement existing laws that were introduced by the former Labor Government. The Firearms Act became law in 1996 under the stewardship of a former Labor Premier, Bob Carr. In his second reading speech, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, summarised the Firearms Act 1996 as follows:

The current Firearms Act 1996 requires that a person must not sell or purchase ammunition for any firearm, unless the purchaser is a holder of a licence or permit for a firearm which takes that ammunition or the purchaser is authorised to purchase it by a permit and the seller has seen the respective licence or permit.

This bill seeks to limit the transaction relating to ammunition to only those who are the holders of a licence or a permit and also to keep a record of the particulars of the purchaser of ammunition. This includes the name and address of the purchaser and the serial number of the requisite licence or permit. It is evident that the changes proposed in this bill are not a steep change in firearms control policy. It is a logical incremental step for firearm control legislation—legislation that is already in existence. The real yardstick by which the O'Farrell Government should be held to account is how long it has taken to introduce these measures. The O'Farrell Government has lauded the need for these measures since February this year. However, it is only now that members of this House will have a chance to debate the bill, whereas these laws should have been in force months ago.

It is a sad day for the people of New South Wales when the Government introduces legislation of this nature—legislation that creates a perception that members of the community who hold and use firearms and are not law enforcement officers are presumed to be criminals, in particular members of rifle and shooting clubs and people in rural areas who have a legitimate need to use firearms. It is important to note that this legislation does not intend to attack the legitimate activities that they undertake, because nine out of ten times these classes of people use firearms in a safe and responsible manner. However, there are members in the community who feel the need to treat their firearms as weapons to intimidate and harm other people. They do so without regard for everyone else in the community. I commend this proposed legislation.

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [4.30 p.m.]: The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 introduces more stringent measures surrounding the purchase of ammunition. This is intended to assist police to tackle organised and other gun-related crime. As a responsible member of this Government I must look seriously at all options at our disposal to ensure that our streets and homes remain safe. Police have said these measures will provide them with a solid base for collecting evidence about the transfer of ammunition between parties where no formal records have existed before and help them in their war against gun-related crime. I make it absolutely clear that I loathe those that are involved in the current drive-by shootings in suburban Sydney and other gun-related crime that have plagued this city, have caused fear in the suburbs and made our streets unsafe.

But we need to be sure when considering new legislation to address a serious issue that we do not inadvertently have an impact on the majority of the law-abiding gun owners in our community. When I threw my hand up to become a member of Parliament and in turn was given my community's trust I said that I would perform my duties to the best of my ability, being honest with myself and my community and not compromise on the principles that have steered me well in life. I am committed to be part of a team that brings commonsense back to government and clearly addresses the concerns of our communities in a responsible and balanced way. At times I will be asked to make decisions based on what is best for the whole of the State as well as what is best in my electorate. I will never make decisions based on political convenience, only on what is right.

This bill involves exactly one of those moments when reason and commonsense need to prevail. The essence of the bill needs to be scrutinised to find the balance. Over the past months I have listened to many of my constituents who have raised compelling concerns about this bill. I have forwarded those concerns on, through the Hon. Rick Colless from the other place, in his role as The Nationals gun spokesman, and he in turn has relayed them to the Minister. It must be noted that the Minister and his office were always forthcoming with their replies and were very understanding of our concerns. I have made it my job to understand the implications of this bill. I have been part of a group attempting, through either amendment or regulation, to ensure that the bill addresses the many concerns we have heard. We have made a huge step forward with this legislation through regulation changes, some already tabled and others that will be forthcoming shortly.

I am still concerned about a number of issues, particularly the impact of this legislation on gun clubs and recreational shooters. These issues need to be addressed so I can say this bill is appropriate and balanced against commonsense. One must also consider the impact of this legislation on the many sporting shooters who borrow firearms from a family member or a friend to shoot on a range. They will not be covered by the provision that will apply to primary producers, and that remains an area needing further resolution. I do understand the nuisance that will be brought about by additional administrative red tape placed upon firearms dealers and sporting shooters, issues that await resolution, and which I am confident can be achieved. Many other members in this House have highlighted what the bill includes and what outcomes the bill will deliver, so I will not bore the House by repeating the principles of the bill.

What I will talk about is how I and my Nationals colleagues have worked within the parameters of government to improve the bill so that we do not impact inadvertently on law-abiding gun owners. The bill has led to vigorous correspondence to many Nationals members of both this House and the upper House in relation

to possible unintended consequences for rural firearms owners and sporting shooters. This has led to robust and frank debate within our party room and our leadership team. The Nationals party room has worked and continues to work closely with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to fully address these concerns. Already, as a result, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services has tabled a draft regulation that addresses some concerns of primary producers and their employees. Although these changes will be a welcome relief for primary producers, I remain concerned about the impact of this legislation on recreational and sporting shooters.

We will continue to address, in trust, with the Minister the issues around access to ammunition by sporting and recreational shooters through the newly created New South Wales Firearms Consultative Committee. The Nationals will be represented on the committee by the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, along with the New South Wales Police Registry, the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, New South Wales Farmers, the Sporting Shooters Association, the New South Wales Firearms Dealers Association, the Australian Rifle Association, the Amateur Pistol Association, the Game Council, the Antique Arms Collectors Society, the Firearms Safety and Training Council, the New South Wales Rifle Association and the Shooters and Fishers Party.

This is a fantastic initiative and one we have received much praise for. For the first time we have been able to get many of the stakeholders to the table so that we can work towards an outcome that achieves the intent of the bill but at the same time appeases the holders of many of the concerns. The committee will consider the issues, establish how the legislation affects small business and legitimate firearms users, and report back with recommendations on regulations that will assist them. Of course, in an area such as the Monaro with a cross-border community any cross-border issues that arise will be dealt with through the appropriate forums including the Standing Council on Police and Emergency Management. What needs to be highlighted is that the legislation will not come into effect until the regulations have been reviewed and adopted. I am confident that now, with all parties sitting at the table, we will find a balance.

The member for Toongabbie said that he had not seen a more monumental failure by The Nationals than this legislation since the Coalition came to government. What a hypocrite. Many on the other side who have spoken on this bill oppose it but do not have the guts to speak out. More importantly, they have done nothing to address the many concerns and issues. As I explained earlier, I and my Nationals colleagues did not throw our hands up and surrender but worked constructively to make sure that our constituents were being heard and that their concerns were being addressed. It is The Nationals who have seen the regulations come though and The Nationals will ensure that we continue to address those outstanding issues.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Bankstown has had her opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr JOHN BARILARO: Unfortunately, many on the other side have shown no ticker on this. They have shown no interest in working through the issues but have decided to play politics as always and not add anything positive to the debate. It is very difficult to introduce any firearms legislation that does not have unintended consequences for legally licensed firearms owners. It is equally true that it is very difficult to introduce any types of laws in this land without impacting on people who abide by the rules most of the time. In this case we again face a situation where we must change some regulations to make it difficult for the minority who do not abide by the laws of this State but not impact on most people who abide by the laws while using equipment that is potentially dangerous. I sincerely thank the Minister for his approach to this matter. I note that there will be negotiations, but I am confident and have assurances that we will reach a resolution shortly.

Today I stand by the many law-abiding gun owners in my electorate and I am determined to find the balance. Through the good work we have already done and with the work still to be done we will find the balance between tackling organised and other gun-related crime in this State and not impacting unduly on those who always do the right thing. Being in government is not always easy and being a government member is even harder. But my commitment when elected was and remains still today to be honest with my community and do what I believe is right for all who live in this great State.

I note also that the statutory review of the Act is due next year. If these amendments have inadvertently impacted negatively further than what was foreseen or have not achieved what they were designed to do, I will be again seeking to address those issues. I have trust in the Minister, and I have trust in the work we, The Nationals, have done to date to ensure further regulatory amendments can be made. I will continue to make the best decisions without compromising my principles. I ask those law-abiding gun owners, primary producers and sport and recreational shooters to now have trust in me and The Nationals that we will continue to fight their cause and rid this State once and for all of the organised and other gun-related crimes on our streets. I thank the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.38 p.m.]: The objects of the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 are to amend the Firearms Act 1996 as follows: first, to prevent the sale of ammunition by a licensed firearms dealer to a shooter unless the purchaser is the registered owner of, or has a permit to acquire, a firearm that takes that ammunition, in addition to the existing requirement that the purchaser must hold a licence or permit for a firearm that takes that ammunition; and, second, to require licensed firearms dealers to keep records of purchases and sales of that ammunition.

Gun crime is rife in western Sydney. I am being realistic not an alarmist. Too many firearms, most likely unregistered, are floating around the streets of our suburbs being used to terrorise our communities. Although most recent drive-bys—approximately 100 since the O'Farrell Government came to power—are perceived to be specifically targeted, a stray bullet can still take away an innocent life in a flash. To have nearly 100 shootings in just over a year for a new government is not good. There were two such shootings in Canley Heights, in my electorate of Cabramatta, over two days earlier this month. My diverse community has a high proportion of residents who left countries at war and came to Australia to escape the fear of living constantly under the threat of guns and bullets. They came to this country and to our city to experience peace and freedom. As legislators and their representatives in the oldest Parliament in Australia we have the responsibility to make laws that will protect them.

Members of The Nationals who have spoken in this debate have said this piece of legislation will cause problems for farmers, ammunition dealers and licensed shooters. I understand that concern but, unfortunately, that is an unintended consequence. I should like to draw an analogy. When I was a child I lived on an 11-acre farm that had many trees that had to be removed. My father would buy boxes of gelignite and dynamite from the local hardware store without signing anything. Neighbouring farmers whose properties were not cleared did the same thing. A year or so later my dad then had to sign for those items and later he had to have a licence to use such material. Eventually it became too difficult to purchase explosives but, fortunately, he had made enough money to hire D9 and D7 equipment to clear the properties. Some members of The Nationals understand the problems farmers face, and good luck to those who do not.

My analogy demonstrates how regulations and legislation evolve. If we did not have regulations regarding the sale of dynamite, we would not be concerned today with drive-by shootings; we would be experiencing drive-by bombings. Sometimes obscure laws are needed. If the Firearms Amendment (Ammunitions Control) Bill reduces drive-by shootings by only 10 per cent or 15 per cent it will be worth it and I support it. This bill further regulates the firearms industry in New South Wales. Law enforcement needs appropriate resources to fight the war against gun crime: adequate police staffing, a tough and heavy-handed legal system, and legislation controlling the supply of guns and ammunition. A gun is of no use if it has no bullets to fire. The bill tightens up who can buy ammunition and makes sure that prospective buyers can buy ammunition only if they are the registered owner of a gun or have a permit to acquire a gun that uses that ammunition.

As I said earlier, these provisions are additional to existing legislation that requires the purchaser to hold a licence or permit for a gun that uses such ammunition. Additionally, licensed firearms dealers will be required to keep records of their purchases and sales of ammunition. These records must be made available to police at any time, and police will be allowed to make copies. This will help police to investigate gun crime and assist in making our communities safe once again. The bill will make a difference on the streets of Sydney. It is a pity it took the O'Farrell Government so long to act. The Labor Opposition will support this bill to improve the safety of innocent citizens. The Labor Opposition will continue to judge legislation on its merits and look after the best interests of all communities in New South Wales; unlike the former Coalition Opposition, which opposed everything just for the sake of it. The spate of drive-by shootings in Sydney has to stop. Tightening the regulations on purchasing ammunition will stop ratbags from buying bullets for their mates. We are taking a stand against gun crime. The Opposition does not oppose this bill.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [4.43 p.m.]: I have been told that the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 was requested by the Commissioner of Police. Any Premier who does not take action on a request from the commissioner would be regarded as recalcitrant. One has to wonder how a high-ranking police officer would suggest that this piece of legislation would address the occurrence of drive-by shootings in western Sydney. Perhaps he knows something the rest of the State does not. When this bill was introduced I thought it seemed innocuous but after I read its contents closely I could not see how it would reduce drive-by shootings in western Sydney. I should like to draw upon the comments of Breil Jackson, the editor of *Guns and Games*, who stated in the April-June 2012 issue of that publication:

The problem seems to have started with the Police Commissioner who at the launch of these laws stated that he can't understand why someone with a shotgun licence can buy handgun ammunition. The Police Commissioner needs to read the Firearms Act. Someone with a shotgun licence, Category A, cannot currently buy Category H ammunition, and has not been able to for at least 15 years. The whole premise of these laws is based on a misconception. The new laws the commissioner thinks he needs, are actually already in place. It also stands to reason that 80% of the guns recovered in crime have no record of ever being registered, they have likely been illegally imported. If they can bring the guns in, they can bring in ammunition, as well as all sorts of other contraband such as drugs.

You can restrict the sale of ammunition all you like and the criminals will still do exactly the same thing that they have always done. This is going to create an enormous amount of paperwork for a firearms dealer and a lot of frustration for shooters. Frustration, because you will have to cart the registration papers for every firearm around with you when you want to buy ammunition. They are going to get lost, they could be stolen, this information has your address on it, it has the firearms you own on it—and exactly what they are. If you don't have that paperwork, you can't buy ammunition.

Those comments certainly represent strong criticism of the bill and are typical of comments to me from firearm owners in my electorate. I would have loved to have provided local licensed firearm owners with a valid reason why this bill was necessary and how it would work. They said that they would support it wholeheartedly if it decreased drive-by shootings. The bill's whole composition is infantile. Firearm licence owners have a licence number, just like a Medicare card, without an address, but the bill requires that names and addresses have to be recorded. This requirement is a return to the past. This bill probably has as much chance of working as one that requires a permit to purchase petrol. We know that petrol is used in the cars driven around western Sydney by those committing drive-by shootings. Surely we should be able to track where the petrol is being sold.

The real losers in the Murray-Darling electorate will be licensed ammunition dealers. Their sales will go to Victoria and South Australia because these draconian laws do not exist in those States. In this House we hear much talk from both sides about how police officers are respected and the importance of their presence on our streets. Police officers to whom I have spoken consider this bill a waste of time as it will create more brain-damaging distraction from their real duties. While drive-by shootings take place in western Sydney police officers will be inspecting records of ammunition sales. If the police commissioner is serious he can do one of two things. He can stake out western Sydney with police. That would be hard work and more police numbers would be needed, but it worked in Vietnam for the Australian Infantry when it ambushed some guerrilla fighters.

It is a time-consuming exercise and uses many resources, but it is a serious approach to what needs to be done. The other approach involves the owner of a house the subject of a drive-by shooting—who is actually a criminal too, because he or she knows exactly who shot up the house and caused the problem. In Victoria laws are being passed to ensure that such people have to give evidence before the court. The person is holding back from the police vital information about who conducted the drive-by shooting. This approach has to be pursued. The lives of neighbours of that individual are at risk because a criminal is living in their street and attracting attention. The firearms consultative committee has been set up. I will read the proposed terms of reference into *Hansard* because I am sure that many firearm owners in my electorate would like to know what it is about.

Aim:

The aim of the Firearms Consultative Committee is to provide a formal forum for consultation, information dissemination and advice to the New South Wales Government on issues relevant to the firearms community.

Roles:

The Firearms Consultative Committee's objectives will be:

1. To monitor and advise the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on the operation of the provisions of the Firearms Act 1996 and other legislation relevant to firearms.
2. To provide advice to the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on legislative proposals that affect firearms legislation.
3. To facilitate inter-organisational co-ordination, co-operation and information sharing arrangements for key stakeholders within the firearms community.
4. Such other functions as are conferred or imposed on the Consultative Committee by the Minister, from time to time.

[*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Chair and Secretariat:

The Ministry for Police and Emergency Services will Chair and provide secretariat services for the Working Group. The Parliamentary Secretary will be designated as Deputy Chair.

Membership:

The Working Group will consist of one representative from each of the following organisations:

Ministry for Police and Emergency Services (Chair)
The National Party of Australia (Deputy Chair)
NSW Police Force (Firearms Registry)
NSW Police Force (State Crime Command's Firearms and Major Organised Crime Squad)
Shooters and Fishers Party
Firearms Dealers Association
Sporting Shooters Association of NSW
NSW Farmers
NSW Shooting Association
Game Council of NSW
NSW Amateur Pistol Association Inc.
Firearms Safety and Training Council
NSW Rifle Association
Antique Arms Collectors Society of NSW

With a review of firearms legislation due in the next 12 months and the formation of this consultative committee, I place a lot of hope in there being some reforms. There is no doubt that the regulations that we work under in New South Wales are the most severe of any State's. There has been a big impost on shooters in this State, and law-abiding citizens continue to be marginalised and sought out to bear the brunt of some of this legislation that will impact directly on them. Licensed firearm owners in this State—187,000 law-abiding citizens—have always been seen as a target. Hopefully, we will see some regulations in the future that make sense, and we can review the ammunition bill on the basis that the concerns of firearm owners in the Murray-Darling are heard and we start to see some common sense in the way we manage things in this State, because right now I cannot see my way to supporting the bill in its current form. I look forward to changes in the regulations on the basis that they will reflect the concerns of people in my electorate and that we will see positive outcomes.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [4.53 p.m.]: The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 is intended to amend the Firearms Act 1996 to make further provision for the purchase and sale of ammunition. The purpose of this bill is to assist police to tackle organised and other gun-related crime. Unfortunately, no evidence has been provided to date that shows how this bill will achieve this desired result. I have to say from the outset that this bill is fundamentally flawed. It is flawed because it targets the wrong people. The bill makes it tough for law-abiding registered gun owners instead of criminals. Once this bill is passed the law-abiding public will have to deal with the additional costs and red tape associated with owning a firearm. Farmers, sporting shooters and gun shop owners are the ones who will carry the cost, and for the criminals it is business as usual.

When the gun buyback was on law-abiding citizens handed their guns in; the criminals did not. The bill operates on the same premise: its impact will be felt mostly by honest people and not the villains. The bill, once enacted, will require that a person, before purchasing ammunition, will have to apply for and be granted an ammunition permit. The permit will carry a \$30 fee. Many firearms owners own a number of guns. This is just an additional impost on law-abiding people and is seen by many in my electorate as a money grab. There are over 3,000 registered firearms owners in the Clarence electorate. The bill will also add a layer of red tape when farmers or sporting shooters have to purchase ammunition: when someone applies for a permit to purchase ammunition they will have to complete the appropriate forms. This takes time—much longer if individual permits are required for each gun. This is the flaw with the bill.

Honest people will pay the additional cost, honest people will fill out the forms, but the criminals will not—they will steal their ammunition or bring it in illegally. It will not stop the drive-bys. The bill requires that an ammunition permit can be issued only by the Commissioner of Police. It does not clarify whether the information is to stay on the premises or is to be sent to the firearms registry. There is potential for the details of gun owners and their ammunition stock to fall into criminal hands. This poses a security risk for families and shop owners alike. Families will be at risk because their names, addresses and firearms details will be kept in stores across my electorate. After all, criminals get their weapons and ammunition by stealing them.

The bill unnecessarily increases cost, bureaucracy and security requirements for thousands of good, everyday people. It will affect them for years to come; every time they buy ammunition they will curse us. People's lives and businesses will be affected needlessly. I have had representations in my electorate office from farmers, sporting shooters and gun shop owners about this bill. They are angry that they are at the centre of the

bill, not the criminal elements that are perpetrating gun crimes around the State. Ask the people of my electorate how gun-related crimes can be stopped, and they will tell you: introduce mandatory sentences for anyone carrying an illegal firearm—after all, they are the bad guys.

I know that the bill has led to some quite vigorous correspondence being received by many Nationals members of Parliament and members of the Legislative Council about possible unintended consequences for rural firearms owners and sporting shooters. I know that The Nationals party room is working closely with the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to address those concerns fully and that a draft regulation, which has been tabled, seeks to address the concerns of primary producers and employees. I also know that issues around access to ammunition by sporting shooters will be addressed by the newly created NSW Firearms Consultative Committee.

This committee will receive representations from a wide range of organisations including the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, the NSW Police Registry, the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, the NSW Farmers Association, the Sporting Shooters Association, the NSW Firearms Dealers Association, the Australian Rifle Association, the Amateur Pistol Association, the Game Council, the Antique Collectors Association, the Firearm Safety and Training Council, the New South Wales Rifle Association, and the Shooters and Fishers Party. This is a legitimate effort by a wide array of organisations to improve the mechanics of the legislation. Unfortunately, introducing regulations to sweeten up a flawed bill is like putting lipstick on a pig: at the end of the day it is still a pig. As a Coalition we came to government with a commitment to reduce regulations; with this bill we are increasing regulations, for very little gain.

But I can say that the Shooters and Fishers Party did not stand up for farmers and sporting shooters in the other place. At least The Nationals are prepared to negotiate some practical regulations to ameliorate the impact of this legislation for farmers, sporting shooters, gun shop owners and law-abiding citizens. Nonetheless, I believe this bill will hurt ordinary law-abiding citizens and let the crims carry on as usual. I am proud to be a member of The Nationals, I am proud to be a member of the Coalition Government, and I am proud of the achievements of the Coalition Government over the past 14 months. This Government has lifted New South Wales out of the mire that it had been in for the past decade and introduced sensible legislation and policies. But this legislation is wrong and I am extremely disappointed that it is being debated in this place.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.01 p.m.]: I will make a contribution to debate on the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012. I have listened closely to the contributions to debate on this bill here and in another place. I have paid close attention to the comments made by crossbench members elsewhere and by colleagues in the Liberal Party and The Nationals who have spoken at length about the implications of this bill. Whilst I find myself agreeing with many of the arguments raised during the debate, I am to a very large extent guided in my response by the sentiments expressed by my constituents, many of whom took the time to speak with or write to me directly about their concerns with the proposed legislation, and its potential to deliver unforeseen or unintended consequences that may adversely impact the businesses and livelihoods of large numbers of gun shop proprietors and the sporting shooters who rely on those shops for their ammunition supplies.

It ought to be recognised that legitimate questions have been raised with me and with many of my Nationals colleagues since the bill was introduced in the other place in February. The views of these constituents have not been taken lightly; nor have they been ignored. I assure the House that these matters have been canvassed at length with the most senior members of the Government and that every effort has been made to draw attention to the likely implications for the firearms fraternity if measures are not considered as part of this legislative package that will limit or minimise the unintended negative consequences that have been identified and may arise following the likely passage of the bill through Parliament.

I understand that measures designed to deal directly with many of the concerns raised will be addressed by way of regulation. Clearly, the substance of these regulatory measures will largely determine the success or otherwise of this legislative reform. A key part of the reform rests with the creation of the NSW Firearms Consultative Committee and how successfully it addresses the ammunition access issues raised by sporting shooters. Among the members to be represented on the committee is my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, The Nationals member for Tweed. Clearly, any recommendations arising out of this process must directly address the concerns raised with the committee or run the very real risk of failing to deliver an acceptable outcome for small businesses and firearms users affected by these legislative changes.

I abhor the reckless criminal behaviour engaged in by the individuals involved in the recent spate of drive-by shootings in suburban Sydney and other gun-related crime. As a police officer for 22 years I saw firsthand, particularly during my time as a member of the Major Crime Squad North Armed Hold-up Unit, the lifelong and devastating impacts that gun crime has on victims. In principle, I would support any reasonable legislative measure that demonstrably limits opportunities for the unlawful acquisition of firearms and ammunition. However, it is far too early in the process for a realistic assessment to be made of whether the legislative measures outlined in this bill and the accompanying regulations will have the desired outcome. This goes to the heart of much of the considerable conjecture within the shooting community since the tabling of the bill. While I do not condone the more extreme reactions that this bill has provoked, I appreciate the understandable passion it has engendered within the firearms fraternity.

Going through the provisions of the bill would be a little pointless at this stage of the debate given that most of the important aspects have been highlighted and were the subject of considerable discussion during its passage through both Houses. Earlier speakers have articulated clearly the aspects of the bill that have caused the greatest amount of concern to shooters. I can well understand the frustration brought about by placing additional administrative burdens upon firearms dealers and sporting shooters. Measures to placate the concerns raised with colleagues over the bill's likely impact upon primary producers have, I understand, been addressed by the draft regulations tabled by the Minister in another place. I know that the Minister has endeavoured to accommodate the concerns raised with him by my Nationals colleagues and by me. I believe and trust in our Minister.

Whether the Firearms Consultative Committee can overcome the remaining perceived shortcomings of the proposed legislation is less clear. I have every confidence that The Nationals will continue to do as they have always done: make decisions in the best interests of their constituents. The passing of this bill should not be interpreted as an indication that the interests of firearms enthusiasts have somehow been diminished or considered of lesser importance than the overriding need to address an escalating crime situation in the capital city. It may be of little comfort to the firearms fraternity in this instance, but without their valued insight on the implications of this legislation for their businesses and livelihoods, I suspect the measures introduced would have been far less effective than they might otherwise be.

Finally, I indicate to the House that this is an area of policy change that has weighed heavily on my mind and on the minds of my Nationals colleagues in recent weeks. I am not comfortable with all aspects of the bill, but I recognise the need to introduce more stringent measures to clamp down on access to illegal firearms and ammunition. The Minister has placed great faith in the legislative changes he is introducing and must ensure that those changes lead to a significant improvement in the detection and capture of the individuals engaged in unlawful activities, which is what the bill is designed to enable. No doubt firearms dealers and the sporting shooters fraternity will join me in watching these events with a great deal of interest and will be quick to remind the Government of the shortcomings of its legislation if these changes fail to provide any additional benefit in curtailing the current Sydney shooting spree.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.08 p.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012. The issue of firearms is very important to me personally and to all members of The Nationals. Many of our friends, families, neighbours and members are licensed shooters and registered firearms owners who use their weapons primarily for farm management reasons. Mr Assistant-Speaker, like you, I grew up on a farm and I also learned to shoot at a very young age. My family still owns the farm. The friends, families and neighbours that I am speaking about have learned to use firearms and ammunition in a very responsible manner.

This amending bill will have collateral consequences for some groups of law-abiding firearms owners, including those who hold a firearms licence for primary production purposes. Of course, the illegal acquisition of firearms and their use is to be condemned and must be considered a criminal offence of the highest order. I agree that law enforcement agencies must be given every possible support to tackle gun-related crime, including the importation of illegal weapons and the importation or acquisition and subsequent use of illegally acquired ammunition. But in its original form the bill disadvantaged law-abiding, licensed individuals who have genuine reasons for being granted a firearms licence.

I acknowledge that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services recognised that and made several amendments that are sensible and that address a number of concerns raised by New South Wales farmers. The majority of farmers in New South Wales have a firearms licence—they hold category A and B licences, which allow them to use rimfire and centrefire bolt action rifles and shotguns for on-farm use, such as to control pest

and feral animals or to euthanise injured and ailing livestock. Those categories of licence do not permit the use or ownership of semiautomatic or pump action weapons. It is an accepted fact that many weapons and unknown quantities of ammunition are imported illegally into Australia. Australian Federal Police and the Federal Government must make addressing that issue the highest priority. Most of those illegal weapons are pistols of varying calibres and they cannot be purchased or sold in New South Wales or in Australia, but of course those importing them do not abide by the laws of this land.

Many primary producing families in this State have two or more family members who hold a firearms licence but the firearms on the property are registered to only one family member. I understand that the Minister has already introduced regulations to allow employees, other family members, contractors or anyone else working on a farm, to obtain a permit to allow them to purchase ammunition. I congratulate the Minister on addressing that issue. I am also gravely concerned about the impact of this legislation on gun clubs and gun shop owners and on the many sporting shooters who borrow firearms from a family member or a friend to shoot on a range. They will not be covered by the provisions that will apply to primary producers. The proposed legislation will impact on the many people who enjoy shooting in New South Wales if we cannot resolve this issue.

[Interjection]

I hear an interjection from the Opposition. It is interesting that Labor and The Greens now take the high ground on this issue. They ignored it for more than 16 years and did nothing. Now they want to attack the law-abiding citizens of regional New South Wales through legislation such as this. The Greens are also going berserk and making threats about taking all guns from all law-abiding citizens who live in regional communities. It is a shame they are misrepresenting constituents who live in regional New South Wales. This bill impacts upon law-abiding citizens—sporting shooters and farmers, and others who overwhelmingly undertake the ownership of firearms in a law-abiding, professional and appropriate way.

I reiterate that drive-by shootings are carried out by people who obtain firearms and ammunition illegally. Imposing further restrictions on legal firearms owners will not have a great impact on those offenders because they do not abide by the laws of this State and the shootings are an ongoing problem. Many club members and concerned citizens have made representations to me about their very legitimate concerns. I still have outstanding issues with the legislation and I cannot support the bill in its current structure. I am concerned as to what regulations will be imposed, but I am keen to continue discussions with the Parliamentary Secretary about the stakeholder meetings that are taking place in relation to this matter.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.14 p.m.]: I express my concerns about the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012. Much has been said about this legislation. I say at the outset that I am not a firearm owner, and I never have been. I note that a number of firearm owners have addressed not only this House but also the other place. We heard in this House from the member for Coffs Harbour, who is a firearms user and owner, and also from the member for Mount Druitt. The issue of drive-by shootings in Sydney is a serious one for this Government, as it was for previous governments. It is a difficult issue that will not be solved overnight and it requires a determined and sustained effort from the legislature, the police and the judiciary to address it.

In the swift and comprehensive way it has responded to the issue of drive-by shootings the O'Farrell Government has demonstrated that it has the determination and political will to curb this violence. The Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Bill has been enacted and consorting provisions of the Crimes Act have been beefed up to prevent people found guilty of an indictable offence from associating with other convicted offenders. New offences created by the raft of new legislation include knowingly benefiting from the activities of a criminal group, directing the activity of a criminal group, directing the activating of a criminal enterprise that is planned and organised, and firing at a dwelling house as part of an organised criminal activity.

The recent legislation designed to remove bikie gangs from the operation of tattoo parlours is another creative use of legislation to combat serious crime. The Government should rightly be commended for introducing that raft of legislation. Law-abiding gun owners would also support that legislation wholeheartedly. We all support the efforts of our law enforcement agencies in cracking down on gun crime. This bill was conceived as a further legislative response to this increasing violence. However, it has been met with anger, resentment and frustration in regional areas. The many letters and emails I have received on the issue are a testament to those feelings. The correspondence highlights the wide-ranging concerns and anger about the impact of this legislation on law-abiding gun owners and small business operators in country areas.

I have received correspondence from people in Mudgee and right across my electorate, like Mr Wayne Burgess from Orange. People have contacted me to express their concern, their frustration and their anger about this legislation. While the sentiment behind this legislation is understandable, concerns about its overall effect and effectiveness remain. I share those concerns. Efforts have been made to address the concerns of law-abiding gun owners through the regulations associated with this bill. The Firearms Consultative Committee has so far produced a couple of amendments designed to meet some of these concerns.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I do not know whether the member for Cessnock has contributed to this debate—

Mr Clayton Barr: Yes, I have.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! In that case, I draw the member's attention to Standing Order 52, which states that members will be heard in silence, and ask him to allow other members to contribute to the debate.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The work of the Firearms Consultative Committee has been carried out in good faith and the work of the committee will continue. But what correspondents have said to me is that the regulations simply highlight where the burden of this bill falls, and that is on law-abiding gun owners in regional New South Wales. Law-abiding gun owners have a number of issues with this legislation. They fear that the recording and storage of information relating to ammunition will just provide a potential shopping list for criminals and could well be stored in a variety of places. For hardworking small business people it just means more red tape. All this information needs to be collated and stored by gun shop owners. Small business people have enough red tape to deal with, without having to add a whole new layer of bureaucracy and regulation. The message they are sending through loud and clear is: Enough is enough.

Despite the proposed regulations, resentment towards the legislation from farmers remains. At the heart of the anger felt by firearm owners in my electorate is that gun owners in the Central West are hardworking and law-abiding citizens. They abhor drive-by shootings in Sydney as much as other law-abiding citizens, but they are angry that they are the ones who will bear the burden of this legislation. They are the ones who are being made to feel like criminals in circumstances where they do not believe the legislation will stop real criminals engaging in gun crime in Sydney. Even with the amendments, for many in the Central West the bill represents more red tape, more bureaucracy and more regulation. I share their concerns. In its current form I do not endorse this bill, I do not support this bill and I do not seek to have any legislative holy water sprinkled upon this bill. What law-abiding gun owners want, support and endorse are tough laws that hit real criminals. The concerns of law-abiding gun owners need to be addressed and taken seriously. They feel aggrieved and slighted by this legislation.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [5.21 p.m.]: The Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 was introduced on the back of an escalation in the number of drive-by shootings and crimes involving firearms. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government introduced a suite of measures to try to stop gun crime and drive-by shootings being committed by organised criminals, bikie gang members and other criminals. Some of those measures include amendments to consorting laws to toughen up those laws to make it easier for police to obtain convictions relating to those offences. They also include amendments to the gang laws and increased penalties for crimes with guns. Also, through the Commissioner of Police, the Government has established a police task force that has achieved more than 560 charges this year alone. This bill is another piece in a raft of legislation intended to make life harder for organised criminals.

However, my electorate sees that this bill will make life harder for law-abiding firearms owners, registered dealers and gun shop owners. Much work needs to be done. I have spoken with many registered firearms owners in my electorate about this bill. They have given me feedback and let me know their thoughts on what is wrong with the bill. As well as primary producers, I have spoken with members of gun clubs, pistol clubs, firearms shooters, sporting shooters and individual firearms owners who have expressed concerns about the bill's impact on them. I will share some of the correspondence I have received on this issue. Dick Letchford, a retired detective inspector from Tamworth, holds this view about the amendments to the Firearms Act in relation to the purchase of ammunition:

Now for all persons who are licensed shooters, I don't think that there is much of an inconvenience to them when purchasing ammunition, because all they will buy is ammunition for the weapons that are registered to them. Now if the aim of the change in legislation relating to ammunition is to stop the drive by shootings it is destined to fail.

An example: A person (called A), who is a licensed shooter for handguns, as most of them will possess a number of different calibres for their target shooting. Most shooters reload their own ammunition for the weapons they legally possess. This person has no criminal convictions, however he has a number of associates, who have criminal tendencies and possess illegal hand guns. They need ammunition for a weapon (say a 9mm.) which this person also legally possesses. He goes to the gun shop and purchases say 1000 projectiles of 9 mm, cartridge cases, percussion caps and powder, which could be done over a number of days from different gun shops or on line. He reloads that ammunition and then sells it to the persons in possession of illegal hand guns.

Another example comes from the Sleightholmes, who recently sold Tamworth Firearms having owned the business for 11 years. They say:

What if you have a .357 rifle and you want to buy .38 ammunition for it, this would not be allowed even though the rifle can chamber the two lots of ammunition. In the same situation what if the Firearms Registry has issued the wrong calibre on the registration places, or worse what if people still had duplicate copies of firearms they have already sold. It also presents a problem if those registration papers are stolen, from your car. This would give the criminals all the information they need, the client's name and address.

As a result of those concerns in my community and across regional New South Wales, a number of regulations are being introduced. These cover purchasing ammunition while not holding a firearms licence. That was a major concern for primary producers; however, it is being addressed through the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Permits) Bill 2012. This allows primary producers, employers and employees to obtain a permit so that an employee, spouse or partner can purchase ammunition on their behalf. It is a start, but let us not lose sight of commonsense. We need to go further. For example, the Ammunition and Club Armourers Regulation will enable the armourer of a club to resell ammunition to members of the club on the day of competition.

My community is also calling for consideration to be given to small business owners who deal in firearms and ammunition. They will be burdened with the red tape of recording extra data and downloading the information in a timely manner. In some cases they may need to employ an extra staff member. That will add more cost to their bottom line—something that small businesses can ill afford. At present they only need to record names when powder is purchased, not ammunition. We must get this right. Whilst trying to stop the offences of gun crime, drive-by shootings and organised crime being committed by bkie gang members and other criminals, we need to consider and not disadvantage the thousands of lawful, registered firearms owners in this case in the Tamworth electorate. We need to take into consideration the dealers and the gun shop owners who will have to deal with the added red tape of recording ammunition sales. We need to explore ways of making it easier for them to do this.

The committee that was tasked to come back with the regulations has completed its review. However, there is a suggestion that committee members will be retained and required to review and report on the complete firearms Act next year. It is hoped that they will consider the issues, establish how the legislation could be amended to look after small businesses and legitimate firearms users and report back with commonsense recommendations on regulations that will assist them. Members of the committee include the New South Wales Police Registry, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, the NSW Farmers Association, the Sporting Shooters Association, the New South Wales Firearms Dealers Association, the Australian Rifle Association, the Amateur Pistol Association, the Games Council, the Antique Collectors Association, the Firearm Safety and Training Council, the New South Wales Rifle Association, and the Shooters and Fishers Party.

I put that on record so people in my electorate can contact those organisations to ensure that they will continue to voice their concerns. I will continue to listen to and receive feedback from my community so that we can inform the committee and the Government about practical, commonsense regulations that do not disadvantage the thousands of regional registered and law-abiding firearms owners and the dealers who play an important role in the small business sector and in our communities. I thank each and every person who has taken the time to contact me, and I encourage others to do so. I want to be at the table when decisions are made so that I can represent my constituents. It is important for me to work collaboratively with the committee in order to get the best result possible from this legislation and the regulations. I stand with my community.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.28 p.m.]: The object of the Firearms Amendment (Ammunition Control) Bill 2012 is to amend the Firearms Act 1996 to prevent the sale of ammunition by a licensed firearms dealer to a shooter unless the purchaser is the registered owner of, or has a permit to acquire, a firearm that takes the ammunition. That is in addition to the existing requirement that the purchaser must hold a licence or permit for a firearm that takes the ammunition. The second part of the object is to require licensed firearms dealers to keep records of purchases and sales of ammunition. The intent of this bill is to implement a series of reforms to strengthen further the regulation of the sale and transfer of firearms

ammunition in New South Wales. The measures are aimed at preventing ammunition from coming into the possession of criminals who may use it for illegal activities, such as robberies and drive-by shootings. The provisions of the bill are not meant to disadvantage appropriately licensed individuals, such as members of a shooting club. The Legislation Review Committee in its digest dated 21 February dealt with a few concerns. I will quickly comment on those concerns. The report states at paragraphs 15, 16, 19 and 20:

15. The Committee notes that similar provisions requiring the recording of personal details are contained in the *Firearms Act 1966* in relation to the sale of firearms.

The Committee notes that introducing legal requirements to provide personal details when purchasing goods may trespass on a person's right to privacy. However, the Committee is of the view that in these circumstances the public interest in providing assistance to police to investigate criminal behaviour overrides this interest.

16. Clause 1 of the Bill inserts into the Firearms Act 1996 provisions which empower a police officer to obtain records without documentation to show reasonable cause for the acquisition of such records. Such a provision may trespass against personal rights and liberties. The Committee is of the view however that these provisions are designed to assist police in investigating and preventing criminal behaviour that endangers the public.

Empowering police officers to obtain records without the need to show reasonable cause may in some circumstances trespass against personal rights and liberties. However, the Committee considers that the provisions in the Bill are designed to assist police in investigating and preventing criminal behaviour which endangers the public and as such the Committee makes no further comment in relation to these provisions.

19. Imposing strict liability is often seen as contrary to the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. However, the imposition of strict liability will not always trespass on personal rights and liberties. The Committee considers that the above two offences are designed to support public safety and assist police in investigating criminal behaviour.

The Committee notes the strict liability offences contained in the Bill however considers that the offences are designed to assist police in investigating criminal behaviour and support public safety. As such the Committee makes no further comment in relation to these provisions.

20. The Bill provides for this Act to commence on a day or days to be appointed by proclamation. In the Second Reading speech the Minister commented that this is to allow time for the NSW Police Force to develop and agree on appropriate forms of record keeping and advise dealers in advance of the new requirements under the Act.

The Committee will always note where commencement of an Act is delegated to the Executive, once passed by the Legislature. However, the Committee notes that commencing the Act by proclamation will allow time for appropriate procedures to be developed to support the objectives of the Act. The Committee also notes that commencement by proclamation will allow time to advise those affected of the new requirements under the Act. Accordingly, in these circumstances, the Committee does not consider there to be an inappropriate delegation of legislative powers.

That last point allows proclamation to occur when the requirements of this legislation can be suitably enacted when appropriate systems, licences and paperwork are in place. I plead with the Commissioner of Police to make the system as easy as possible and user friendly to the vast number of legitimate law-abiding shooters in New South Wales. I have many friends who are extremely responsible and law-abiding shooters and gun owners. I know they understand that this legislation is to protect the police and the community from those who have illegal guns and who use them in committing crimes. Neither they nor I know how effective this legislation will be, but when the police ask for help in protecting the community we are obliged to give that help. I think I can say that this is probably not the most popular legislation to be introduced into this Parliament, but I think it is best summed up by the contribution of the member for Mount Druitt, who led for the Opposition during debate on the bill, when he said:

Because of the emotion behind certain offences and crimes we are all frog-marched as legislators—both sides of the political fence—into supporting them. That is why, I assume, the Government is introducing the bill and the Opposition, of which I am a member, is supporting it. I do not know why, but we will not oppose the bill. We do have to be seen to be doing something and that is why both sides of the House will support this ...

We have an obligation to provide the police with appropriate weapons to fight crime, and this bill is one of those weapons. If this bill saves one victim of illegal firearms, it is worth supporting. I simply implore the Commissioner of Police to make the operation of this legislation as easy as possible for the vast bulk of responsible and law-abiding legal gun owners and shooters. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.34 p.m.], in reply: I represent the Minister for Police and Emergency Services during this reply to the second reading debate on the Firearms Amendment (Ammunitions Control) Bill 2012. This bill has strategic and proactive measures to provide necessary additional support to our law enforcement agencies. It is one part of a range of measures being taken by the Government to respond to drive-by shootings. I am pleased that the Opposition has taken the sensible path of supporting the bill. The bill has engaged a number of members and constituents. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has spent time with stakeholder groups and their representatives, along with members of Parliament, to listen to and address the concerns they have raised.

I thank members who contributed to debate on the second reading of the bill, including the members for Myall Lakes, Toongabbie, Camden, Sydney, Rockdale, Cessnock, East Hills, Lake Macquarie, Mount Druitt, Coffs Harbour, Northern Tablelands, Coogee, Bankstown, Port Macquarie, Fairfield, Monaro, Cabramatta, Murray-Darling, Clarence, Dubbo, Bathurst, Orange, Tamworth and Port Stephens—a total of 24 members. I particularly thank my Nationals colleagues for the time they have taken to speak with their local communities about this bill. They have proven that they are attentive to the needs of their unique constituencies. No-one could ever accuse them of not advocating strongly on their behalf. Given the issues raised during the debate, it would be remiss of me not to address some of them.

A number of members raised concerns about access to ammunition, especially by those who hold a firearms license but who either do not have a firearm registered in their name, or at times may wish to borrow a firearm. Much of that concern is couched in terms of inconvenience—inconvenience when purchasing ammunition and the inconvenience of asking the owner of a borrowed firearm to also provide ammunition. Members should be aware that the possession of a firearm is conditional to ensuring public safety. As we have said on previous occasions, public safety must be paramount in all decisions relating to this issue. A lot of firearms owners are responsible, such as primary producers for whom a firearm is a tool, not a weapon. Currently 13,000 primary producers are registered firearm owners. There are also sporting shooters associations. In a short time, the London Olympics will commence and one of its events will be shooting, which will include shotgun target shooting. In the past, Australia has scored well in Olympic shooting events.

With a licence comes responsibility—a principle that was highlighted by the Firearms Act 1996. We recognise that those who purchase ammunition will be additionally inconvenienced, but it will be a very minor inconvenience in the context of preserving public safety. Inconvenience must be considered in the context of the overriding principle of imposing controls on firearms and ammunition to ensure public safety. For firearms owners, the inconvenience amounts to carrying and producing the registration certificate or permit required when buying ammunition. This minor inconvenience is to ensure ammunition is being purchased for a firearm that the purchaser has a lawful and genuine reason to use. For those who borrow firearms, the minor inconvenience is that they will need their friend to provide them with ammunition as well.

The member for Toongabbie also raised the inconvenience caused to parents who will be unable to purchase ammunition for a minor who is borrowing a firearm of a calibre different to their firearm. While the Government recognises that parents have busy lives, we do not believe that the public safety benefits of these proposals should be ignored to continue unrestricted access to ammunition. I appreciate that there are legitimate reasons why a person who is not a registered owner of a firearm may need to purchase ammunition. This issue was raised with the Government and we have responded to it. We have responded to the very real concerns of firearms licensees, particularly those in rural and remote areas who have family members in primary production, who use or purchase ammunition for a firearm registered to a spouse or parent, or employees who purchase ammunition for firearms registered to their employers.

These concerns will be met through a regulation under the Firearms Act 1996 that will create a permit to acquire ammunition in limited circumstances. The details of the permit will then be recorded in the same way as a certificate of registration or permit to acquire a firearm. My colleagues on this side of the House have also raised concerns about access to ammunition for sporting shooters. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services recently established a Firearms Consultative Committee and this was the first issue the committee considered. The committee's members are drawn from key stakeholder groups, including the Firearms Dealers Association, the NSW Rifle Association, the Antique Arms Collectors Society of Australia, the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia, NSW Farmers, the NSW Shooting Association, the Game Council of NSW, the NSW Amateur Pistol Association Inc., the Firearm Safety and Training Council, the NSW Police Force and the Shooters and Fishers Party. I am the deputy-chair of the committee. At its first meeting, which was held on 21 May, the committee discussed this subject and a number of other firearms issues.

One thing I took away from the meeting was the genuine concern of those on the committee to work with the Government to make sure that people's legitimate rights are protected and to make sure their sport continues. Another meeting is scheduled for June. Following the meeting I received a number of emails from a large number of shooters applauding the O'Farrell-Stoner Government for establishing the Firearms Consultative Committee. People emailed me that for too long the issue had been a political football; they had been booted from one side to the other. Finally the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has given the committee the ability to be open and transparent, and the ability to communicate with government at the highest level possible about issues that affect the sport of shooters and their livelihoods. The committee is one of the better committees I have sat on. Committee deliberations started slowly, but they ended with a free flow of information backwards and forwards.

The acceptance of the committee was highlighted by the large number of emails I received from senior country people and from city people. I even received an email from a constituent of the member the Drummoyne saying how great it was that the Government had formed the Firearms Consultative Committee. The Government is to be applauded. The feedback I have received confirms that we are being open and transparent, and listening to the concerns of the people, which is what we said we would do when we came into government. I applaud the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for formulating that committee and being proactive. As I said, at its first meeting the committee discussed and considered sporting shooters' concerns about accessing ammunition. The meeting discussed the exemption in the bill that means that club armourers can sell ammunition to members of a firearms club for use in a firearm registered to the club. The requirement to record the name and address and so on will continue to apply.

Armourers will record the registration details of the club firearm that is being used by the club member alongside the record of purchase. Following discussions at that meeting and to encourage the establishment of armourers at all clubs, the Government will waive the initial application fee to enable each club to nominate and establish one armourer. Further, the Government will also regulate to exempt the recording of registration details in connection with shooting competitions at clubs. This will address stakeholder concerns about the practical impact of recording firearms registration details in a competition environment. Armourers will still be required to sight and record licence details when ammunition is purchased. These measures demonstrate this Government's preparedness to listen to the issues being raised with our members and to respond with practical solutions to genuine concerns.

I will address the comments of the member for Cessnock. He appears to have fundamentally misunderstood how the regulation would work. He seems to think that we would require every firearms owner to hold a permit to purchase ammunition. I can assure members that is not the Government's intention. The new permit will simply provide certification of a genuine need to purchase ammunition when the permit holder does not own a firearm that requires the ammunition being purchased. Any person who is purchasing ammunition for a firearm registered in his or her name will not need a permit. To make it clear, the genuine need will be limited to household members of primary producers, employers, partners of businesses and individuals who have a genuine need to purchase ammunition for a firearm registered to another person. I am advised that it is not expected to affect a large number of people, but is, for reasons of economic efficiency, considered a necessary exception to the new requirements.

Because of this misunderstanding, the suggestion of the member for Cessnock of 60 additional staff for the firearms registry is fanciful. A permit may list a number of firearms for which ammunition can be purchased, so long as there is a genuine reason and it arises because of the reasons outlined previously. Again, the member's misunderstanding means that his concerns about increased costs to firearms owners are ill-conceived. The member for Cessnock also suggested that bikies who own rural properties will be able to access ammunition permits. The regulation will make it clear that a permit will be available only when the applicant already holds a licence issued for the genuine purpose of primary production. I remind the member that holders of a firearms licence are required to meet stringent requirements, including being a fit and proper person. That is another misunderstanding clarified.

Members have questioned how ammunition will be tracked once it leaves the store and how this amendment will benefit the NSW Police Force in investigating firearms-related crime. For the first time, formal and accessible records of the transfer of ammunition between parties will exist. For the first time police will be able to make inquiries with dealers as to who is purchasing ammunition, which will enable the tracing of ammunition from dealers to end users. This will provide police with a solid basis for evidence collection—a chain of evidence, for want of another phrase—and to monitor inappropriate transactions of ammunition when these arise. Purchasers and dealers will be accountable for the ammunition they buy and sell. The measures are not unlike those applying to pawnbrokers, who must also keep records of items they purchase and sell.

Members have also asked how dealers' records will be secured and not fall into the wrong hands. These are important issues. The record-keeping requirements contained in this bill are similar to the existing requirements on dealers for firearms transactions. The current records are subject to security arrangements that will apply to ammunition records. The fact that dealers are required to record firearms transactions already demonstrates the fallacy that some members peddled during the debate that the new requirements would impose onerous record-keeping requirements. Record-keeping requirements already exist for the sale of firearms, not to mention normal business requirements, and now they are being extended sensibly to apply to ammunition. These record-keeping provisions are not without precedent as similar requirements are already in place in South Australia, Western Australia and the United Kingdom.

Members questioned whether bulk purchase of ammunition would increase attendant storage and security concerns. Again, stringent controls are in place already to regulate how ammunition is stored: it must be secured separately from any firearms owned by the individual. The measures proposed by the bill will further restrict the potential for firearms ammunition to come into the possession of criminals and be used in crimes such as robberies and drive-by shootings. The Government clearly condemns all such illegal activities whenever and wherever they occur. The bill provides a sensible balance between regulation to assist law enforcement, public safety and access to ammunition for lawful purposes. We have backed and will continue to back the NSW Police Force and the NSW Crime Commission in their dedication of all available and appropriate resources in combating these crimes. Once again, I thank members for their valuable contributions to the debate. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.

[Division called for.]

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: Two members have to call for a division, not one.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! One member can call for a division. I commend the standing orders to the member for Kiama.

Division called for and Standing Order 181 applied.

Noes, 2

Mr Piper
Mr Torbay

Question declared resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Geoff Provest agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and returned to the Legislative Council without amendment.

CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT (RESTORATION OF OATHS OF ALLEGIANCE) BILL 2011

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 23 May 2012.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.58 p.m.]: I support the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. I thank Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, MLC, for introducing this private member's bill in the other place. 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 or making an oath or 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. Taking the pledge of loyalty is currently required before a member of Parliament can sit or vote, and before a member of the Executive Council can assume office. This bill makes clear also that a member of Parliament who has taken or made an oath or affirmation of allegiance does not have to take or make a further oath or affirmation in the event of the demise of the Crown.

The previous 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 and in so doing removed mention of the Crown. This was putting the cart before the horse. In the very careful writing of our Constitution New South Wales and the other colonies agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown. This is written into the Constitution agreed to by the people and cannot be changed other than by the people by way of a referendum. The Constitution of Australia is the mighty pillar upon which the rest of society safely rests. To start shaking this pillar hoping to dislodge the Crown serves no public good and is unwise.

The bill provides new members and new Ministers of the Parliament with the option to swear or affirm allegiance to the Queen, Her heirs and successors, prior to taking their seats or taking office. The oath or affirmation to the Queen will be an alternative to the current pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. The Crown and the people are constitutionally one and the same. There cannot be any conflicting interests between the State and its personification in the Crown: that is, the Crown is the personification of the State. An oath of allegiance to the Queen in her legal role as Queen of Australia does not and cannot in any way conflict with an allegiance to Australia or New South Wales.

While ever we remain a constitutional monarchy with the Crown at the apex of our system of government elected representatives should honour this principle. The Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011 provides for greater consistency with practices elsewhere in Australia. As a somewhat timely example, I draw to the attention of members the oath of allegiance made and subscribed by Senator the Hon. Bob Carr on 13 March 2012 stating that he will "be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Her heirs and successors according to law. So help me God."

In the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions, an oath or affirmation of allegiance to the Queen is mandatory or an optional form of mandatory declaration. This makes perfect sense. We are and always have been a constitutional monarchy. Currently in New South Wales the Governor, 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. Under this bill it would be mandatory for members of Parliament and Ministers taking office to do one of the following: Swear allegiance to the Queen, Her heirs and successors, or affirm allegiance to the Queen, Her heirs and successors, or pledge loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. The form of the new oath of allegiance is specified in the following terms:

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.

The bill further states:

A member may, instead of taking an oath of allegiance, make an affirmation to the same effect.

Sitting members of Parliament and current Ministers would not be required to make a new oath or affirmation as to their allegiance or loyalty. It would be possible, however, for any member of Parliament or Minister who wished to do so to make a statement in Parliament about his or her preferred form of allegiance or loyalty. The central point in this debate is that the Queen is legitimately the Queen of Australia and our head of state. The oath of allegiance should reflect that fact. The Queen is represented in Australia by the Governor-General and, in New South Wales, the Queen's representative is Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, AC, CVO—and what a first-class job the Governor has done and continues to do as the Queen's representative. In October last year the Premier announced that the Governor would again live at Government House, as she should.

There was never anything to be achieved by scrapping the pre-2006 oath of allegiance to the Queen. It was part of our unique and successful system of government. The monarchy is the oldest institution in New South Wales and Australia and is as much a part of our national culture and tradition as cricket on Boxing Day and a fair go. As the Hon. John Howard said when Prime Minister in 1999, "There is nothing to be gained from tampering with a system of Government which has contributed to our country being one of only a handful of

nations which has remained fully democratic throughout the twentieth century." Changing the oath of allegiance in 2006 was definitely tampering with the system. With this Westminster system in place it was absurd that members of Parliament and Ministers were unable to swear or affirm allegiance to the Crown under the 2006 aberration. With the passage of this bill members of Parliament can once again swear or affirm allegiance to the Queen. The pledge of allegiance to the Crown in one form or another has a long history.

Members who do not swear or affirm allegiance to the Queen, by and large, want to change the constitutional arrangements in Australia to something different. They do not know to what, but for one reason or another they would prefer a change. If you want to change the system there is a mechanism to do so: it is a referendum. Those who yearn for change have put up no model that can be debated, just change for change's sake, riddled with risk and all the inherent dangers that come with untested systems, with no idea of what will replace the tried and true system that works. Fortunately, in 1999 the people of New South Wales saw through the trick. As in every other Australian State, New South Wales delivered its verdict: no change. It should have been clear from that result that there was no need to change the oath of allegiance in New South Wales in 2006. It is wrong to change longstanding constitutional arrangements by stealth, by removing symbols, oaths of allegiance and portraits of the Queen from where they should rightfully be displayed.

There is a reason that this has been termed "sneaky republicanism", and I do not think the public appreciate it. It is dishonest. I congratulate Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile, member of the Legislative Council, on recognising that there were people at work attempting to abolish the monarchy by stealth—not up front, but by the most underhanded means, by unwelcome attacks on the symbols that underpin or are an integral part of the present system. Changing the oath of allegiance was one such attempt. In short, Australia is a constitutional monarchy. New South Wales is a constitutional monarchy. The oath of allegiance should be made to the Crown through the person of the King or Queen. Currently this is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Constitutional monarchy has worked well in New South Wales for over 200 years. I have no doubt that it will continue to serve the people of New South Wales well into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [6.08 p.m.]: In order to know where we are going we need to know what we are about and have an appreciation of where we have come from. We, as Australians, have a proud history. We are a nation that has achieved much in a very short time. We have seen the heroics of our young soldiers in the various theatres of war, from Gallipoli to Kokoda, fighting for the freedom we enjoy today. We have witnessed numerous sporting achievements, from winning the America's Cup to punching above our weight at every single Olympic Games, including hosting the best Olympic Games ever. We have seen engineering feats such as the Snowy Mountains scheme—a project covering an area the size of Switzerland, where my ancestors are from—which employed over 100,000 people from 30 nations across the globe.

We have observed scientific feats such as Graham Clark's development of the bionic ear. We have a proud history—a history of amazing feats. And we as a nation should appreciate and ensure their details are preserved. It is essential for the benefit of our generation and future generations of our great country that our traditions are not lightly cast aside. It is for this reason that I commended Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile for bringing the Constitutional Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011 to the Parliament. This bill, despite all the huffing and puffing from the Opposition, simply stems from and reiterates the current constitutional arrangements here in New South Wales.

The purpose of the bill is to amend the Constitution Act 1902 to give a member of the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council or the Executive Council the opportunity to take an oath or affirmation of allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Her heirs and successors—and an optional alternative to pledge loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. Members on the other side may not like it, but Queen Elizabeth II is our head of state. Some members of the Opposition claimed in this debate that the bill is purely some sort of ideological stunt. That is interesting: an ideological position to support a bill that simply stems from the actual constitutional and legal position here in New South Wales and the Commonwealth. So where is our apparent radical, ideological position derived from in supporting the bill? It is the Constitution. The preamble of the Constitution states:

The people humbly relying on the blessings of Almighty God have agreed to unite in an indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown.

It is ironic that the Opposition seems to believe there is some political mileage to be gained from arguing that by restoring the option of swearing allegiance to the Queen we are in some way turning our backs on the people of New South Wales. No-one can seriously suggest that by swearing allegiance to our constitutional head of state we are doing any such thing. So who are the real ideologues in this debate? As David Shoebridge, who argued against the bill, pointed out in the upper House, it is the people who are the ultimate authority. And he is right. If

the people are of the view that we need to do away with the monarchy and move to a republic then that change will happen and we can then remove the ability for members to swear allegiance to the Queen. No-one would then have a problem with that. However, until such time as that occurs members in this place or the other place should have the ability to do what is constitutionally consistent, and that is swear an oath of allegiance to our head of state, the Queen.

Those opposite need to realise that the referendum was lost. Those opposite need to realise that we are not a republic: the move for a republic was defeated convincingly at a national level, in every State and in 72 per cent of Federal electorates across the country. That was a decision by the people of Australia—as Mr Shoebridge said, "the ultimate authority". What had changed since the 1999 referendum on the republican front to result in the Labor Opposition deciding, when it was in government, to amend legislation in order to remove the ability of members to swear allegiance to the Queen? Absolutely nothing. Because the republican ideologues lost they reverted to creeping republicanism, to the throwing of labels and slogans. They suggest that those who support and hold the views and principles inherent in the bill are somehow out of touch with modern society. In fact, during this debate the member for Sydney said just that. She said:

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.

It is not for the member for Sydney, the member for Liverpool or any member of this Parliament to determine what is or is not part of contemporary society. As the youngest member of this place—and I note not many members are actually part of gen Y, though the member for Kiama is certainly here—I was at school at the time of the referendum in 1999: I was in year 11 at the time. I recall that once the referendum was defeated there was a common view that this was a one-off event and that when the elder generation passed on a republic was inevitable. The same brigade claimed support for Anzac Day also would decline. The member for Camden would recall that when we were at school it was said that as the young Australians—now a lot older—who served in World War I slowly passed away Anzac Day would fall from the calendar. Well, I am proud to be part of a generation that respects and appreciates our past, a generation that has reinvigorated Anzac Day, and a generation that overwhelmingly is of the view that our current constitutional arrangements should remain in place. We are proud of our country, proud of our achievements and proud of our traditions.

Whilst we have an overwhelming support for our constitutional arrangements, we have members of Parliament who appear to be totally focused on creeping republicanism. These ideologues, unable to get support from the people, have reverted to achieving change slowly but surely—without the support of the wider community. In government those opposite introduced legislation to remove the Governor from Government House—perhaps it would be more appropriately described as an eviction. More than 20,000 people marched in the streets in protest. The republican ideologues have not stopped there; they moved from the overt to the more covert. The President of the Legislative Council, the Hon. Dr Meredith Burgmann, removed the portraits of Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh from the strangers dining room. In our short 12 months in government we have overturned those decisions.

The Governor has been returned to her rightful place at Government House and the portraits have now been returned to the strangers dining room. The final step is to restore tradition and ensure that relevant parts of the Constitution are adhered to and supported in this place. We have many reasons to be proud of our history. Symbols such as our flag and constitutionally valid traditions such as swearing an oath of allegiance to the Queen provide us with a stark reminder of where we have come from and represent the achievements and milestones of our early years as a nation. Constitutionally, all members of this place and the other place should have their chance to choose how they pledged their loyalty to their country, to their State and to the people that they represent. The bill specifies the form of the new oath of allegiance, specifically:

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.

I believe this bill reflects purely the provisions of the Constitution. It reflects the view of the people of New South Wales. It reflects the views of the people of Australia. Therefore I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [6.17 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to rise in support of the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. The bill returns to members of Parliament the option to swear an oath of allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, Her heirs and successors. It also maintains the option for a pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. The taking of oaths in our culture is a serious business. It is a solemn pledge by a holder of public office. In my inaugural speech in

this House I spoke of some of the virtues to which the oath relates: the leadership that we demonstrate in this House—leadership based on values, service and commitment. Those values, which should be epitomised by members of Parliament, include duty, honour, loyalty and integrity.

The oath is a reminder of the heavy responsibilities that members of Parliament bear. This country enjoys a rich culture and a constitutional monarchy based on the rule of law. New South Wales has a constitution that requires us to pass laws for the good of the people of this State, their peace, their welfare and the good government of New South Wales. This rule of law has delivered stable, prosperous and resilient government. It has made New South Wales and Australia the envy of the world. Being a member of Parliament is a tremendous privilege, a great honour and a heavy responsibility. No member of Parliament can sit or vote in this Chamber until they have taken the oath prescribed by the constitution. This bill returns to members the ability to take an oath of allegiance or the current pledge of loyalty.

I remember the day when we stood here on the floor of the Legislative Assembly where a temporary dock had been set up on which were *Bibles* for those who wanted to swear an oath. We all lined up and swore our oath and I remember wondering why we were not taking an oath of allegiance; I was not aware that the oath had been changed to a pledge of loyalty. But it was one of the proudest days of my life, as I am sure it was for many members here, to take an oath to serve my electorate and the people of New South Wales and to act for the good government of this great State. I have lived the vast majority of my life under an oath of allegiance and I find it amazing that some people suggest that an oath of allegiance is a terrible thing and should be struck out, which is why it was removed from the Parliament. I served under an oath as a member of the Police Force for 27 years. The oath is a key touchstone that guides all police officers. The oath provides:

... I will well and truly serve our Sovereign Lady the Queen as a recognised law enforcement officer without favour or affection, malice or ill-will until I am legally discharged, that I will cause Her Majesty's peace to be kept and preserved, and that I will prevent to the best of my power all offences against that peace ...

That is the solemn oath that police officers still swear to this day. Former Commissioner of Police Ken Moroney, a constituent of mine, always used the oath of office as a litmus test for judging the standard of an officer's behaviour. Similarly, as members of Parliament we have the great privilege to interview constituents who apply to become a justice of the peace. One thing I always remind the applicants is that if they are successful in obtaining approval to become a justice of the peace they will swear two oaths, one being the judicial oath, which is that they swear to be "faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen, Her heirs and successors according to law", and also an oath that they will "well and truly serve our Sovereign Lady the Queen in the office of justice of the peace and will do right to all manner of people after the laws and usages of the State of New South Wales without fear or favour, affection or ill-will".

Witnesses who give evidence before courts of inquiry are also required to swear an oath, and in a courtroom setting everything stops while the oath is taken. Our culture, our legal history and our nationhood have a great relationship with the taking of oaths of allegiance. The oath represents a solemn duty that goes way above the normal employment contract that one would expect. The oath of allegiance speaks of duty, honour and obligation, and it is one of the reasons why I proudly support the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [6.24 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. Whether republicans like it or not, Australia is a constitutional monarchy. Our head of state is Queen Elizabeth II, the Queen of Australia. Our Governor-General is a representative of the Queen, as is our State Governor. In 1999 Australians were offered the chance to change this situation and move to a republic. Australians, including the majority of people in New South Wales, overwhelmingly voted to keep our current system. In defiance of the popular will of the people, the New South Wales Labor Government decided in 2006 to change our State constitution to enforce republicanism by stealth in New South Wales. The former Government decided that if the people of New South Wales would not vote the "right" way then they obviously needed to be told what they should think by those in the Labor Party who consider that they always know best.

So in 2006 the oath of allegiance to our head of state was removed and it was replaced with a pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. I was very happy to pledge my loyalty to the people of Australia and New South Wales when I entered this Parliament—I was particularly proud—but I was not allowed to pledge my loyalty to Her Majesty the Queen, the Queen of Australia. Why not? Would my doing so

lessen my allegiance to the people of New South Wales and Australia? Or would it affirm that I value the role that the monarchy has played in making New South Wales one of the world's oldest continually functioning democracies in the world? I know the latter is true. It is for that reason that I support this bill.

All members of this Parliament should be able to swear an oath of allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen—our head of state—if they so choose. They may choose not to, and that is allowed for in this bill as well. They can also choose to affirm their allegiance to the Queen or to pledge loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. Under this bill sitting members of Parliament and current Ministers would not be required to take a new oath or make an affirmation. It would be possible, however, for any member of Parliament or Minister who wished to do so to make a statement in Parliament about his or her preferred form of allegiance or loyalty. The bill provides for greater consistency with practices elsewhere in Australia. In the Commonwealth and in other State jurisdictions an oath or affirmation of allegiance to the Queen is either mandatory or an optional form of declaration.

I will refer to the contents of the bill in more detail. The object of the bill is to amend the Constitution Act 1902 to give a member of the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council 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 the pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. Taking the pledge of loyalty is currently required before a member of Parliament can sit or vote in the Chamber and before a member of the Executive Council can assume office. The bill also makes it clear that a member of Parliament who has taken or made an affirmation of allegiance does not have to take or make a further oath or affirmation in the event of the demise of the Crown.

Clause 1 sets out the name, also called the short title, of the proposed Act. Clause 2 provides for the commencement of the proposed Act. Items [1] and [2] of schedule 1 amend the Constitution Act relating to the election of members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. In particular, item [1] inserts "or oath of allegiance" into section 12 (1) of the Act, providing members with that alternative to the current pledge of loyalty. Item [2] replaces the existing section 12 (4) with subsection (4B). New subsection (4) specifies the form of the new oath of allegiance as follows:

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.

New subsection (4A) provides members with the option of taking an affirmation of allegiance instead of an oath. Subsection (4B) specifies that oaths and affirmations of allegiance will not need to be replaced on the demise of the Crown, including upon abdication. This bill restores freedom of conscience to members of Parliament who believe that our Head of State is the most appropriate person to whom to swear loyalty. Members of Parliament need not do so if they do not wish; they can continue to swear their allegiance to Australia and to New South Wales. The 1999 referendum gave Australians the opportunity to vote on whether this country should become a republic. That vote did not succeed and we remain a constitutional monarchy. Therefore, it is entirely appropriate that we swear our allegiance—should we so wish—to our head of state, Queen Elizabeth II.

It is interesting to note that the English had a go at republicanism in 1649, when they tried Charles I for being tyrannical and chopped off his head. They continued as a republic for 11 years, after which time they could not get back to a constitutional monarchy fast enough. These may be less vicious times, but the fact is that England experimented with republicanism 400 years before Australia considered it. Denmark also has a royal family, which is in fact older than the British royal family. The Australian member of the Danish royal family, Princess Mary, is much loved by this nation and by Denmark. Denmark has had an unbroken constitutional monarchy for over a thousand years and its royal family is still much loved today. Last year I was happy to meet Crown Prince Frederik, the future King of Denmark. He is a charming chap.

Those examples go to show that Australia is not an anachronism. We are not alone in having a constitutional monarchy: other countries also treasure their constitutional monarchies. I believe the majority of Australians still want Queen Elizabeth II as this country's head of state. Indeed, an advertisement for a program soon to be shown on television quoted a republican as saying, "I wish Queen Elizabeth would stop coming here; she sets back the republican cause by 20 years every time she does." The monarchy is much loved in New South Wales and in Australia. It is part of our system. That system has served us well in the past and I believe it will continue to serve us well into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [6.34 p.m.]: I commend Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile for introducing the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011 in the other place. As the member said when he encapsulated the purpose and importance of the bill:

The Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011 does no more than represent the actual constitutional and legal position in this State and in the Commonwealth of Australia. That is, as the preamble to the Constitution Act 1900 so clearly states, "the people, humbly relying on the blessings of Almighty God, have agreed to unite in an indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown."

That is the essence of the bill. The oath is enshrined in our Constitution, which has served us well for 112 years. The oath is steeped in history and is part of history. If we were talking about demolishing a 112-year-old building of significance we would have all manner of heritage orders placed on us; yet little thought is given to the historical significance of our most important legislative document. The campaign for a republic presented an opportunity for Australia to move away from the monarchy, but most Australians said no. The concept was defeated nationally and in every State. It was defeated in 72 per cent of Federal electorates. The people made their choice. The fact is that the Australian public love the monarchy. Will and Kate's wedding attracted a record television audience. The love of the monarchy has even extended to Pippa's derrière—we just cannot enough of it.

On a more serious note, when Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh visited Casino in my electorate in 1954 I am told that there was a line of cars stretching for about four kilometres in my home town of Maclean. Cars were banked up from the ferry crossing at Harwood into Maclean. At that time there was no Harwood Bridge; three ferries at Harwood were the only means of crossing the river. The public's affection for the monarchy has not changed since that time. Recently I had the pleasure of meeting with members of the Casino Historical Society who were the recipients of some \$7,500 to upgrade the museum under the Community Building Partnership program. The chairs upon which the Queen and the Duke sat during their visit to Casino take pride of place in the museum.

The purpose of this legislation is to reform a decision that was made by the previous Parliament. We know how cynical the Labor Party can be. In 2006, just before the visit of Her Majesty the Queen, the then Labor Government rushed through a private member's bill to remove the oath of allegiance. The oath of allegiance to the Queen unites the peoples of a nation in times of war and peace. The two former members commemorated on the plaque in this Chamber both swore an oath of allegiance to the Queen. It is part of our history. No matter our background—whether people are Macedonian like me, Italian, Vietnamese or Lebanese—we cannot escape the fact that we have an historical bond with England and the monarchy. Nor should we try to break this bond.

It is where we have come from as a nation. Once the oath has lost its significance, also lost is our national discipline and our patriotism. As I mentioned earlier, 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. My nephew left for Afghanistan today in the service of his country. He would have sworn an oath of allegiance to the Queen. It is the basis on which our Constitution is founded. It is for this reason that those who drafted our Australian Constitution incorporated in section 42 this requirement:

Every senator and every member of the House of Representatives shall before taking his seat make and subscribe before the Governor-General, or some person authorised by him, an oath or affirmation of allegiance in the form set forth in the schedule to this Constitution.

The required oath or affirmation stipulates that those who swear or affirm "will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Her heirs and successors according to law." Today we are bringing New South Wales back into harmony with the Commonwealth Constitution and with the other States of Australia. In conclusion, I will refer briefly to the contents of the bill, which states:

The object of this 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 the pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. Taking the pledge of loyalty is currently required before a Member of Parliament can sit or vote and before a Member of the Executive Council can assume office.

This Bill also makes it clear that a Member of Parliament who has taken or made an oath or affirmation of allegiance does not have to take or make a further oath or affirmation in the event of the demise of the Crown.

Clause 1 sets out the name, which is also referred to as the short title, of the proposed Act. Clause 2 provides for the commencement of the proposed Act on the date of assent to the proposed Act. I refer now to schedule 1 to the bill. Items [1] and [2] amend the Constitution Act 1902 in relation to elected members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly. In particular, item [1] inserts "or oath of allegiance" into section 12 (1) of the Act, and that will provide members with an alternative to the current pledge of loyalty. Item [2] replaces the existing section 12 (4) with new sections 12 (4), (4A) and (4B). New subsection (4) specifies the form of the new oath of allegiance, and states:

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.

New subsection (4A) provides members with the option of making an affirmation of allegiance instead of taking an oath. New subsection (4B) specifies that oaths and affirmations of allegiance will not need to be repeated on the demise of the Crown, including by or on abdication. Items [3] and [4] amend section 35CA of the Act in relation to Executive Councillors. Item [3] inserts "or oath of allegiance" into section 35CA (1) (a) of the Act and will provide the alternative of an "oath of allegiance" to the current pledge of loyalty. Item [4] specifies the form of "oath of allegiance", which is the same for the oath taken by members of Parliament. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.43 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support the Constitution Amendment (Restoration of Oaths of Allegiance) Bill 2011. This legislation is important because it gives people a real choice when it comes to deciding whether to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen or loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales.

Mr Andrew Gee: Do you support the Queen?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I support both this legislation and the Queen. The bill states:

The object of this 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 the pledge of loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. Taking the pledge of loyalty is currently required before a Member of Parliament can sit or vote and before a Member of the Executive Council can assume office.

This Bill also makes it clear that a Member of Parliament who has taken or made an oath or affirmation of allegiance does not have to take or make a further oath or affirmation in the event of the demise of the Crown.

This is sensible legislation. It gives members of both Houses and members of the Executive Council the alternative of taking an oath of allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen. In a relatively short time, Australia has achieved so much as a nation. I know that Government members are mindful of the magnitude of our national achievements. Australia's history includes participation in wars, and we are very grateful to Defence personnel who have fought overseas and won for us the freedom that we enjoy in this country.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: It gives us choice.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: We enjoy peace and freedom and, as the member for Myall Lakes so rightly says, this legislation gives us choice. The oath to the Crown is the basis on which our Australian Constitution was founded. It states:

Whereas the people of New South Wales ... humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God, have agreed to unite in one indissoluble Federal Commonwealth under the Crown of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland ...

In 2006 the Labor Government launched a futile attempt to re-energise the republic debate and abolished, after 104 years, the oath of allegiance by replacing it with the pledge of loyalty. In 1999 the republic referendum overwhelmingly produced a no-vote for the republic. As I stated, this legislation is about providing choice. It enables members to choose whether they wish to swear allegiance or pledge loyalty. What could be simpler or fairer than that?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! It is difficult for Hansard to hear members with the call when they turn away from the lectern to talk to Government members.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: Usually I am too loud, but that is okay. This bill gives members the option to swear or affirm allegiance to the Queen and her heirs and successors as an alternative to the current pledge of loyalty. The oath of allegiance for 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.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Shame.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! Government members will contain their passion for debate on this highly exciting bill.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I agree with the member for Myall Lakes: It is a shame we went down that path, or even considered that option. This legislation will give future members of Parliament and new Ministers the option of swearing or affirming allegiance to the Queen, her heirs and successors, prior to taking their seats or taking office as an alternative to taking the pledge of loyalty. Members of Parliament and Ministers will be able to do one of three things: swear allegiance to the Queen, her heirs and successors; affirm allegiance to the Queen, her heirs and successors; or pledge loyalty to Australia and the people of New South Wales. Opposition members deny that the Queen is still the formal Head of State. The Queen is still the sovereign of Australia. It is great that we are giving people a real choice, and that is what the oath of office is about. As demonstrated by the 1999 referendum, Australians then held the Queen and Australia's place in the Commonwealth in high regard—and we still do. I know of a no more fitting occasion than the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II to restore the oath of allegiance.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! Opposition members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber. Hansard will want to record every syllable of this debate. The member for Bathurst will be heard in silence.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I think Madam Acting-Speaker is saying that this is a great contribution by the member for Bathurst. As was the case in 1999, Australians still hold the Queen and our place in the Commonwealth in high regard. The oath of allegiance has been part of our society for well over 100 years, and this bill provides for greater consistency with practices elsewhere in Australia. At present, the Governor, Lieutenant-Governor, justices and justices of the peace must pledge allegiance to the Queen before taking office. There is still strong public affection for the monarchy; that has not changed over the years. Since the Queen first visited our great country in 1954, the communities we represent have had sincere affection for her. Record numbers watched the recent royal wedding of Prince William and Catherine Middleton.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! I know that members are passionate about this debate, but they will contain themselves.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: The interjections from those opposite show that they are not about choice in this instance. The bill is not about monarchists and it is not about republicans; it is about giving those members who wish to do so the opportunity to acknowledge the important place the Crown has in our Constitution. The Government embraces choice. We embrace freedom and the ability to choose. That is what this legislation is about. I am proud to commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [6.51 p.m.]: I support 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 or making an oath or 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. Taking the pledge of loyalty is currently required before members of Parliament can their seat or vote and before a member of the Executive Council can assume office. The bill also makes it clear that a member of Parliament who has taken or made an oath or affirmation of allegiance does not have to take or make a further oath or affirmation in the event of the demise of the Crown.

Australia enjoys political stability largely unparalleled in the rest of the world. This is because our system keeps politicians from assuming total and absolute power. At the same time the Governor-General does not interfere with the decisions of the Prime Minister, and any warnings or other advice is given behind closed

doors so as not to create any conditions that may give rise to a political or constitutional crisis. Australia has no problems operating under our present Constitution. As Australians, we all proudly stand and sing the Australian anthem. When we dissect the national anthem, what are its two strong messages? The first is that we are young, because the British, in giving Australians their independence many years ago, created an entirely new country out of their former six colonies.

The second is that we are free, because 10 years earlier, in 1891, the Australian patriots Samuel Griffith, Charles Cameron Kingston and Edmond Barton drafted a Constitution to suit the specific requirements of the new nation of Australia. In doing so, they based the Constitution on the British Westminster system but bettered it by adding from the Constitution of Canada and those of the republics of the United States of America and Switzerland. The Australian Constitution is therefore a uniquely Australian creation, and was voted for and adopted by the Australian people of the time. For more than a century our Australian Constitution has worked unobtrusively in the background, ensuring that our young nation remains democratic and free.

It is 100 years younger than the American Constitution, and far less cumbersome and politically invasive. In its more than a century of existence as a nation, Australia has had no civil unrest and no constitutional crisis and has an unparalleled record of political and economic stability that has ensured our new nation developed into the magnificent country it is today. We are recognised as the seventh-oldest continuous democracy and are often listed in the top five developed nations of the world. Our Australian founding fathers also ensured that the power and authority of the nation would be vested in the Crown but they made the Crown subject to the will of the people by ensuring that the Constitution could be changed only by the people, not by politicians—as occurs in the United Kingdom.

Republicans proclaim that the people want a republic. But they certainly did not at the last referendum and there are no street protests today calling for change. In fact, many polls show a continuing rise in support for our constitutional monarchy. Some say that not having an Australian Head of State is embarrassing for politicians and diplomats overseas, but do foreign leaders care? The facts are that following appointment by the Queen, our sovereign Head of State, the Governor-General—who is always an Australian—assumes the role as our effective Head of State and commander-in-chief. Our system is different from most others. We have a head of government in the Prime Minister, who exercises administrative control, and a Governor-General, who is more like a benevolent trustee, well above politics.

New South Wales is the only jurisdiction that does not allow members of Parliament to pledge loyalty to the monarch. Several offer the option of both: an oath to the monarch and/or an oath to the people. Members of Parliament represent the people and the monarch symbolises the people and is also a personification of the State. The Queen symbolises the people of New South Wales, the institutions of New South Wales, the laws of New South Wales, the traditions of New South Wales, and the history of New South Wales. The Queen symbolises the entirety of the State, not just the people, and an oath to the Queen encompasses a broader commitment than an oath to the people. Although I come from a non-British background, I understand and value the importance of the monarchy to our State and this Parliament.

I acknowledge that debate is part of our democracy and consequently have no objection whatsoever, provided the questions put forward are fair and not ambiguous. We are of the opinion that questions such as "Do you want to have an Australian as Head of State", although sounding good, are absolutely meaningless and give no indication of any proposal for serious constitutional change. In any event, under our system it is the head of government, the Prime Minister, who makes the final decision, backed by his or her Cabinet. To bandy about lightly the idea of "Australian as Head of State" would only complicate and even frustrate our structure of governance, whereas under our current system of constitutional monarchy the Governor-General plays no part whatsoever in party politics. His or her job is to represent the Crown, which is vested in the people, and to ensure that the provisions of the Constitution are adhered to.

We are a constitutional monarchy. The Queen is the sovereign. The people voted to retain that structure so it is not right that the previous Government removed the oath of allegiance. It was republicanism by stealth. Premier Carr, exercising dictatorial privileges as a result of his majority and as part of a process to diminish the importance and role of the Crown, removed the office and home of the Governor of New South Wales from the historic Government House. He also removed the Crown from the historic coat of arms in our New South Wales courts. The final betrayal was when he introduced the Constitutional Amendment (Pledge of Loyalty) Bill, which removed all references to the Queen from the Oath of Allegiance that all members of Parliament and Ministers must take under the State Constitution, as well as removing references to the Queen in the Ministers' Oath of Service. New South Wales members of Parliament have been swearing the constitutionally required Oath of Allegiance to the Crown since 1902. The Carr Government and its members showed absolute contempt for our New South Wales history, heritage, and constitutional arrangements.

I believe our system of constitutional monarchy, although far from perfect, is the best—and indeed the most modern—system yet devised. By limiting the ambitions and greed of our politicians, has it not made our nation of Australia a truly great country in which to live? I welcome the proposed changes that will allow those of us who wish to do so to swear an oath or make an affirmation of allegiance to the personified symbol of our great State. In every town and community hall in my electorate one will find a portrait of the Queen. Her importance to our system of government has not been forgotten by the people of the Monaro. I wonder how many royal portraits hang in Balmain—or have they been replaced with images of Julian Assange or Bob Brown? I am proud to say that in my electorate office I have once again reinstated the portrait of the Queen, along with the Australian and New South Wales flags. I am pleased that this bill will bring the institution of the monarchy back into this Parliament, and I know the people of Monaro will be pleased with a move that celebrates our strong heritage. I commend Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile for introducing the bill. God save the Queen.

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

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

Reference

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! I report the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:

Madam SPEAKER

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

1. That, according to section 95 of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 (the Act), the Committee on the Office of the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission inquire into and report on the following:
 - (a) whether the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission (PIC) has appropriate resources to carry out the functions of the Inspector under the Act,
 - (b) whether the provisions of the Act relating to PIC investigators are sufficient to allow the employment of appropriate and a sufficient number of investigators, and
 - (c) whether the Act should require the PIC to establish a Code of Conduct for its employees.
2. That this House requests that the Legislative Assembly pass a similar resolution.

Legislative Council
29 May 2012

Helen Westwood
Deputy President

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

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Biofuels Amendment Bill 2012
Primary Industries Legislation Amendment (Biosecurity) Bill 2012
Tattoo Parlours Bill 2012

MACULAR DEGENERATION

Matter of Public Importance

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [7.01 p.m.]: Macular Degeneration Awareness Week 2012 runs from 27 May to 2 June. "Keep your family in the picture" is the major theme of this public health awareness campaign and highlights the fact that if a direct family member has macular degeneration there is a 50 per cent chance of other family members developing the disease. Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and severe vision loss in Australia. This disease of the retina causes progressive and painless loss of central

vision, which affects the ability to see fine detail, drive a motor car, read and simply recognise the faces of friends and family. Macular degeneration can lead to total blindness. This week the call is to encourage people to have their eyes tested and their macula checked. Early detection is vital.

This year the Macular Degeneration Foundation wants everyone with macular degeneration to talk with their family members about the genetic risks and the measures that can be taken to reduce this chronic disease. It is important to raise awareness also of the risk factors for macular degeneration. Anyone who is aged 50 years and over—I must admit that I am fast approaching that age—who has a family history, or who smokes is at risk. The message is to get one's eyes tested, especially if one is over 50, talk with one's family and quit smoking, if one can. It is important to emphasise also not to wait because, as I have said already, early detection is vital. I am sure the good doctor, the member for Macquarie Fields, will stress the need for early intervention and treatment.

I am pleased that the Macular Degeneration Foundation has promoted this awareness week. The charity was established in 2001 with a vision to reduce the incidence and impact of macular degeneration in Australia through five major areas of activity: education, awareness, support services, research and representation. The foundation has done an amazing job. Without citing the statistics, I know that until recently I had a very low awareness of macular degeneration and its impact on people's lives. Everyone aged over 50 should have an Amsler grid on his or her fridge. Most people in Campbelltown have a fridge magnet that depicts their local member of Parliament and, I imagine, many other people. An Amsler grid can be used to check one's central vision in the comfort of one's home. It is a grid on a sheet of paper that is held up to the eyes.

To use the Amsler grid a person closes the left eye and keeps the right eye open, then focuses on the dot in the centre of the grid. Wavy, broken, distorted or blurred lines, or missing areas of the grid may indicate the presence of macular degeneration. The Macular Degeneration Foundation has a useful website as well as a Facebook page, with which I am sure many members would be familiar. I encourage all members to click on "Like". I urge members also to spread the news about Macular Degeneration Awareness Week. My office is displaying the posters, as I am sure are other members. The message is: Keep your family in the picture. The only way to do that is to make sure we talk about macular degeneration with our families, seek appropriate medical attention and keep the vision for Australia.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [7.06 p.m.]: I thank the member for Campbelltown for raising the extremely important issue of macular degeneration. I congratulate the Macular Degeneration Foundation because in just 11 years it has had an enormous amount of influence on spreading the knowledge of this insidious disease. The foundation currently is running an excellent television advertisement that will have an enormous impact because it will enable those who are at risk to identify that risk and get any necessary treatment. Macular degeneration is a social justice issue, and as our population ages we should ensure that people have access to the appropriate services so that they can be properly checked. Vision loss in the elderly comes like a thief in the night.

Macular degeneration, especially the wet form that involves a lot of new vessel formation, can cause permanent and irreversible loss of vision overnight. Prior to loss of vision, symptoms may be put down to just getting old or there may be no symptoms whatsoever. One may notice distortion of straight lines, difficulty in reading or threading a needle, difficulty distinguishing faces or the appearance of dark patches or empty spaces in the centre of the field of vision. If these symptoms of wet macular degeneration are not taken seriously, they can result in loss of sight overnight. That is the most dreadful tragedy. The macular is only 2.1 per cent of the retina, but it takes up 50 per cent of the visual cortex of the brain.

The visual cortex processes the information from the macular where all the visual cues are focused. The macular is responsible for the central part of vision used for reading, driving and all of the most important things for which we use our eyes. The peripheral part of the retina, the so-called side vision, is not affected by macular degeneration, but without central vision one is effectively permanently housebound and one's enjoyment of life is affected. As the member for Campbelltown said, the major risk factor is smoking. South-west Sydney has a higher rate of smoking than does the rest of the State. The risk may continue even after someone has stopped smoking. Heavy alcohol use—more than three drinks a day—is another risk factor. About 50 per cent of the cause of macular degeneration is a defect in the CFH gene.

If someone has a family history of macular degeneration, that person is at increased risk. Early detection is vital because treatment is available. The most commonly used drug is Ranibizumab, marketed as Lucentis. It is injected into the eye every six weeks. It is expensive and is the only drug currently approved. However, a new drug called Bevacizumab is being investigated as an alternative. This treatment requires access to an ophthalmologist who is experienced in the injection of the drug. The drug is effective, but the treatment

must be continuous which, for elderly and frail people, can be a major undertaking. The Macular Degeneration Foundation has done a wonderful job. It is hoping to raise \$10 million in the next 10 years. The foundation increases the knowledge in the community of macular degeneration and I commend its work to the House.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [7.11 p.m.]: The diagnosis of macular degeneration is important. This week is Macular Degeneration Awareness Week, which is being promoted by the Macular Degeneration Foundation. The theme for this year is "Keep your family in the picture" and highlights the fact that if a person has a direct family member who suffers from macular degeneration, there is a 50 per cent chance of that person developing the disease. The Macular Degeneration Foundation encourages families with members who have macular degeneration to talk to those family members about the genetic risk of developing the disease and the reduction measures for this chronic disease, including adopting an eye-friendly diet and lifestyle. What is macular degeneration and why is it important? The retina is the part of the eye that relays images to the brain.

The centre of the retina is the macular, which is responsible for the detailed central vision that allows people to read and recognise faces. Macular degeneration begins when the exchange of nutrients and the elimination of waste products from the retina breaks down and waste products build up in the layer just under the retina. There are two types of macular degeneration: dry and wet. In cases of dry macular degeneration, the cell layer dies, leaving patches of retina missing and leading to a gradual loss of vision. This type of macular degeneration is untreatable. Wet macular degeneration occurs when blood vessels under the retina grow wildly, and leak blood and fluid into the retina. This leads to scarring and loss of vision. In wet macular degeneration, treatment with Lucentis stabilises vision significantly.

Macular degeneration is the leading cause of blindness and severe vision loss in this country. Forty-eight per cent of all blindness is attributed to this disease. Awareness of macular degeneration is particularly relevant to people aged over 50. With the ageing population increasing, macular degeneration is becoming a big health issue. Genetics play a significant role in the development of the disease. Individuals with a single relative with macular degeneration are twice as likely to develop the disease, and those with two or more relatives with the disease are four times as likely to be diagnosed. The risk is even higher if the affected family members were diagnosed before the age of 65.

Age-related macular degeneration is a degenerative disease that causes progressive, painless loss of central vision. That is why it is important to communicate with family members about their susceptibility to the disease. Genetics and age cannot be controlled. There is a high genetic component, but other risk factors need to be checked in order to decrease the risk of developing the disease. Ways in which risk factors can be avoided are to quit smoking, maintain a healthy lifestyle, control weight, exercise regularly, eat a well-balanced diet, consider taking anti-oxidant supplements, wear eye protection from the sun and have regular eye checks.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [7.14 p.m.] in reply: I thank the members for Macquarie Fields and Blue Mountains for their participation in raising the awareness of Macular Degeneration Awareness Week. Good eyesight is one of the things we take for granted. As we age many of us—both men and women—are reluctant to acknowledge the fact that our health is failing and that we need to discuss these things with our family and to also seek medical intervention. There is nothing courageous or honourable about not paying the doctor a visit when it is necessary. I am certain that many people in the medical profession, including the member for Macquarie Fields in his previous profession, wish that some people they know had come to see them earlier than they did ultimately.

There is an old saying that the world's biggest problems can be more easily solved when they are still small. So it is with macular degeneration. As did my colleagues the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Blue Mountains, I too commend the Macular Degeneration Foundation for its great work in raising the profile of this disease. As I said in my opening remarks, I was unaware that this was such an issue. The work of the Macular Degeneration Foundation has lifted the profile of the disease and it is seeking vision for the future for the better treatment of this disease. I know that the foundation plans to raise more funds for this vital research work and to find ways to reduce the incidence and impact of this disease in Australia.

The Blackmores Dr Paul Beaumont Research Fellowship will provide three fellowships over a five-year period to conduct research into the nutritional and lifestyle aspects of macular degeneration. The fellowship has a total value of \$240,000. I note that applications have opened for the second fellowship and these applications close on 22 June 2012. I wish the medical practitioners who take up that research God's speed and hope that their research will lead to improved outcomes in relation to macular degeneration. I thank my fellow members for their support on this matter of public importance.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**SCHOOL LIBRARIANS**

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [7.17 p.m.]: I recently received a delegation from Georgia Phillips, formerly of Kanahooka High School, and Di Ridley from Dapto High School, who represented the Illawarra School Libraries Association, and I am concerned by some of the issues that they raised with me. I place on record the fact that I support the continued staffing of teacher librarians in State schools. Information was given to me that raised concerns and again I need to say, as the member for Wollongong, that I am opposed to the replacement of teacher librarians with physical education teachers or any other teacher under national partnership agreements as has occurred at Loftus Public School. I support physical education teachers and assistance to teachers. My position is about supporting school librarians. The *Sunday Telegraph* reported on 14 February 2010:

A Sydney primary school has abolished its teacher librarian position, as part of a pilot scheme designed to give principals more control over school-based decisions.

This landmark case has raised fears that hundreds of other staff will lose their jobs.

Loftus Public School principal Martin Sinclair opted not to replace his retiring teacher librarian last year. Instead, he employed a part-time clerical assistant and a temporary, entry-level teacher.

The school is one of 47 participating in the program, which lets principals make more decisions on issues such as recruitment, staffing mix and budget. The two-year trial is part of the national partnership agreement on improving teacher quality.

I am not quite sure how it improves teacher quality if a teacher librarian is replaced by a physical education teacher. The article continues:

The Loftus case is the first example to emerge of a school abolishing a teaching role, but teacher unions fear the move could set a dangerous precedent and lead governments to absolve themselves of responsibility.

NSW Teachers Federation deputy president Gary Zadkovich said it had ramifications for every teacher librarian in the State.

He warned that it could lead to school counsellors and careers advisers losing jobs.

Minister Piccoli brags about the extra physical education teacher that Loftus Public School now employs, but he does not mention the school's lack of a trained teacher librarian in its new Building the Education Revolution library. I have grave concerns that in these decisions the role of teacher librarians is being undervalued. Teacher librarians play a very important role in our schools. I place on record my opposition to the withdrawal of funding in 2013 to support the Premier's Reading Challenge for schools. The Premier's Reading Challenge has been an outstanding success over the years. I have presented numerous awards on behalf of Labor Premiers to encourage young people to read books.

I know a lot of reading is done on computers and the like but, in my opinion, for children reading books is essential to their learning. The message I received from Di Ridley, President of the Illawarra School Libraries Association, is that New South Wales teacher librarians are considering opting out of the Premier's Reading Challenge because of a probable increase in cost and time. It is important to raise our concern that reduced funding to autonomous schools will reduce staffing of specialist teachers, such as teacher librarians. I call on the Government to reconsider this issue.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Is this a private member's statement?

Ms NOREEN HAY: I am talking about my electorate and it certainly is a private member's statement. We cannot undervalue the importance of teacher librarians and the Premier's Reading Challenge to young people in our schools.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.23 p.m.]: Our teachers do fantastic work across New South Wales. Being a former school teacher, I am aware of the hours of commitment that teachers dedicate to working for the students in their care. Whether they are full-time teachers, temporary teachers, support teachers, assistant teachers or librarians, they do a magnificent job. I know that the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, is also a very strong advocate for teachers in our schools. The Minister was

recently in my electorate and met with staff of local schools. He was open and transparent with them about the future of education in our State, and the school staff indicated they were very happy with the changes. He also announced a new gymnasium for the Bathurst High School campus, of which my electorate is very proud. [*Time expired.*]

HASTINGS RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [7.23 p.m.]: This evening I speak on the recent launch of the Hastings River oyster farmers environmental management system. The environmental management system aims to provide a basis for Hastings River oyster farmers to communicate and cooperate with natural resource managers and the community on the environmental management of oyster cultivation. Earlier this month I welcomed to Port Macquarie the Minister for Primary Industries, the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson. I was interested to hear from local oyster growers that it was the first time a Minister for Primary Industries had officially been to the electorate to meet with oyster growers in more than 30 years. I am very grateful to the Minister for her visit. The environmental management system was launched in conjunction with the New South Wales Farmers Association, Ocean Watch and the Northern Catchment Management Authority.

Our local oyster farmers are committed to providing consumers and the industry with high-quality oysters based on environmentally sustainable growing methods. The environmental management system provides a mechanism for the ongoing identification and management of environmental impacts, risks and opportunities for the Hastings River oyster industries. This is an industry-based initiative that seeks to contribute to the sustainability of oyster farming and the health of the Hastings River, as well as increase community understanding of cultivation methods and the management and regulations that apply to the industry. The future of our local oyster industry depends on the capacity to demonstrate that natural resources and the environment in which they work are utilised in a sustainable and responsible way. Participation in the environmental management system is voluntary; however, engaging in the process offers significant benefits, including the opportunity to identify realistic and achievable environmental improvements, to identify external water quality concerns and to engage with landholders.

The Hastings River has a long history of oyster harvesting, with cultivation beginning as early as the 1830s. There are currently 28 active oyster growers on the Hastings. In 2010-11 the production of Hastings River edible oysters was worth \$1.5 million. Approximately 3 million oysters were produced, making the Hastings River the third most productive river in terms of oyster production on the New South Wales North Coast. It is easy to see why an environmental management system is so important. One of the other production activities that this system will help protect is our local spat cultivation. Let me explain. When oysters spawn, which happens a few days after the full moon, both male and female eggs are released in the water. In a process of random selection, the eggs fertilise and are carried in the water for up to three weeks before they settle onto a suitable substrate in the river and form a protective shell, which ultimately becomes an oyster, and so the growing begins. You learn lots in this job.

The Hastings River is the primary supplier of wild-caught spat to oyster growers across New South Wales, which equates to 40 per cent of the State's oysters or 13.7 million oysters in 2010-11. This is worth an additional \$1.1 million to the local industry. The environmental management system is a great initiative and I know that many people have been working on its development for a number of years. It is an important document for the ongoing success of our award-winning oyster industry. In the past few years our local oysters have won awards at the Royal Easter Show and the Oysters in the House award, so clearly we are on a winner. I congratulate the New South Wales Farmers Association, Ocean Watch and the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority on their commitment to achieve this very important document. I also take this opportunity to acknowledge local oyster growers Mark Bulley and Paul Wilson for helping me to better understand this very important local industry.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.28 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Port Macquarie on informing the House about the importance of the environmental management system. The member has been a strong advocate for oyster growers in her region. It is pleasing that the Minister for Primary Industries and members of Ocean Watch, the New South Wales Farmers Association and the Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority have examined the health and importance of the Hastings River. This shows a cooperative effort by government agencies and the community in ensuring that we have a secure clean and green environment for future generations. The member for Port Macquarie is a strong advocate for her region, and I place on record that I like eating oysters.

TRIBUTE TO RUBY MURPHY

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [7.29 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the passing of the oldest citizen of the electorate of Macquarie Fields. Ruby Murphy died on Friday, 11 May 2012, aged 102 years, 6 months and 10 days. Her much-loved husband, Allan Murphy, had died 25 years earlier on 14 April 1987. Ruby Greentree was born 1 November 1909 in Tasmania, after her father moved there to work. At age 18 months she moved to "Reibycroft" at Freeman's Reach where she lived as a young girl—she remembered knitting woollens for the troops in the First World War. "Reibycroft" was constructed in the 1820s by Mary Reiby for her daughter Penelope and son-in-law John Atkinson; it is still standing. Ruby lived in that house until it was sold.

In November 2009 I visited Ruby and in recognition of her 100th birthday I took her some flowers. Unfortunately, four days after my visit Ruby fractured her hip and then moved to the Frank Whiddon nursing home, Glenfield. When I visited Ruby in November 2009 I was struck by her enormous generosity of spirit. Her family adored her because she was kind, generous and loving to all of them. She had a wonderful sense of humour and until her dying day she taught her family and those around her about kindness and human decency. Ruby was married in 1929. She and her much-loved husband, Allan, had six children, but only four survived—two died soon after birth. Ruby always remembered the birth stories of her children. Twins Pamela and Patricia, who weighed one pound and 1½ pounds, died shortly after their birth in 1929.

Ruby bathed them gently and put them in a crib. In 1930 Ruby gave birth to a second set of twins, Howard and Yvonne, who weighed 1½ pounds and two pounds, at Boundary Road, Pennant Hills. Ruby expertly nursed them in the bottom tray of the wood-fired oven, wrapped in cotton wool to keep them warm. They both survived. Howard is now 81-years-old. Ruby and Allan had two more children, Marjorie and Lyn. Ruby and Allan had 12 grandchildren, 26 great grandchildren and five much-loved great, great grandchildren with another on the way. Ruby's children live at Beecroft, Narwee and Surf Beach. She was much loved by her extended family. She was a committed housewife and always there for her children and family. She loved tennis and her garden was one of her great loves. Ruby and her family moved a number of times in her lifetime, and her daughter Marjorie believes the gardens sold their homes.

At the age of 80 Ruby took up tapestry. She took five years to do a tapestry of *Blue Boy*, the famous Monet print, which took pride of place in her living room. Ruby was tough and strong. She was a wonderful wife, mother and grandmother who had known much sorrow in her life. The Taylor House staff at Frank Whiddon nursing home were wonderful to Ruby and showed her loving compassion in her dying days. She died peacefully. Last Thursday a lovely service was held for Ruby, finishing off with her favourite song *The Carnival Is Over*. Ruby Murphy lived a long and fruitful life and touched all who met her. She is now having a well-earned rest with her much-loved husband. It was a rare privilege to meet Ruby Murphy. I commend her to the House. May she rest in blessed peace.

HILLS RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [7.34 p.m.]: Tonight I pay tribute to those who have survived, those who have lost their battle with cancer and their carers, families and colleagues who have supported them in their time of need. My electorate is blessed with many people with a caring attitude. It is not uncommon for the whole community to rally to the aid of someone in need of assistance. Indeed, this attitude was on clear display at the Hills Relay for Life, a unique overnight fundraising event to celebrate, remember and fight back against cancer. One in every two men and one in every three women will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. Every day in New South Wales 89 people are diagnosed with cancer and we have over 210,000 cancer survivors. The Hills Relay for Life is a chance for all to come together and fight back.

Cancer Council Australia has a mission to minimise the threat of cancer to Australians through successful prevention strategies, best treatment and support. This worthy and important organisation undertakes and funds research and prevention strategies, and it provides information and support to those affected by cancer. The Hills Relay for Life is a great initiative to raise awareness of secure important funding to help provide assistance to those families in the Hills dealing with cancer. The Hills Relay for Life, now in its eleventh year, is the oldest, continuous relay in Australia. More than \$2 million has been raised over the history of the relay to help Hills cancer patients and families, to support programs and to fund research. This year 102 teams took part in the relay, with over 1,000 people running, walking and—in the case of my daughters—being piggybacked and carried around the track.

The National Australia Bank team raised \$10,000 and I was thrilled to see Don Tait, the sub-branch president of Castle Hill RSL, present a cheque for \$10,000 to Bev Jordan, chair of the Hills Relay for Life committee. That was substantially more than my team, the Perrottet Pacers. We were named after the Indiana Pacers, that great National Basketball Association [NBA] team that had its heyday led by Reggie Miller in the 1990s. Unfortunately, they were defeated last week by the Miami Heat in the Eastern Conference semifinals. It was a great honour to represent that franchise at the relay and support what has been a great season for the Indiana Pacers in the United States. I congratulate all those who joined a team and donated to the relay.

The relay started early on Saturday morning. The survivors and carers of cancer walked the first lap. I could not help but admire their smiling faces as they progressed around the Castle Hill Showground to the sound of a lone Scottish bagpipe player. One of the best pieces of advice I have ever received is that it is not what happens to you but how you react to it that matters. It was inspirational to see the strength of character in the smiling faces of these survivors of cancer and those who cared for them. That is why the relay is such an important event in the Hills community calendar. It is truly worthwhile to show support to those with cancer so that they know they are not alone. I was encouraged by the presence of young people supporting the cause. Darth Vader and several of his stormtroopers made an appearance.

Everyone who participates at the Hills Relay for Life has been touched by cancer in some way. I would say that all in attendance had a story of courage, strength and hardship that they brought with them to fight back against cancer. In February this year Richard Tarlington, an active parishioner of St Bernadette's church, lost his battle with cancer. Mr Tarlington—affectionately known as Mr T—and his wife, Helen, has been the parent couple working with youth groups in the parish for more than 25 years. They only stopped when Richard's condition deteriorated. The St Bernadette's team dedicated their walk to the memory of this kind, selfless and caring man who made it his life to give back to others.

Several relays for life are held throughout New South Wales but I would suggest—and I say this with some obvious bias—that the Hills Relay for Life is like no other. While the reason for the relay is a serious matter, the event is a fun community event. I would encourage all members to form a team and support those in the community who suffer from cancer. I commend the Hills Relay for Life committee, particularly chair Bev Jordan. The work involved in getting the relay to what it is today has been nothing short of amazing. Without Bev's tireless attitude to fighting back against cancer the relay would not be the success it is today. I say to all those who joined the relay, your attitude and support were an inspiration. I hope that one day with such efforts cancer will become a thing of the past. I commend the great work of the Hills Relay for Life to the House.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.39 p.m.]: I commend the member for Castle Hill for his participation in the Hills Relay for Life. I also congratulate the Hills Relay for Life community on participating in such a worthwhile event and the Perrottet Pacers on leading by example, even if the children were being piggybacked around the showground. It is an outdoor fun event, but it is also a fundraiser. It brings our communities together to celebrate the lives of those who have battled cancer. Let us not forget that the money raised goes towards making a difference not only in fighting cancer but also helping to raise levels of education and providing funding for much-needed research work. I say well done to the member for Castle Hill.

TRIBUTE TO JAMES "JIM" TAYLOR, OAM

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [7.40 p.m.]: I rise tonight to pay tribute to James "Jim" Taylor, OAM, a real Aussie hero who passed away last Saturday. Being very much limited by time here tonight, I sadly have to leave out much of the life and achievements of Jim Taylor, so here are just some of the highlights of a truly exceptional life—soldier, sportsman, businessman, coalminer, administrator, author, husband, father, grandfather, friend. Jim's legacy is one of service, sacrifice and, most of all, unwavering commitment to his fellow man, and commitment in a variety of fields. To those who knew Jim it was clear he lived his life serving his community and his country.

Jim left school at the age of 15 to take up an apprenticeship as a maintenance fitter. At the age of 18 he began his service to his country by joining the Citizens Military Forces, and then in 1962 the Regular Army. During his time in the armed forces Jim served during the Malayan Emergency and also in Thailand from 1962 to 1964 inclusive. Before being posted to Malaya Jim was recommended for officer trainer but he declined this offer and chose instead to serve alongside his mates on the front line. From 1965 to 1969 Jim served with the Army Reserve.

During his service in Malaya Jim, who was a keen rugby union player, joined the Australian Army rugby team and played against the England and New Zealand Army teams. He later played rugby for Parramatta. In 1967 Jim moved back to Swansea and played for Boolaroo third grade, eventually taking on the captaincy of the side and leading them to premierships in 1968 and 1969. Jim would later be heavily involved in many aspects of the game of rugby, from refereeing 247 first grade matches, plus finals, grand finals and international matches both in Australia and overseas, to holding a number of administrative positions with Boolaroo Rugby Club and the New South Wales Rugby Union Referees Association, and was made a life member of the Newcastle Referees Association in 1989. He was also the inaugural President of the Lake Macquarie Rugby Club.

In 1968 Jim, like many others from Lake Macquarie, entered the mining industry. Jim later joined the Mines Rescue Squad and served 17 years in that team. During his time he responded to some of the worst mining tragedies we have seen in the area. In 1978 he was the deputy in charge when the removal of coal pillars led to a roof collapse at the Wallarah colliery. Sadly, Jim lost a work colleague that day after he and fellow rescuers laboured for hours in the rescue attempt. Over the years Jim would have similar harrowing experiences. In 1979 Jim and the Mines Rescue Unit responded to an explosion at the West Wallsend colliery. Jim and his mates worked 12-hour shifts, sometimes up to their mouths in water, in an attempt to save the mine. In 1982 Burwood colliery caught fire, and the rescue squad once again responded. These fires were described as the fires of hell, with the squad working hundreds of feet below the ground, fighting a fire so fierce that the roar drowned out any other noise. The rescue squad laboured for days building brick walls to contain the inferno.

Jim started his service with Swansea RSL club in 1981, and for the next 25 years the club would be his second home. In 1987 he was elected president of the club, a position which he held until the day of his passing. Those associated with Swansea RSL Club then and now are of the belief that if it were not for Jim Taylor the club would not have survived. In 1990 Jim could see the huge problems the club was experiencing. Many of the directors resigned, not wishing to be associated with the financial ruin that the club was facing. But Jim was not one to walk away. Assisted by Alan Kellock, the district manager of the National Bank, the two worked together on a plan to rebuild the club's finances. Jim laughingly said that he remembers Alan "flogging him day and night about all aspects of the operation, and you can still see the scars."

It was through Alan and the club's auditors that Andrew Patroni was employed as the club's secretary manager. Andrew and Jim worked side-by-side, and both were proud to see the club flourish. Swansea RSL Club paid off its debts, renovated and built additions to the premises, constructed a memorial hall for the Swansea community and built a new war memorial. Swansea RSL Club was named the Best Licensed Club in Lake Macquarie in 2002 and 2003 at the Lake Macquarie Business Awards. The club also sponsors Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club and supports several other Swansea community groups. The club's future looks bright—bright because Jim Taylor did not walk away when many others did.

Notwithstanding his many distractions, Jim was a proud and loving family man. He was a husband and father first and foremost, and was heavily involved with his son's soccer teams. He found time to manage and coach teams from Swansea Junior Soccer Club from 1974 to 1982. He also took on the role of secretary of that club from 1976 to 1982. Jim was many things to many people throughout our community, but only Jim's family can know what he meant to them. My thoughts go out to those Jim has left behind. To his mother, Olive, his wife, Bonnie, and his sons, Jimmie and Robbie, and their families, I convey my condolences and those of this House. Rest in peace, Jim Taylor—great community man, bloody good bloke and bloody good mate. The next one's on me, Jimmy.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.45 p.m
until Wednesday 30 May 2012 at 10.00 a.m.**
