

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 14 June 2012

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

APPROPRIATION BILL 2012

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2012

STATE REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 12 June 2012.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [10.00 a.m.]: We live in a time of rock-bottom trust in politicians. A poll this week found that just 22 per cent of Australians trust Parliament. Politics in this State is in a terrible condition. In opposition, Barry O'Farrell promised change; he promised to be different. Instead, with just one 30-minute speech on Tuesday, his Government has torched its credibility with a budget built on broken promises. This budget is a litany of deception that will not only decimate the already fragile trust in politicians but also hurt hardworking people with its severe job and service cuts.

Never before has this Parliament been presented with such a secretive batch of budget papers. One needs a precision microscope to spot the sneaky \$1.24 billion-worth of cuts to services and programs—cuts that are not broken down by departments and cuts that will menace the most vulnerable in the months and years to come. But this budget seems to be even trickier when we look at what it dares to announce. In opposition, Barry O'Farrell promised he would employ more public servants but now he has axed 15,000 public service positions. He promised that he would never privatise electricity but now the generators are being sold. He promised he would not allow home ownership to become a distant dream for young people but now he has axed the \$7,000 first home buyers grant for 85 per cent of purchasers. Barry O'Farrell promised he would never allow hunting in our State's national parks but now families will not be able to picnic without a bulletproof vest.

Before the election Barry O'Farrell swore that he would not privatise Port Kembla but he then pounced like a bear on a honey pot as soon as people's backs were turned. This Premier swore that he would not use road cameras as cash cows. He must have had his fingers crossed behind his back because in his next disingenuous breath he rolled out 148 new speed cameras. He has hiked speeding fines by 12.5 per cent and will collect an extra \$180 million in revenue from those fines. This Premier is milking this cow for all it is worth. For years the Coalition railed about road safety cameras and posed as the motorists' friend, but never before has \$180 million a year in revenue been dredged up from so wretched a place. This is the most cynical, deceitful cash grab in the history of New South Wales. At the same time that this Government cut the Roads budget by \$400 million—the completion of the Pacific Highway duplication and the M4 and M5 extensions remain a distant fairytale—these speed cameras will be everywhere, with the Premier waiting at the bottom of every hill with his hand stretched out.

The Premier's failure to implement the Resources for Regions program is yet another stunning example of his breach of trust. This was the plan to return fair proceeds to our State's mining communities. Two budgets in and there is just one hitch—the Resources for Regions program contains barely any resources. While our mining communities contribute billions to the State's coffers, this Government can be bothered to provide only \$9.9 million of the \$160 million it promised. It is poignant to witness the moral decline of a Premier who said he would be different, who once emblazoned the promise of a new era of honesty and accountability in his contract with New South Wales. Before the last election Barry O'Farrell had an opportunity to be up-front and honest about his real plans for New South Wales. Instead, he just chickened out. He chose to slither around in sophistry, to hide behind weasel words. An example is the phrase "no plans". The Premier had no plans to

privatise electricity, no plans to privatise Port Kembla and no plans to privatise Port Botany. Out in the real world, when a mum in a shopping centre hears a Premier say he has no plans to do something, she thinks that means it is not going to happen. In this Government's compromised moral universe, the opposite is true. Make no mistake: Behind every cut lies a human face. The Premier's broken promises in this budget will hurt real people. I think of the pensioner who will not be able to pay his or her privatised electricity bill and the special needs students at Hunter River Community School in Maitland who will continue to endure mouldy carpets and leaky roofs. I think of the hundreds of others schools in a similar situation because of this Government's cuts to school infrastructure funding.

I think especially today of the 10,000 sacked public sector workers, many of whom voted for this Premier because they trusted him when he said he would not touch their jobs. I think of the firefighters, the hospital cleaners, the radiographers, the social scientists, the TAFE teachers, the classroom aides, the New South Wales Department of Community Services workers and the people who work in our justice system—just to name a few. Their jobs will not be quarantined and the second they vanish without trace other staff will have to be dragged from the front line to fill the gaps. This is the Government's death by 10,000 cuts to public services in this State.

Sometimes it is the little touches that betray a government's priorities. In the Treasurer's 30-minute speech on Tuesday there was not one mention of the Hunter, not one mention of western Sydney, not one mention of the Blue Mountains, and a lone mention of the Illawarra was to ambush Port Kembla, placing hundreds more jobs under a cloud. It seems with the Government's massive majority these regions of our State have been forgotten without a trace. Let us take a look at hospitals. After 15 months of Barry O'Farrell administering the hospital budget, western Sydney emergency wards at Fairfield and Blacktown hospitals are on their knees. After 15 months of Barry O'Farrell administering the hospital budget, John Hunter Hospital is in crisis; ambulance paramedics are forced to attend patients in the car park because there are not enough beds. The Hunter's cancer services are at breaking point, with many sufferers forced to travel to Sydney for lifesaving care.

On Tuesday the *Newcastle Herald* reported that Mr Charles McGregor from Belmont was forced to wait six weeks for urgent treatment because of a shortage of oncologists. Last month the head of medical oncology at Calvary Mater Newcastle made a desperate plea for more funds. What was this Government's response? A budget speech that failed to mention even the Hunter, that failed to mention Fairfield and Blacktown hospitals and that failed to devote even a single extra cent. In education, the Government has made history for all the wrong reasons. Our schools have been turned into battlegrounds due to the Government's unwillingness to consult on its key education reforms. It has now handed primary and secondary schools a budget that goes backwards in real funding. It has ripped \$40.9 million from the TAFE and vocational education and training budget.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will not interject during the Leader of the Opposition's reply to the Budget Speech.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The Government has put literacy and numeracy programs on the backburner. It has abolished the Higher School Certificate portfolio—a simple credentials folder that graduating students present at job interviews—and it has scrapped the Higher School Certificate advice line. The Higher School Certificate advice line allowed students from anywhere in New South Wales to access trained teachers for help with their exam preparations for the cost of a local call. The service was not just there to solve a year 12 physics problem; it frequently doubled as a lifeline and referral service for students experiencing worries about the future and the pressure of expectation. The decision to scrap this \$656,000 program, a drop in the ocean in the State budget, is as mean and as petty as one can get. It is also disappointing that the budget fails to make any real mention of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The needs of people with disabilities must be dealt with in a bipartisan way.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition will be heard in silence.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: The O'Farrell Government should stop grandstanding and start negotiating with the Commonwealth on a launch site for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The New South Wales Labor Opposition is ready and willing to do all it can to help. The supreme tragedy of this budget is that it cuts so harshly when it could have built infrastructure and supported jobs. Instead it has brought insecurity to the doorway of every family in New South Wales. The Government is doling out the medicine but it threatens to knock out the patient, particularly with business and consumer confidence already so low, lay-offs soaring on

this Premier's watch and the New South Wales economy the softest on the mainland according to the national accounts figures released last week. In the run-up to the budget leading economists were telling the Premier that slashing jobs would be bad for the State economy. Chris Richardson, chief economist at Deloitte Access Economics, warned against a sack-and-burn budget. Shane Oliver, chief economist at AMP, said:

The danger is that it comes at a time when lots of private companies are cutting back as well. It adds to an air of negative sentiment.

As we now know, the Government did not listen. Instead it plans to make 15,000 more people unemployed. But there is a reason why confidence is stalling and the economy is down. The Premier would have us believe that his job and service cuts were forced on him by fluctuations in the GST. GST receipts are actually going up, not down; just not up by as much as the Government's unrealistic forecasts.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will listen to the Leader of the Opposition in silence.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Instead the slump in our State economy and the resulting deterioration of the State budget has one explanation and one explanation alone: The Premier failed to keep his promise to build infrastructure and fix this State. This Premier is borrowing the money and he has nothing to show for it. He has given New South Wales a mortgage but he is not building the house. In this budget one would think that with a \$7.6 billion explosion in borrowings, record mining royalties, increased GST revenues and the Government moving to privatise every conceivable asset, it would be cashed up to start delivering immediately on its infrastructure promises—not to delay them even further—and to support jobs and not cut them.

Instead the Premier is still asleep at the wheel. When it comes to infrastructure, the Premier is more conflicted than Hamlet. After two budgets Barry O'Farrell still cannot tell us what his infrastructure plans are. Why is it that after 15 long months the Premier is still failing to fast-track roads and rail? When will work finally start on the M4 East? When will work start on the M5 expansion, the Pacific Highway duplication or the Parramatta to Epping rail link? Barry O'Farrell had 16 years in opposition to get his plans together. After almost 16 months in office why has the Premier not got on with it? Where is all the money going?

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

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: For the past 15 months the people of New South Wales have been promised an infrastructure priorities list. Nick Greiner was meant to release it at the end of 2011, but just like a temperamental chef he is never ready. We now hear that the State will be fobbed off until at least September. The State's Transport Master Plan is still months away. Meanwhile the planning review is dragging on longer than the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, with a green paper and a white paper to come before any action is taken. So many key policies areas are in limbo.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call Government members to order.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: Every waking moment the Premier should be sending a message to investors and to the world that New South Wales is open for business. Instead companies are being forced to shut up shop on his watch. Some 500 jobs have gone at Kell and Rigby Construction, 200 jobs at Bonds and Reckitt Benckiser, hundreds more at Rio Tinto, BlueScope Steel, Norsk Hydro, Qantas, ANZ, NAB and Westpac, and we all remember last month's devastating announcement of more than 1,000 positions slashed at Hastie Industries. At one time Premiers acted as energetic champions of our State—Premiers such as Bob Carr would walk over hot coals to keep jobs in this State—scheduling crisis meetings and calling chief executive officers, yet this Premier has not lifted a finger.

The Premier has promised 100,000 new jobs. Instead jobs are walking out the door in New South Wales. The Premier has allowed our State to drift to the bottom of the pack. The Premier has broken his promise to make New South Wales number one again. In opposition, Barry O'Farrell promised to restore integrity to New South Wales politics. After breaking promise after promise the Premier has proven that he simply cannot be trusted. At last year's State election the Labor Party learnt the hard way what happens when one loses people's trust. But make no mistake: Labor has learnt its lesson, and no-one absorbed it more intently than me.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will not interject during the Leader of the Opposition's reply to the Budget Speech.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: People rightly expect their political leaders to be honest and fair dinkum. So let me be clear. Unlike the Premier, I will promise only what I can deliver; I will not make promises that I have no intention of keeping.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I will be clear and upfront about my values and the different priorities I would bring to government. In this budget there are many things that Labor would do differently—things that reflect our different values and priorities. First and foremost, Labor would support jobs. In my reply to last year's Budget Speech I predicted that the Government's Regional Relocation Grant scheme, which bribed people to move from the city to the country, would prove a monumental dud. That is what it has turned out to be. The Government projected 10,000 applications a year; instead, it has received just 636 applications. Among the top five suburbs from which people are claiming the \$7,000 grant is Adamstown, and among the top five suburbs to which people are moving is Charlestown, just a few minutes down the road.

Plainly, this program has to go. That is why last September I announced that Labor would re-divert this \$188 million to a regional jobs fund. Today I can advise that I will be introducing a private member's bill to create a New South Wales jobs commission. That is because, unlike the Premier, my number one focus as Premier will be jobs for New South Wales. We urgently need a body to drive jobs growth across the State and support regions like the Illawarra and the Hunter, which have been hit hard by mass lay-offs. Labor's jobs commission would strategically map out future employment opportunities. It would identify skills shortages and develop a skills profile for each region. Labor's jobs commission would be independently overseen and comprise a chairperson and part-time members. It would evaluate regional development funding initiatives and conduct regional impact studies into proposals that cut or relocate public sector jobs. It would prepare an annual report to the Parliament on issues impacting on jobs growth in New South Wales.

This is an idea whose time has come, and I urge the Coalition to support the bill when it comes before the House. Labor would also take a different approach towards educating our children. Labor would immediately reverse the Government's absurd abolition of the Higher School Certificate advice line and Higher School Certificate portfolios, at a total cost of \$1.256 million. While the Premier did not learn the lessons of the last election, my party and I have. I am determined to ensure that anticorruption bodies are fully resourced, wherever the crooks may be. That is why Labor would immediately restore the budgets of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Police Integrity Commission, which have been sliced by \$700,000 in this budget. The final commitment I make reflects my values. I have said this before: I was, I am and I always will be opposed to electricity privatisation. So today I will extend to families a helping hand to cope with the monster price rises from the Premier's broken promise of selling off our State's generators.

The Premier and the Treasurer promised to place downward pressure on the cost of living. Instead they passed on an 18 per cent electricity price rise last year, with a further increase of up to 18 per cent to come following yesterday's determination by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal. This means that on Barry O'Farrell's watch average families will be forking out an extra \$587 each year just to keep the lights on. When electricity was privatised in South Australia prices rose by 30 per cent. For pensioners on a fixed income and struggling families, just imagine that hit. Last year more than 18,000 households had their electricity disconnected. I firmly believe that no child should ever have to do his or her homework in the dark. That is why today I announce that Labor would allocate an additional \$55 million over five years to the Energy Accounts Payments Assistance scheme.

This scheme is designed to help some of our State's most financially stressed families who cannot pay their electricity or gas bills because of an emergency. The scheme operates with vouchers issued through charities such as St Vincent de Paul, Anglicare and the Salvation Army. Labor would raise the value of the Energy Accounts Payments Assistance voucher from \$30 to \$40, and the maximum allowable household claim would increase from \$480 to \$640 a year. This \$55 million funding boost would deliver help to an extra 8,000 needy families. Increasing the voucher amount was supported by the Energy and Water Ombudsman in 2010. The previous Labor Government committed this funding, but this Government has failed those most in need. Labor is determined to compensate the people for the Premier's broken promises.

Last year I said that this Premier will go down in history as the Premier who lost the surplus. And after Tuesday's budget it is clear that he still has not found it. Instead he has trashed promise after promise—his promises not to cut jobs; to enhance, not cut, services; not to privatise electricity; to remove speed cameras; to protect first-home buyers; and to protect services and jobs. In this budget the Premier has cancelled his contract with the people of New South Wales. How will he get the budget back to surplus and debt under control, yet still deliver his election promises? What other services will he cut? Who else will he sack? How many more speed cameras will he install? When will the Government introduce its congestion tax? And what else will the Government privatise?

Last year the Government had no plans to privatise Port Botany; this year it had no plans to privatise Port Kembla. Will the Port of Newcastle be next? Will the Government sell off CityRail or our State's bus network? When will the Premier's addiction to breaking his promises end? Barry O'Farrell was the Premier who came in raising such high expectations. Fifteen months later he has dashed them. While the Government fails to get this State moving, cuts the heart out of programs and breaks its compact with the community, and while it serves up the same old obfuscations and excuses, I say it is Labor that has learnt its lessons. Labor will be up front and fair dinkum with the people of New South Wales. And in doing so Labor will change to meet the challenges facing New South Wales.

Question—That these bills be now read a second time—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Bills read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Mike Baird agreed to:

That these bills be now read a third time.

Bills read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council with a message seeking its concurrence in the bills.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2012-2013

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.27 a.m.]: I move:

That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for the financial year 2012-2013.

Pursuant to resolution debate adjourned and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

STRATA LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2011

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 11 November 2011.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [10.36 a.m.]: The Government opposes the Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 introduced by the member for Sydney. This bill proposes a piecemeal, quick-fix solution to what is quite possibly one of the most significant and complex areas of reform to be undertaken in this State over coming decades. As we are all aware, strata is now the fastest growing form of residential property ownership in New South Wales, with over 70,000 strata schemes and 2,000 community schemes in existence. These figures will continue to grow in the future in response to chronic housing shortages and pressure on infrastructure.

Stakeholders and the community are in agreement that this sector is ripe for reform. The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government has listened and we responded by committing to undertake a comprehensive review of all the laws governing strata and community schemes. A fundamental root-and-branch review of the legislation is long overdue and is exactly what is needed. The Government has undertaken to review all the laws governing strata and community title schemes. This review will look at the development issues when schemes are established as well as the management issues that arise on a day-to-day basis during the life of the scheme.

The member for Sydney's bill does not deal with the broad spectrum of issues that arise in strata and community living. In fact, it does not deal with issues in community schemes at all. Instead, this bill is a reaction to a small number of isolated strata issues that have been brought to the attention of the member for Sydney. Regrettably, the member for Sydney has not provided any evidence as to why these changes should be dealt with in isolation and ahead of the outcomes of the broader review. I would encourage the member for Sydney to make submissions to the review. That will ensure that her views are incorporated in the inquiry. For these reasons we oppose the bill.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [10.38 a.m.]: I lead for the New South Wales Opposition on the Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 and I note at the outset that the Opposition will not oppose the bill. Both sides of politics accept that there is a need to implement reform in the strata sector. The New South Wales Government is undertaking a review of the strata laws, as the member for Wagga Wagga has stated. The first stage was online consultation to hear directly from the community. A report was subsequently released last month by Global Access Partners. The report makes for interesting reading, and I recommend that all members read it. I understand the Government will reply to the report during the next month. I take this opportunity to thank the member for Sydney who was kind enough to arrange a formal briefing on the legislation with herself, her adviser and her legal counsel. I acknowledge her legal counsel, Mr Richard d'Apici, AM, of Mackinson and d'Apici lawyers. I am sure many members will be acquainted with Mr d'Apici, who has been practising for over 40 years and is well respected in the field of strata law.

The member for Sydney has undertaken extensive consultation regarding this legislation. The bill is a well thought-out attempt to address some of the issues facing the strata sector today. Regardless of the outcome of today's debate, members of this place should acknowledge the lengths to which the member for Sydney has gone to try to address the issues in this sector. Members will also be aware of the importance of the strata sector. According to the Department of Fair Trading there are more than 70,000 strata schemes in New South Wales. Two million people throughout New South Wales now live in strata-managed properties and the numbers and proportion of people living in strata schemes will increase in coming years. New South Wales has a rapidly expanding population and in future more people will reside in apartments and townhouses as they strive to afford a home. Undoubtedly, the numbers of such dwellings will increase.

Governments must make apartment living as attractive as possible and strata reform is a significant aspect of this. It is estimated that up to half of New South Wales residents could live in strata-managed properties by 2050. I will now review the bill in detail. The bill proposes 19 separate amendments to existing strata law and I will deal with them in the order in which they appear in the bill. Schedule 1, item [1], introduces a code of conduct for the chairperson, secretary and treasurer of a strata scheme. The code of conduct is intended to encourage best business practice, compliance with existing legislation, honesty and integrity, and to prevent conflicts of interest. Schedule 1 [2] inserts new section 27A, which proposes to ban the original owner and builder or someone connected with them from holding the position of strata managing agent. This amendment is intended to counter any conflict of interest that might arise for these individuals should there be structural defects within a strata property.

Schedule 1 [2], new section 27B, and schedule 1 [3], new section 40D, are an extension of the previous amendment and will require strata managing agents to disclose any connection with the original owner, caretaker, letting agents for a lot, or builder who carried out the work of the scheme. That is a particularly worthy amendment. Schedule 1, items [4] and [5], propose to allow a special levy to be raised to finance the sinking fund. This amendment is intended to assist owners corporations to deal with unexpected capital expenses. Presently, special levies can be raised but only to finance the administrative fund, which has a limited scope in terms of the projects it can finance.

Schedule 1 [6] proposes automatic levy increases in line with the consumer price index if no lot owner or proxy attends an adjourned general meeting. This amendment attempts to address a problem that sometimes arises in smaller strata schemes—that is, schemes with approximately five or fewer members. In such schemes it can become difficult to obtain a quorum for general meetings. As such it is difficult for the management of these schemes to seek approval for levy increases. Schedule 1 [7] proposes to increase the minimum public liability insurance level for owners corporations to \$20 million. The present level under the Act is \$10 million, and I think we all agree it is time to review that amount. I concur with the member for Sydney that \$20 million would be more appropriate.

Schedule 1, items [8], [9] and [10], will require certain information to be listed on the strata roll. This information includes licences with the owners corporation for use of common property, plans and approvals for building work, details of loans to the owners corporation, and copies of special resolutions passed to allow

additions and alterations to the common property. Schedule 1 [11], new section 117A, proposes to make the owner and occupier of a lot liable for damage caused to common property. It is unfair where clear fault for damage to common property can be attributed to one owner-occupier of a lot for this damage to be paid for by the owners corporation. I understand that such matters will be resolved in the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal.

Schedule 1 [11], new section 117B, intends to limit adult occupants to two per bedroom to prevent overcrowding. This amendment is intended to help cope with the ongoing problem of unlicensed boarding houses. This is an issue that particularly affects inner-city electorates, hence the member for Sydney's particular interest in this matter. However, unlicensed boarding houses are also common in areas with tertiary education institutions. Students at such institutions, particularly overseas students, are more likely to reside in such premises. Overcrowding of bedrooms presents all kinds of problems, including safety issues and health concerns, and Governments have a responsibility to take action to address this issue.

Schedule 1, items [12] to [21], are intended to clarify the role of the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal in matters relating to strata management. These amendments seek to allow the tribunal to make orders about the construction and interpretation of strata management statements and increase the penalty for non-compliance with tribunal orders from five to 50 penalty units. This will result in a maximum fine of \$5,500. These amendments will also make it an offence to contravene an order made by the tribunal or an adjudicator. Schedule 1, items [22] and [23], require that upon being approached for legal services by an owners corporation the legal practitioner must disclose whether they have any connection with the original owner. Again, that is a worthy amendment given there can be clear lines of conflict in those situations.

Schedule 1 [24] requires that documents addressed to the owners corporation be sent to the owners corporation letterbox at the address of the strata scheme in order to assure that documents are properly received. Schedule 1, items [25] and [26], propose to allow owners corporations to send documents via email to owners and residents who nominate an email address for this purpose. Presently all such documents must be sent in hard copy, which can be both impractical and environmentally unfriendly. Also, we are all now very accustomed to emails. Schedule 1 [30] proposes to require receipt of cheques for levies five clear working days before a meeting in order for the owner to be able to vote. This will ensure that payment of levies is received by the owners corporation prior to the meeting commencing.

Schedule 1, items [31], [33] and [34], are common-sense amendments that aim to ensure the smooth running of general meetings. Schedule 1 [41] proposes to allow an executive committee to hold meetings through telephone or television conferencing provided that attendees can hear all members speak. Schedule 2 aims to clarify the requirement to disclose expenditure expenses that are not estimated by the owners corporation for the adequate maintenance of the building, that is, unforeseen expenditure. I again congratulate the member for Sydney on putting forward this private member's bill. Clearly the member for Sydney and her advisers and staff have put a great deal of effort into clarifying some of the shortcomings of strata living. I commend her work in preparing this bill, and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [10.46 a.m.]: I speak in opposition to the private member's bill introduced by the member for Sydney to amend the Strata Schemes Management Act 1986. It is clear that Ms Moore, the member for Sydney, and her team have put a substantial effort into the preparation of the Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 and, like the Opposition, we acknowledge the good intentions and the hard work expended in that regard. We do not doubt the member's commitment to these matters, and her determination to keep these proposals moving is commendable. However, I understand that some time ago the Hon. Anthony Roberts, the Minister for Fair Trading, received correspondence from several key strata industry stakeholders regarding the bill's proposals. These were the Property Council of Australia, the Australian College of Community Association Lawyers and the Law Society of New South Wales.

While these stakeholders expressed support for some elements of the bill, significant concerns also were raised about the potential negative effects of many of the proposed measures. This indicates that the views of the strata industry owners and the community have not been adequately taken into account at this stage. I am informed that limited consultation was undertaken—for example, a strata forum at Parliament House was organised by the member for Sydney. As well, there was the public release of a discussion paper that covered the issues forming the basis of the proposed measures in the bill. However, I understand that this consultation involved mainly residents living in strata scheme buildings within or near the Sydney central business district. We are not confident that this consultation was extensive enough and we are concerned that the outcome of the consultation is not representative of the views of the wider strata sector, or even of other parts of New South

Wales. We are also concerned about the apparent absence of a formal financial impact statement, a cost-benefit analysis of the proposals or case studies that would convincingly demonstrate the urgent need for many of the proposed measures.

As many members would be aware, and as has been pointed out already in this debate, the O'Farrell-Stoner Government has already taken the first steps in what will be a comprehensive and thorough review of the New South Wales strata and community title laws. The Minister for Fair Trading announced this review late last year, which has been broadly welcomed by constituents in my electorate, such as Mr Gibb of Belrose who has expressed concerns about the existing strata legislation. The Government's review process not only will encompass all the issues that the member for Sydney proposes to deal with in her private member's bill but also will examine every other aspect of strata and community title law. The extensive nature of the Government's review will be mirrored by an equally extensive and thorough consultation process. Strata and community title laws affect the lives of millions of people in the electorates of all members of this House—including the electorate of the member for Balmain—and those people deserve a genuine opportunity to comment on any changes to these laws. For those reasons I oppose the Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2011.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.52 a.m.]: I oppose the Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 and I support the Government's opposition to it. I am especially concerned at the vast amounts of unnecessary red tape that this bill would impose on strata owners corporations. This would have the effect of reducing the ability of owners to effectively and democratically manage their buildings. For example, proposals in the bill limit the rights of strata owners to choose who they employ as a strata managing agent or caretaker. This could have major unintended consequences, especially for strata retirement villages. Every strata scheme is unique. That is why it is vital that the laws continue to provide owners corporations with the flexibility and autonomy to make appropriate decisions applicable to their situation.

Other aspects of the bill attempt to prescribe a highly regulated, one-size-fits-all approach to the operation of executive committees. These excessively punitive measures could act as a strong disincentive to potential executive committee members and could exacerbate the shortfall of volunteers that many strata schemes already face. It is clear from this bill that the member for Sydney has focused only on larger strata schemes, such as those found in the Sydney central business district. The current strata laws already provide a higher level of accountability for large schemes. Whether executive committee accountability needs to be enhanced is one of the issues being considered by the Government's wide-ranging review of the laws. The Government's review is being carried out in full and open consultation with strata owners throughout the whole of Sydney and rural and regional New South Wales, not just those in the inner city.

If reforms to the requirements for managing large strata buildings are to be workable in practice, it is essential that they be based on the views of those who will have to put them into effect: the owners and managers of strata schemes. It is not necessary or appropriate to force smaller strata schemes, which make up more than 90 per cent of strata buildings in New South Wales, to comply with the same accountability requirements that apply to massive inner-city skyscrapers. The bill proposes a number of other administrative measures that would increase red tape and operational costs for owners corporations. This would inevitably result in higher strata levies, which could have serious impacts on the many strata owners who are pensioners or on fixed incomes.

To properly address the matters raised in this bill and the many other issues faced by strata owners, the Government is undertaking a fundamental review of the strata laws. The Minister has given a commitment to the member for Sydney that the proposals in her bill will be given consideration as part of the review. Some of the measures in this bill may ultimately be adopted by the Government. However, the Government is committed to consulting widely with strata owners, strata industry professional organisations and other stakeholders. This is the key to getting it right. The Government does not believe that the member for Sydney has consulted widely enough on her proposals, nor has any evidence of urgency been forthcoming as to why these changes should be dealt with ahead of the outcomes of the broader review. For those reasons, the Government will oppose the bill.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.55 a.m.]: The Greens support the Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. I will address some of the issues that have been raised that show the importance of progressing with this legislation. I say at the outset that I live in a relatively small strata building comprising 15 apartments. I have seen firsthand some of the problems that arise with strata management such as, in particular, the shared laundries in my building. The use and management of our common property has been quite contentious. The Greens support this bill because of the many straightforward issues it deals with—for example, managing governance, improving ethical management, and transparency.

Government members have said that the bill deals with relatively small issues that are confined to the city of Sydney. However, I draw the attention of the House to the article in today's *Sydney Morning Herald* headed "Beware the first homebuyers' grant—it's a poison chalice". The article talks about the Government promoting first home buyers to buy property in a strata development under \$650,000, which is predominantly apartment dwellings, and that the rights of those involved in a strata title is highly problematic. Earlier the Treasurer asked where the evidence is to support that. I refer to the recent University of New South Wales report on governance in the State's strata developments where researchers found that more than half of respondents reported problems in their developments and 80 per cent said they had problems with building defects. They are highly significant issues, particularly for my electorate where a large number of people live in strata buildings.

I recognise the work of the Minister and his department in reviewing the entire Act. However, that will take a long time—at least one year, possibly longer. Perhaps the Minister could inform the House how long he thinks the review will take. The issues in this bill that relate to the governance of strata schemes, in our view, should be supported. It is a first step that will significantly improve the lot of those dwellers who live in strata buildings. I will refer to a few of the issues in the time I have available. For example, the proposed legislation would prevent a developer or builder from being the strata managing agent during the 10-year period when action can be taken in relation to building defects. Currently the developer or builder who builds the building can be the strata managing agent. If tenants approach the strata managing agent about building defects the builder will say, "Don't worry about it. It's alright. We'll look after it. We'll fix this and we'll fix that." That has been a major problem in significant and small developments. The Greens do not support that practice.

The proposed legislation would prevent the developer from also being the building caretaker. That is a reasonable proposal in order to eliminate conflicts of interests. A very positive aspect of this bill is the proposed introduction of a code of conduct for members of the executive committee. The code of conduct would require executive committee members to commit to understanding and complying with the Act—which is perfectly reasonable—to act honestly and fairly, not to disclose private information, to act in the best interests of the owners corporation, not to interrupt someone's enjoyment of their home or common property and to disclose any conflict of interest. This basic code of conduct should apply to members of the executive committee, who make determinations on matters that affect people's lives and enjoyment of their home—which for most is the biggest investment of their entire lives.

The bill also proposes requirements that may seem minor. However, they are important and they include, for example, that the strata roll must record licences granted by the owners corporation for the use of common property. That is critical because we have seen situations in which licences have been granted and the process has been unclear. The strata roll also must include plans and approvals for building work on common property and other property in the strata scheme, the details of loans made to the owners corporation, copies of special resolutions passed for additions and alterations or the erection of new structures on common property, and an index of all documents. These are simple requirements that will help to improve the transparency and accountability of strata schemes in New South Wales. It is also important to note the increase in the maximum penalty for contempt of the tribunal. A number of members have used the word "punitive" with regard to the penalty. However, \$550 is hardly a punitive measure or a deterrent, given the amount of money at stake. The legislation also proposes a range of other measures that will improve the quality, transparency and accountability of the strata management process.

I acknowledge the work of City of Sydney Councillor Chris Harris, who launched an innovative campaign in 2006 using much of the information that has been referred to by members in this debate. That information was gathered from local residents and people who have raised concerns about the strata management process. His campaign, which he waged on behalf of The Greens, was designed to ensure that those affected by strata schemes are dealt with fairly and ethically. The University of New South Wales report, which highlighted concerns about these developments, is one small part of that. Like the member for Sydney, I live in an electorate that has a large number of strata title buildings. I receive complaints constantly about the way in which properties are managed.

Governance is the major issue and this bill deals specifically with that question. The Government has told us that we must wait for the entire review to be completed. The governance issues—that is, accountability and openness—could be addressed relatively quickly. One of the challenges in this area is that some changes have been made to the system but they have not been of benefit to the consumers. Even before the O'Farrell Government came to power the statutory requirement to take out home warranty insurance was removed for buildings more than three storeys high. That concerned many people who own properties in large buildings. This Government has also made some changes. An article in today's *Sydney Morning Herald* states:

The new Fair Trading Minister added another hoop for them to jump through this year when he decreed that non-structural defects had to be claimed within two years and structural defects within six.

That makes it more difficult for people to address these issues. The article also states:

It was made harder for owners to agree to take legal action, which cost more than a paltry sum, and then it was announced that claims had to be made within six months of a problem being discovered. And let's not forget that these issues are confronting many people who, for the first time in their lives, are coping with home ownership and the shared rights and responsibilities of strata living.

We know there have been changes, in particular, that reduce the legal rights of people living in strata buildings. This bill will not be passed today because the Government has said it will not support it. However, if nothing else I hope this bill sends a strong message to the Government and the Minister that while the Act must be reformed, the governance issues could be addressed relatively quickly. We must ensure that people entering into strata arrangements—and we have been told today that that will be almost 50 per cent of the population in the future—are protected and that we improve the ethics of executive committees. We must provide for greater transparency and promote effective and honest governance of strata schemes. I support the bill and commend it to the House.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [11.05 a.m.]: As stated by the member for Balmain, the Government opposes the Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2011. It does so because this State cannot afford to allow ad hoc and piecemeal reform; it does not work. The former Government demonstrated clearly that carving off bits and pieces in an attempt to get the right outcome for particular areas of the State without undertaking appropriate consultation does not work. It leads to ad hoc reform that creates more problems down the track. It is admirable that the member for Sydney has introduced a private member's bill that addresses issues in her electorate. That is our responsibility as members of this place. However, we must also ensure that we understand the overall impact of any changes we make. Penrith does not immediately come to mind when we talk about strata schemes. However, every area of Sydney, particularly those with a major transport hub, will have to address population density in the future.

When we talk about strata management we must look at the whole picture; we cannot afford to pass legislation that will work in some areas but not in others. We cannot make amendments to find only six months later that we have not consulted everyone or sought input from a broad enough range of people. That is why this Government, under the leadership of the Minister for Fair Trading, has decided to reject this legislation. The member for Balmain referred to the University of New South Wales report entitled "City Futures". About 300 people participated in a survey conducted by the university. That is a small sample given the number of strata schemes in this State. What makes me sceptical about the results of that survey is the fact that people were asked to respond if they had a problem. Of course, people living happily in a strata property that has no defects and has a good strata manager would not bother to respond. If only 300 people responded, one must be sceptical about the validity of the findings of the report. Despite that, members opposite have placed a great deal of weight on the information contained in the report.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: It is timely that the member for Bankstown has wandered back into the Chamber to interject. She might be reasonably new to this place, but she is a member of the shadow Cabinet and, as such, has a responsibility to be knowledgeable about her shadow portfolio. Her contribution to this debate involved her dribbling through each part of the bill. She based her entire speech on information provided to her by the member for Sydney, which proves she is completely out of her depth. She does not belong on the frontbench; she is getting a complete touch up, given the performance of the Minister for Fair Trading. You should step up and take responsibility for your portfolio. There are quality Opposition backbench members waiting in the wings. She will have to lift her game. Her speech was completely unacceptable. She read through the legislation. As a member representing a western Sydney electorate, I know better than anyone else how important—

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: The member for Penrith well knows that if he wishes to attack another member in this place he should do so by way of a substantive motion. Mr Deputy-Speaker, I ask you to draw the member back to the leave of the bill.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): The member for Penrith should return to the leave of the bill. He should also direct his comments through the Chair.

Mr STUART AYRES: If you are a member representing western Sydney you have a responsibility to fully understand the legislation that is brought before this House and if you recognise the need for strata reform then surely the fundamental premise and the key point is that you do all the consultation up-front. You do not put together legislation that will create more problems across the State than it solves in smaller areas. The responsibility of the member for Bankstown is to ensure that this legislation is beneficial to everyone across the State. If those opposite were prepared to do what people in this State want, they would wait for this Government to do the review. One could even suggest that the Opposition would take part in the process. The Opposition should engage with the Minister for Fair Trading to ensure that all the people who have made representations to Opposition members are brought into the review in the collaborative and consultative way in which this Government is doing business.

That is the way that Minister Roberts is doing business in order to ensure the rights of people who are in strata properties. He is working on behalf of people who—like many of the visitors in the public gallery—will find their way into smaller properties, apartments and townhouses, which will invariably be under some sort of strata management. Do the young people in the public gallery, from independent schools, want a piecemeal piece of strata legislation when they are buying their first home? Of course they do not. The Minister for Fair Trading has embarked on this review; his consultation is extensive and wide. The Government needs to continue down this path because, if it does not, it will walk down the path that the previous Government followed—on multiple pieces of legislation. We all know where that ended up—with a catastrophic result for the Labor Party at the last election.

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

Mr STUART AYRES: It is time to get this State moving again. It does not matter whether we are talking about the State Budget or strata reform; it needs to be done properly. That is what this Government is doing and the speech of the member for Bankstown shows that the Opposition is all about politics and nothing about reform.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The behaviour of the member for Bankstown will not be tolerated.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [11.12 a.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions of the member for Wagga Wagga; the Opposition spokeswoman, the member for Bankstown; and the members representing the electorates of Davidson, Port Stephens, Balmain and Penrith. The Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 was developed following extensive consultation and expert input over a period of three years. In 2009 my office worked with Makinson and d'Apice Lawyers to develop a discussion paper based on many strata cases that the firm had knowledge of or was involved in. The discussion paper was presented at a community forum attended by 200 people in the New South Wales Parliament Theatre. The more than 40 submissions that were received were assessed by a think tank made up of the Owners Corporation Network, the Institute of Strata Title Management, academics, strata columnist Jimmy Thomson, managers, residents, independent councillor Di Tornai, my research assistant, and Makinson and d'Apice Lawyers.

A large number of issues were raised, many outside the span of the original discussion paper. It became very clear that extensive legislation could not cope with the needs and conflicts of the growing number of people who are occupying apartments. I concluded that one bill could not cover all the concerns raised, but that a number of smaller bills would make it easier for the community and stakeholders to understand the implications. We are dealing with people's homes, and I believe that understanding is important. This first bill reflects the simple, practical changes that can be made quickly and easily, and would make a real difference to people living in apartments and to owners and occupiers of apartments. Other issues that I was working through included proxies, delivery of documents by the original owner, short-term rentals and tribunal expertise.

While I welcome the commitment of the Minister for Fair Trading to reform, and the Government review of the legislation that has commenced in response to my bill, I am concerned about the complete rewriting of the Act. Presenting all the changes needed in an omnibus bill will reduce the scrutiny of the proposals, because they will be too large for anyone to assess and understand. It will be hard enough for people working in the industry to understand, but very difficult for the layperson. If there is a wholesale rewrite of the legislation, the meaning of the present legislation—determined after much extensive litigation—will need to be relitigated. This raises a serious risk of unintended consequences in a field of law that is complex. It should be remembered that it is an area that has a day-to-day impact on the lives of people in their homes.

Richard d'Apice and Beverley Hoskin-Green, who are experts in this field, have stressed to me that even experts could not identify all the impacts of a rewritten Act. They cite the 1993 rewrite of the Local Government Act, where exemptions that were retained but rewritten in plain English clearly gave rise to the possibility of relitigating issues that had been litigated over a period of 85 years. The Government saw the sense of retaining the existing wording and avoided that expensive pitfall. There is no problem with the structure of the Strata Schemes Management Act 1996; it does not require a complete rewrite. Reforms are needed in a number of key areas, many of which have a wide consensus and can be addressed immediately. The Government should focus on key areas through an ongoing process. After undertaking the consultation process I can say that that is the best approach for the Government to take.

I believe the Strata Legislation Amendment Bill 2011 would complement that Government process. Richard d'Apice and his team would be willing to assist the Government and build on work that they have done already. It is disappointing that the Government refuses to engage with my bill, despite its stemming from a process that commenced more than three years ago. With all the work done, passing this bill would enable some reform now that could make a difference and still allow a review of these and many other desirable changes. We could have a code of conduct for executive committee members. We could stop developers controlling building management to avoid pursuing defects liability. We could strengthen disclosure requirements for manager positions. We could improve access to information by owners.

We could ensure all emergency works can be funded through a special levy. We could ensure levies could be raised at the consumer price index if an annual general meeting quorum is not achieved. We could increase the minimum public liability insurance to a level that would cover serious incidents like balcony collapse. We could empower owners corporations to act against overcrowding. We could ensure important notices for owners corporations actually get served, and we could provide for electronic means of communication. I think it is a pity that the Government has not assessed this bill on its merits. The Government should be looking at what could be done to help people now, while it proceeds with its strata process. To say, "We are taking care of it" is not good enough. An omnibus bill will take a long time to get right and there are many risks that could cost unit dwellers dearly.

I was disappointed to hear the comments of the members for Wagga Wagga and for Port Stephens. Their comments reflect the fact that the Minister for Fair Trading has refused to engage with this bill, which will result in strata owners and occupiers being denied immediate relief in key areas. I respond to their comments about concerns raised by the Australian College of Community Association Lawyers and the New South Wales Law Society. The Minister referred to these concerns but he did not seek a response to their comments from me. For example, both organisations say proposals to prevent overcrowding should be dealt with through planning legislation. This is exactly what the City of Sydney has done through its 2006 standard consent condition for multi-dwelling units. However, planning legislation cannot be used for apartments built before the consent conditions were introduced, nor has the Minister considered provisions in my bill that both organisations support.

As a number of members have acknowledged, apartments make up a growing share of our housing mix. Most building approvals now relate to multi-unit dwellings. Apartments make sense: they use land more efficiently, and enable more people to live within existing urban infrastructure, while avoiding the need to clear native bush and arable land. Apartments are an essential housing option in the face of a growing population. Many people are choosing to live in apartments because of the sense of community they create. However, the potential for problems to arise is real and I do not believe the law is strong enough to protect people. After hearing the stories of many people from the public forum, I was appalled at the distressing situations that so many people were facing on a regular and daily basis. I went home and said to my husband, in a throwaway line that, until we got that reform, we had better stay in our Redfern terrace because of my concern about the very distressing experiences that people are having. That highlights how difficult it is for people right now.

High-density living creates challenges that do not exist in detached dwellings. Residents live in close proximity to each other, share common property and have to manage expenses collectively. Legislative reform is needed to protect owners' assets and occupiers' enjoyment of their homes to ensure that apartment living is attractive, equitably managed and sustainable. In such a complex field, ongoing reform is needed and myriad concerns emerge constantly. My electorate has the highest proportion of multi-unit dwellings and apartment living. People who live in apartments should not be made to feel that apartment living is the second-best option. Strata reform is a massive task. To date, the Government has done nothing but reduce insurance claims for structural defects, which is a major concern for owners of new apartment buildings. This first move made by the Government clearly favours developers rather than those in apartment buildings. It would be a pity if the Government, in its desperation to get an independent voice out of this place, were to reject not only my proposals but also the work of many experts, as well as the input of many strata dwellers, and delay the reforms.

I find it extraordinary that after being in opposition for 16 years the O'Farrell Government does not even have a plan, a reform or a bill. Whereas I, as an Independent member with very limited resources compared with members of major parties, have engaged in consultation and worked with experts over a three-year period. At the commencement of this new term of Parliament I had prepared a bill for the reform of something that is needed urgently and that is very long overdue. It is incredibly disappointing that the Government, having been in office for 16 months, is only now carrying out a review. In conclusion, I thank all those who have worked with me on this bill, particularly Richard d'Apice, Beverley Hoskin-Green, Suzie Broom and their staff—all of whom are busy lawyers who gave up their time without pay to draft this important legislation. I recommend that the Government work with them. I also thank Tammie Nardone, my parliamentary research officer. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 20

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

Noes, 55

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

Pair

Mr Lalich

Mr Brookes

Question resolved in the negative.

Bill not read a second time.

CRIMES AMENDMENT (RECKLESS INFLECTION OF HARM) BILL 2012

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

STATUTE LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL 2012

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

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

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

WOLLONDILLY MAYORAL CHARITY GOLF DAY

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the efforts of Wollondilly Shire Council in hosting the 2012 Mayoral Charity Golf Day on 25 May 2012.
- (2) Commends the donation of more than \$8,000 to the Ambulatory Care Service in the paediatric unit at Campbelltown Hospital.
- (3) Acknowledges the members of the community who generously donated and participated in the day.

WOLLONDILLY AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA EVENT

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contributions of individuals, businesses and community groups in the Wollondilly electorate who helped raise money for this year's Biggest Morning Tea.
- (2) Recognises Le Jardin Café, at Tahmoor Garden Centre, for providing its cafe and donating raffle items to raise almost \$300.
- (3) Acknowledges the value of community spirit for raising money to fight cancer.

SHANE ROSE EQUESTRIAN ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates equestrian Shane Rose on winning the Sydney International Three Day Event.
- (2) Commends the dedication Mr Rose has applied in order to achieve this success.
- (3) Notes Mr Rose's previous success as a silver medallist at the Beijing Olympics.
- (4) Wishes Mr Rose all the best as he prepares for upcoming competitions to qualify for the London Olympic Games.

AUSTRALIAN WAKEBOARD CHAMPION CHLOE-AMANDA BAILEY

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Chloe-Amanda Bailey on becoming Australian Cable Wakeboard Nationals amateur ladies champion for 2012.
- (2) Recognises the perseverance displayed by Ms Bailey in overcoming multiple setbacks to secure this achievement.
- (3) Encourages Ms Bailey to continue being a role model for young women in sport.

BROUGHTON ANGLICAN COLLEGE MUM'S BIG BREKKY EVENT

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges Broughton Anglican College for holding its annual Mum's Big Brekky event.
- (2) Notes the importance of encouraging healthy breakfasts for families and school-aged children.
- (3) Commend the school's Parents and Friends Association for organising this valuable event.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ROWING EIGHT OLYMPIC GAMES QUALIFICATION

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Tess Gerrand, of Moorlands, and Australia's Women's Rowing Eight on its recent qualification to compete at the London Olympic Games.
- (2) Wishes Tess and the crew every success at the London Olympic Games.

GO-KART CHAMPION TOREY BLANCH

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Torey Blanch, of Bulahdelah, who has been chosen to represent Australia in go-karting at the Commission Internationale de Karting-Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (CIK-FIA) Karting Academy Trophy to be held in Italy in June 2012.
- (2) Notes that 15-year-old Torey was selected by FIA Women in Motor Sport as one of eleven young racers worldwide.
- (3) Notes that Torey has been go-karting since the age of 10 and won the Junior National Heavy category at the 2012 All Ladies Championships.

APPRENTICE AWARD RECIPIENT CARL SCHUBERT

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Carl Schubert, of Mount George, on being named the most outstanding first-year apprentice at the Hunternet Group Training Company awards.
- (2) Notes that Carl works in the production shop at UGL Rail and aims to study engineering at university when he finishes his apprenticeship.

LILLYPILLY PRESCHOOL, FORSTER

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Helen and Tim McCabe, owners of the Lillypilly Preschool in Forster, on being named the New South Wales-Australian Capital Territory winner of the Childhood Service of the Year category in the Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards.
- (2) Notes that Lillypilly Preschool was a State finalist in 2011 and, following its 2012 win, is shortlisted for the national awards.
- (3) Notes that Lillypilly Preschool cares for 28 children per day and has a strong environmental policy to educate children about recycling, composting, gardening and reducing waste.

PACIFIC PALMS ARTS FESTIVAL TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Pacific Palms Arts Festival on celebrating its twentieth anniversary.
- (2) Notes this festival commenced in 1992 to bring a new cultural event to the Pacific Palms area and raise funds for the local public school.

FORSTER COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION SIXTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Forster branch of the Country Women's Association on celebrating its sixty-fifth anniversary.
- (2) Notes that current president, Sue Hutchison, and more than 30 members and guests attended a luncheon to mark the occasion.

KEITH AND FRANK PEARCE TRIATHLON WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS SELECTION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 75-year-old twin brothers Keith and Frank Pearce on their selection in the Australian Age Group team in the Triathlon World Championships held in New Zealand during October 2012.
- (2) Notes that Keith, a well known Forster triathlete, will race in the Olympic distance triathlon of 1,500 metre swim, 40 kilometre bike ride and 10 kilometre run and Frank will contest the sprint distance race comprising a 750 metre swim, 20 kilometre bike ride and 5 kilometre run.

POWERBOAT CHAMPION TROY MARLAND

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Troy Marland, a member of the Taree Aquatic Powerboat Club, on winning the Union Internationale Motonautique Unlimited Displacement World Championship in his blown alcohol displacement boat named *Madness*.
- (2) Notes that this is the second time that Troy has won this championship, undefeated in 11 races.

MANNING POINT BOWLING CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Manning Point Bowling Club on winning the men's number Three Pennant and women's number Four Grade region Two Pennant.
- (2) Notes that Manning Point Bowling Club is one of the smallest bowling clubs in the district and that the club's success in 2012 is a tribute to the support and participation of all members.
- (3) Notes that the men's team play for the zone flag in June at Tuncurry for the third year in succession.

TESS GERRAND OLYMPIC GAMES SELECTION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Tess Gerrand, of the Manning River Rowing Club, and a member of the Australian Women's Eight who have won selection to represent Australia at the 2012 London Olympic Games.
- (2) Notes that Tess, who started rowing when she was 14 years old, will now be in the Australian crew to contest a round of the World Cup before the Olympic Games.
- (3) Notes that the Krambach Race Club is recognising Tess's achievement by naming a race in her honour at the Gloucester Cup race meeting.

SHENZHEN ECONOMIC AND TRADE PROMOTION FORUM

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the recent Shenzhen Economic and Trade Promotion Forum held in Darling Harbour on 22 May 2012.
- (2) Notes Shenzhen is southern China's major financial centre and the second busiest port in mainland China.
- (3) Notes the contribution of the forum to bilateral business development between Australia and China, including the Chinese community of the Oatley electorate.

GRANDVIEW WOMEN'S BOWLING CLUB AND ALZHEIMER'S AUSTRALIA

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the efforts of Grandview Women's Bowling Club in supporting families and individuals who have family members with Alzheimer's disease.
- (2) Notes Alzheimer's disease currently affects 280,000 Australians with 1,600 new cases of dementia diagnosed each week, which is expected to grow to 7,400 per week by 2050.
- (3) Commends the hard work of the club at a charity day on 21 May 2012 that raised over \$7,000 for Alzheimer's Australia.

SALVATION ARMY RED SHIELD APPEAL

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the work of the Salvation Army providing high-quality community services to over one million Australians in need.
- (2) Commends the hard work and dedication of volunteers who doorknocked the Hurstville Zone on the weekend of 19 and 20 May 2012, raising over \$15,000.

MEDICA CENTRE HURSTVILLE

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Medica Centre Hurstville on its official opening on 18 May 2012.
- (2) Commends the Medica Centre Hurstville for the provision of quality health services to the St George community.

WALK SAFELY TO SCHOOL DAY

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes that 18 May 2012 was the annual Walk Safely to School Day.
- (2) Commends the community for actively seeking to promote road safety, health, public transport and the environment.

ST DECLAN'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the visit by students of St Declan's Catholic School to Parliament House on Wednesday 16 May 2012.
- (2) Commends the staff and students for their continuing hard work in providing excellent educational services in the local community.

LIANG ZANG HEALTH OASIS CENTRE

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Liang Zang Health Oasis Centre on its official opening on 15 May 2012.
- (2) Commends the centre on the provision of quality health services to the community.

MORTDALE COMMUNITY SERVICES AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA EVENT

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the dedicated volunteers and staff assisting with Australia's Biggest Morning Tea at the Mortdale Community Services Centre.
- (2) Commends their hard work to raise funds for the Cancer Council.

HAWKESBURY RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Notes the success of the ninth Hawkesbury Relay for Life held on 9 and 10 May 2012, raising a total of \$150,000.
- (2) Thanks the organising committee, including Jenny Hamilton, the chairwoman for the last five years, and Deb Cooper for their tireless effort and work in facilitating this event.
- (3) Congratulates individuals and businesses from the Hawkesbury area on their magnificent support in making the Relay for Life such a success.

NSW WOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS NOMINEE CAROLYN BYERS

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Women of the Year Awards is a fantastic way of recognising women of New South Wales who work tirelessly for the betterment of the community.
- (2) Congratulates Mrs Carolyn Byers on her nomination recognising her exemplary service to the Hawkesbury community, particularly through her position as a volunteer visitor, trainer and coordinator with the Living in Communities scheme.
- (3) Congratulates all the women who were nominated, the finalists and the winners.

APPIN MINE ACCIDENT COMMEMORATION

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends the work of the Appin Historical Society which has organised a memorial ceremony to remember the 1979 Appin Mine accident.
- (2) Notes the significance of this tragic event to the Wollondilly community, including the families of the 14 miners killed in the accident.

BUXTON PUBLIC SCHOOL NATIONAL SIMULTANEOUS STORYTIME INITIATIVE

Mr JAI ROWELL—That this House:

- (1) Commends Buxton Public School students and staff for participating in the National Simultaneous Storytime Week during Library and Information week.
- (2) Notes the initiative encourages children to take up reading.
- (3) Notes the success last year, with more than 170,000 children in 1,100 different places taking part.
- (4) Commends Paul McDougall, school principal, for reading the *Very Cranky Bear* to 185 students.

**NSW PREMIER'S STUDENT VOLUNTEERING AWARDS SCHOLARSHIP
RECIPIENT CARRINGTON MELBOURNE**

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Carrington Melbourne, a student of Billabong High School, on being awarded one of 10 State scholarships through the NSW Premier's Volunteering Award.
- (2) Recognises Carrington's dedication to helping senior residents at the Harry Jarvis Wing of Holbrook District Hospital.

HORSEMAN DAVID MITCHELL

Mr GREG APLIN—That this House congratulates David Mitchell, of Tooma, on his exceptional horsemanship in winning the 2012 King of the Ranges Stockman's Challenge in Murrurundi and The Man from Snowy River Challenge in Corryong.

ST JAMES ANGLICAN CHURCH, KURNELL, FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates St James Anglican Church, Kurnell, on its fiftieth anniversary celebrated on 27 May 2012.
- (2) Recognises its contribution to the Kurnell community.

SANS SOUCI GIRL GUIDES

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that Girl Guides Australia inspires young girls to become leaders in our communities.
- (2) Congratulates the Sans Souci Girl Guides on developing the best qualities in young women.
- (3) Commends Lara Kelly, Elyza Ware, Zoe Ball, Jessica and Helaina Sikes, Christa Psarros and Victoria Loukis of the Sans Souci Girl Guides for demonstrating leadership qualities and being role models for their peers.

WALK SAFELY TO SCHOOL DAY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges 18 May 2012 as Walk Safely to School Day.
- (2) Commends all those who participated in Walk Safely to School Day in the Rockdale electorate.
- (3) Urges a commitment to healthier children and support for initiatives which encourage physical activity.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH GOLD AWARD RECIPIENT ASHLEIGH XIE

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ashleigh Xie, of Brighton-Le-Sands, on receiving the Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- (2) Acknowledges that the Duke of Edinburgh's Award provides young people with a valuable opportunity to engage with their local community.
- (3) Commends parents who assist their children in the service of the community.

ROCKDALE VOLUNTEERS

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Commends the role that local charities play in shaping a better community.
- (2) Congratulates the volunteers in the Rockdale electorate who routinely participate in activities which serve others.
- (3) Acknowledges National Volunteer Week between 14 and 20 May 2012.

SYDNEY PEACOCK 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mr Sydney Peacock, of Sans Souci, on his 100th birthday on 15 April 2012.

GLADYS RASMUSSEN 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mrs Gladys Rasmussen, of Arncliffe, on her 100th birthday on 14 May 2012.

MEHERJI BENGALI 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mr Meherji Bengali, of Turrella, on his 100th birthday on 21 May 2012.

CANTERBURY SMOKE ALARM BATTERY REPLACEMENT FOR THE ELDERLY PROGRAM

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Canterbury City Council on continuing with Project SABRE (Smoke Alarm Battery Replacement for the Elderly).
- (2) Notes that since the program began in 2003 it has successfully installed more than 1,000 smoke alarms and replaced over 680 batteries in the homes of people with a disability and the frail-aged.

SALVATION ARMY RED SHIELD APPEAL

Ms LINDA BURNEY—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges everyone who supported the Salvation Army's Red Shield Appeal doorknock on 19 and 20 May 2012.
- (2) Encourages people to volunteer to be collectors.
- (3) Hopes that the Salvation Army's target of \$10 million is realised to enable it to deliver its front-line services.

FAIRFIELD HOSPITAL NURSES CHRISTINE AND MEGAN WILLIAMS

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution made by Christine and Megan Williams over an extended period at Fairfield Hospital.
- (2) Notes their consistent patience, flexibility, dedication, commitment, knowledge and expertise in their service to the Fairfield community.
- (3) Congratulates Christine and Megan Williams on the celebration of International Nurses' Day.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEERS IN POLICING PROGRAM

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution made by Brian Sentana, Bosiljka Vojnovic, Cathryn Carroll, Krupesh Patel, Ali Almalky and Robyn Christiansen to Fairfield Volunteers in Policing.
- (2) Notes their ongoing volunteer support in ensuring the safety and security of the Fairfield community.
- (3) Congratulates them on their achievements and appreciation during National Volunteers Week.

FAIRFIELD VOLUNTEERS

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the ongoing contribution made by Iris Terry, Joyce Cook, Daphne Seddon and Christina Eddy through their years of service to the community.
- (2) Congratulates them on their achievements at the Annual Jean Arnot memorial luncheon held at Parliament House, Sydney.

MACEDONIAN HUMANITARIAN ASSOCIATION

Mr MARK COURE—That this House:

- (1) Notes the important fundraising event held on 21 April 2012 by the Macedonian Humanitarian Association to raise funds for four individuals with significant medical conditions.
- (2) Commends the association, which is dedicated to charitable activities and fundraising for important causes within the Macedonian community.
- (3) Further notes the successful night raised \$33,743 so that Natasha Nikolovska, Vesna Boceska, Todorka Naumoska and Ivana Pavleska will each receive \$8,413 towards their extensive medical costs.

SHELLY FRANKE GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

EMILY APOSTOLOVSKI GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

JENNA IRISH GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

KIM LACEY GYMNASTICS ACHIEVEMENTS

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

CAMDEN LIQUOR ACCORD CHARITY BOWLS DAY

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Camden Liquor Accord on raising \$1,300 for the Salvation Army at its charity bowls day.
- (2) Acknowledges that the Camden Liquor Accord will hold two charity bowls days each year to support different local charities.
- (3) Congratulates and encourages the efforts of the Camden Liquor Accord on supporting the local community.

SWIMMING CHAMPION LUCA SULLIVAN

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Luca Sullivan on her achievements at the South-West Sydney Regional Swimming Championships where she won four gold medals and broke two regional records.
- (2) Congratulates Luca on winning the senior girls champion title at the carnival.
- (3) Notes that Luca trains at the Narellan Swimming Academy.
- (4) Acknowledges Luca as a wonderful ambassador for her school, team and community.

CAMDEN CIVIC CENTRE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the thirtieth anniversary of Camden Civic Centre.
- (2) Notes the importance of the building within the community.
- (3) Thanks Philippa Percy, manager, and her staff for organising a celebration of the anniversary.

MACARTHUR EARLY LEARNING CENTRE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the owners, Tom and Rika Bazdaric and Sam and Robyn Haoui, on the opening of Macarthur Early Learning Centre at Elderslie.
- (2) Notes that this is a state-of-the-art facility, with a discovery garden, organic vegetable garden and pirate ship play equipment, beach themed sandpit with water pump, and bike track with street signs, slides and tunnels.
- (3) Acknowledges the importance of this facility within the community to provide young children with the foundations for learning, playing and interacting with their environment and community.
- (4) Wishes the Macarthur Early Learning Centre every success.

CAMDEN ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the effort that goes into organising Anzac day services.
- (2) Notes the hard work and dedication of Iain Richard-Evan to the Camden Sub-branch and Anzac day services.
- (3) Congratulates Tasha Hodges on her moving performance on the day.
- (4) Thanks the volunteers from the State Emergency Service, the Service Cadets, the Police and the Fire Brigade who assisted on the day.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARDS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates David Stuart-Watt, Elyse Glynn, Lisa Close, Luke Hughes, Rhearne Ryan, Amy Ward, Nicholas Wear and Joel Geist from Macarthur Anglican School on each receiving a Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award.
- (2) Notes that each recipient has had to meet rigorous standards of skills, fitness and community service to achieve this award.
- (3) Acknowledges the students efforts and their outstanding efforts for this award.
- (4) Notes the valuable opportunities for young people to engage with their community through the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE OFFICERS NEIL THOMPSON AND WAYNE O'BRIEN

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Captain Neil Thompson and firefighter Wayne O'Brien of the Lawrence Rural Fire Brigade on being awarded Certificates of Commendation from the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service.
- (2) Acknowledges their commitment and dedication to deliver training workshops for a number of village and rural fire brigade units in the use, care and maintenance of automated external defibrillators units.
- (3) Acknowledges Mr Thompson's leading role in the delivery of the Rural Fire Service Cadet Program in the Clarence Valley district.
- (4) Thanks them both for their efforts and exemplary performance in their roles with the Rural Fire Service.

YOUTH WORKER SAM KAPEEN

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges Aboriginal Education Officer Sam Kapeen of Maclean High School for his commitment and dedication to the Lower Clarence Magpies Junior Rugby League Club.
- (2) Acknowledges the voluntary hours he devotes to youth, particularly Aboriginal youth, as a mentor and a role model.

HEALTH SERVICES ADVOCATE JIM AGNEW, OAM

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges Jim Agnew, OAM, of Yamba for his tireless efforts over a number of years in advocating at all levels of government for better health services in Yamba.
- (2) Congratulates Mr Agnew on leading the campaign for better health services and being instrumental in helping to secure funding for an ambulance station at Yamba in 2003 and, more recently, funding for the establishment of a community health centre at Yamba.

BMX RIDER BROCK GRIFFITHS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates BMX rider, Brock Griffiths, of Cardiff South, on his second in the seven round 14 years boys' national champbikx series to earn selection in the Australian team.
- (2) Wishes Brock all the best in his BMX career.

WORLD'S GREATEST SHAVE AND ANDREW PRYCE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Commends Glendale East Public School principal, Andrew Pryce, for participating in the World's Greatest Shave to support a student's younger sibling suffering from leukaemia.
- (2) Recognises the efforts of the World's Greatest Shave in raising money for people living with blood cancer.

HUNTER CANCER ACTION NETWORK

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Commends the Hunter Cancer Action Network, a dedicated group of volunteers, for seeking to improve cancer control in the Hunter region.
- (2) Commends Gary Rosevar and Erin Marney for their tireless work to highlight the importance of early detection of cancer.

HUNTER HEALTHDIRECT HOTLINE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Healthdirect hotline on its efforts to ensure the Hunter's emergency departments are not overloaded with people with non-acute illnesses.
- (2) Recognises the great commitment to the hotline by Clinical Advisor to Healthdirect Australia, Dr Jenny Bartlett, and her colleagues.

NEWCASTLE FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY OPEN DAY

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Newcastle Family History Society on its open day on 21 April 2012, when 70 visitors signed the attendance book.
- (2) Recognises the great commitment to the open day by president Brian Engel and secretary Elaine Sheehan.

ELSIE WOMEN'S REFUGE, GLEBE

Mr JAMIE PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Elsie Women's Refuge, Glebe, on its recognition by the City of Sydney council with the renaming of a local laneway to "Elsie's Walk".
- (2) Recognises that the Elsie Women's Refuge is a unique organisation providing specialist support to women and children experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness due to domestic and family violence.
- (3) Acknowledges the outstanding work of the staff of Elsie Women's Refuge in providing support to some of the most vulnerable women and children in the community.

BALMAIN HOSPITAL

Mr JAMIE PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the ongoing service of Balmain Hospital in providing care to the community since 1885.
- (2) Notes that the Balmain Hospital is committed to providing the highest standards of health care, with a focus on aged care, rehabilitation and general practice.
- (3) Acknowledges the dedicated work of all the staff and in particular: the acting Director of Nursing; acting Director, General Practice Casualty; Nursing Unit Manager, General Practice Casualty; Director of Rehabilitation and Executive Clinical Director; Exercise Physiologist in the Centre for Strong Medicine; Manager, Performance Monitoring, Casemix and Innovation Unit (a Sydney Local Health District Service being hosted and managed by Balmain Hospital); Manager, Business Unit (a Sydney Local Health District Service being hosted and managed by Balmain Hospital) and Tim Sinclair, General Manager of the Balmain Hospital and acting Director, Performance and Business Units.
- (4) Congratulates the Balmain Hospital staff on excellent results in Hand Hygiene Compliance for the January-March quarter, with overall Balmain Hospital performance at a five-star rating of 92.3 percent.

LEICHHARDT PUBLIC SCHOOL 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JAMIE PARKER—This House:

- (1) Notes the 150th anniversary of Leichhardt Public School.
- (2) Acknowledges that Leichhardt Public School is a high-quality educational institution providing an invaluable service to the community.
- (3) Recognises the ongoing commitment of teachers, staff and parents to ensuring that Leichhardt Public School is a place of excellence in learning and development.
- (4) Congratulates the Leichhardt Public School Parents and Citizens committee on organising a successful gala fundraising dinner and other events as part of the school's anniversary celebrations.

COL MATTHEWS MOTORS, MUDGEES, TWENTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges, during May 2012, Col Matthews Motors of Mudgees on its twenty-first anniversary of opening its business.
- (2) Notes that Col Matthews Motors opened with 10 cars for sale and a staff of two and now has a stock of 100 cars and 14 staff and the business has grown to one of the largest specialist used car dealerships in the Central West.
- (3) Congratulates Col Matthews and his staff and wishes the business continued success and growth.

MO LONG CENTRAL SCHOOL DEBATING TEAM

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Molong Central School's debating team on its success in the Dudley Debating Cup for 2012.
- (2) Notes that Molong Public School's team of Chloe Boyd, Rose Hazelton and David Antioch, supported by Megan Garland and coached by Lin Eccelston, defeated James Catholic High School, Orange, in the final.
- (3) Wishes Molong Central School every success in its defence of the Dudley Cup.

TAFE WESTERN VOCATIONAL STUDENT OF THE YEAR REBECCA LINCOLN

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Rebecca Lincoln, of Orange TAFE, on being named TAFE Western Vocational Student of the Year.
- (2) Notes that Ms Lincoln was successful in gaining Certificate IV in Administration.
- (3) Wishes Ms Lincoln well in her future studies for a Diploma in Business Studies and in her future employment.

MUDGEY RELAY FOR LIFE AND LUE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Lue Public School on being one of the top fundraisers in the Mudgee Relay For Life held in Mudgee on 12 and 13 May 2012.
- (2) Notes that the school team, captained by Debbie Robinson, raised a total of \$4,000 from a student population of 21 in this event.

MUDGEY RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the organisers of the Mudgee Relay For Life on raising \$163,000, more than double the target, in the Relay For Life held at Victoria Park, Mudgee, on 12 and 13 May 2012.
- (2) Congratulates the committee chairperson, Ian Hunter, and team co-ordinator, Christina Caughey on organising the event.

TRIBUTE TO GISELA DEASEY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Orange High School teacher Gisela Deasey on reaching the milestone of 30 years service at the school.
- (2) Notes that Mrs Deasey has taught community and family studies and home economics and has seen the changes in these subjects where now both boys and girls take these subjects.

TRIBUTE TO TOM KNOWLES

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the passing of Tom Knowles, former Wellington Council Mayor, who served on council for 14 years and was mayor for four years.
- (2) Notes that Mr Knowles played a key role in instigating the Wellington Blayney Cabonne Councils Alliance, known as the WBC Alliance, when it was formed in 2003.
- (3) Offers condolences to Mr Knowles' family.

MUDGEY COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION NINETIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Mudgee Day Branch of the Country Women's Association on its ninetieth anniversary.
- (2) Notes that the Mudgee branch was formed in the same year that the organisation was founded and is the third oldest branch in New South Wales.
- (3) Wishes branch president, Marie Croom, and its members every success towards its centenary.

MUDGEES BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Country Physiotherapy on its second win for Outstanding Business in the Rotary Club of Mudgee Sunrise Clock Awards.
- (2) Further congratulates all businesses that were nominated for the awards and those that were winners and runners-up in their respective division.
- (3) Recognises the work of the Rotary Club of Mudgee Sunrise in presenting these prestigious awards.

HEAL FOR LIFE FOUNDATION AND ANNIE NOTHNAGEL

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the importance of long-term psychiatric health care in helping people recover from trauma and become active members of society.
- (2) Congratulates the Heal for Life Foundation, its employees and volunteers, on providing much-needed psychological services for victims of childhood trauma.
- (3) Congratulates Annie Nothnagel, a survivor of trauma and a recipient of Heal For Life Foundation services, on her scholarship from the Greater Building Society enabling her to volunteer for the Heal for Life Foundation at its Eva House for Girls and undertake a Bachelor of Behavioural Studies.

AGED CARE VOLUNTEERS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Recognises, in the spirit of National Volunteer Week, the invaluable, unpaid and often thankless work undertaken by volunteers in countless segments of the community and that every volunteer counts.
- (2) Acknowledges the essential work provided by volunteers in bringing much-needed services to the elderly.
- (3) Acknowledges the tireless work of organisations such as Anglican Care and Meals on Wheels in the provision of aged care to the elderly.

HUNTER EDUCATION WORKSHOPS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the importance of parents engaging with their children's education and encourages this engagement.
- (2) Congratulates Maryland Public School and the TAFE NSW Hunter Institute on providing workshops for parents that will help them engage with and further encourage their children's learning on a deeper level.

NEWCASTLE HERALD SCHOOL NEWSPAPER COMPETITION

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the importance of encouraging youth engagement with community.
- (2) Acknowledges the importance of encouraging youth literacy.
- (3) Congratulates the *Newcastle Herald* on its school newspaper competition, encouraging students to research and write articles about school and their community and promoting engagement with that community and literacy in general.
- (4) Congratulates the staff and students of Jesmond Public School on the publication of their entry, The Jesmond Journal, and specifically recognises students Maryam Ahmad, Jomana Ahmed, Simon Gordon, Alyssa Howard, Julia Lawrence, Leilana Lawrence, Lara McEwan, Carlin Morton, Zjardai Ninevski and Kaila Stead.

SLICE OF HAVEN FOOD AND WINE FESTIVAL

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jenelle Nosworthy and the team of volunteers on the outstanding Slice of Haven Food and Wine Festival held in Camden Haven on Sunday, 27 May 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the contribution that the Camden Haven Chamber of Commerce has made to the event through its strong support.
- (3) Recognises the generosity of the sponsors and talent of the stallholders in producing this hugely successful annual event.

PORT MACQUARIE-HASTINGS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR RALPH MUELLER

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ralph Mueller, of Port Macquarie, on receiving the Port Macquarie-Hastings Volunteer of the Year Award for his work for the Special Olympics Mid-North Coast.
- (2) Acknowledges and applauds the commitment of Mr Mueller, his wife Teash and the other volunteers who give their time to Special Olympics Mid-North Coast to promote self-esteem and confidence in the lives of those with disabilities.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.

Community recognition notices agreed to.

BROADMEADOW TO SYDNEY RAIL SERVICE

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.32 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that Newcastle is the second and most prosperous city in New South Wales, and the lower Hunter is a growth area for both population and employment; and
- (2) notes the need for a faster train from Broadmeadow to Central and that a two-hour train journey from Broadmeadow to Central is achievable.

Encouraging patronage of public transport is certainly not a new idea. Decision-makers before our time have considered the convenience of and environmental benefits from the use of public transportation. Proper promotion of public transportation would sway users away from private means of transport. However, public transport needs to be attractive to commuters. Why travel on overcrowded carriages when one can commute in the comfort of one's own vehicle? Why take a three-hour commute when one can travel to one's destination much quicker by car? These issues influence how people commute. In the *Newcastle Herald* on 11 June 2011 it was reported that the Hunter Independent Public Transport Inquiry determined that a two-hour journey is between Broadmeadow and Central station is achievable, with just a few modest improvements in track and signalling required.

Given that costs are a significant issue in developing infrastructure, making a series of improvements on the rail line may be one of the many options the O'Farrell Government can consider. The supporting evidence for establishing a faster train service from Broadmeadow to Sydney is simply irrefutable. I totally support Howard Dick, a member of the Hunter Independent Public Transport Inquiry, who said that the lower Hunter will encounter growth in both population and employment. The lower Hunter is about to embrace massive growth. According to Regional Development Australia, the region will be home to one million people by 2040, which is a significant increase compared to the estimated resident population of 644,000 in 2009, as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

A submission compiled by Lake Macquarie City Council states that Glendale and Cardiff are expected to experience an increase of 6,200 jobs and 4,000 homes by 2031. Newcastle City Council's Independent councillor Bob Cook has proclaimed that Broadmeadow is the centre for growth. It is clear that there will be an extent of growth within the Hunter that demands an efficient rail service for commuters to and from this region. Broadmeadow as a centre of growth and a fast-track rail service to Sydney go hand in hand. As Newcastle is the second and most prosperous city in New South Wales, the region needs a fast, regular and reliable train service to Sydney. This is imperative for the area as the F3 freeway is often congested and suffers from frequent road accidents.

In addition, the existing train service is simply not practical to use due to the long and arduous trip from Newcastle to Sydney. For instance, a train from Broadmeadow to Central departs at 5.35 a.m. and arrives at its destination almost three hours later, at 8.20 a.m., if one is lucky. Geoff Hassell, a well-informed public transport advocate and constituent of mine, has suggested that a worthy project would be to implement a regular limited-stops service between Broadmeadow and Sydney every hour. Mr Hassell said that this could be achieved by replacing the stops between Wyong and Morisset, with an extension of the existing commuter service, and run the local Morisset to Newcastle service at night and on weekends, as well as weekdays. This may be worth considering.

According to the "High Speed Rail Study—Phase 1" report compiled for the Department of Infrastructure and Transport in 2011, commuters who travel via train between Newcastle and Sydney account for 55 per cent of commuter train trips within the corridor. In other words, Hunter locals are more likely to travel to Sydney via train than by private transport or air travel. The report also states that there are considerable opportunities to reduce existing travel times between Newcastle and Sydney from less than three hours to a remarkable 40- to 50-minute commute on high-speed rail services. Rather significantly, the Hunter Independent Public Transport Inquiry identified that "a much faster conventional rail service could be achieved at a fraction of the cost of building a duplicate F3".

Therefore we cannot say that the notion of constructing an efficient rail service for the Newcastle region is absurd, whether that might be high-speed rail or an improvement to our current services. It has been noted that road investments in the Hunter, such as the Hunter Expressway, have their benefits, although they also create bottleneck congestion and increase the total amount of traffic on our roads. The Hunter Independent Public Transport Inquiry suggested an obvious solution to shift peak-hour trips off our roads and onto the rail network. It is not alone with this thought, as former Deputy Prime Minister-turned-diplomat Tim Fischer has argued this case previously. Mr Fischer wants to see the existing lines upgraded and travel times reduced on country services in New South Wales, which he states can reach their potential of approximately 160 kilometres per hour. If this is the case, a faster train from Broadmeadow to Central is certainly plausible and should be seriously considered by the Government.

Having regard to our current state of politics regarding transport, the O'Farrell Government is set to disband RailCorp and establish two new bodies: NSW Trains to run regional and country services, and Sydney Trains to operate those services in the city. The Government has said that these reforms will supposedly fix the current state of our trains, though not everyone is convinced. Jacob Saulwick from the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that it has not been made clear how these initiatives will lead to more frequent and reliable train journeys. Indeed journalists were left in the dark after they specifically asked about the issues. The budget delivered on Tuesday stipulates that \$95 million will support the introduction of Waratah rail carriages, though this does not necessarily mean that services between the Hunter and Sydney will be quicker. I strongly urge the Government to consider the many reasons that an improved train service between Broadmeadow and Central will benefit the people of the Hunter.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [11.39 a.m.]: I note that notice of this motion was given in June 2011, which is 12 months ago. This gives me an opportunity to articulate the current Government's achievements over the past 12 months in rail transport in my part of the world. It is interesting that the member for Wallsend chose to move this motion after the former Labor Government had 16 years to deliver better travel times for constituents in her electorate. I note also that some years ago she was the Parliamentary Secretary Assisting the Minister for Transport. Labor's record in the Hunter can be summed up in one word—woeful. The current New South Wales Government is working to improve rail services across the outer metropolitan network, especially on the Newcastle and Central Coast lines. From March 2012 additional capacity was provided on selected Newcastle and Central Coast line services, providing an additional 33,000 seats across selected services. This fantastic news for commuters from Newcastle and the Hunter demonstrates this Government's commitment to commuters from our regional cities.

In addition, the Government has implemented a quiet carriages initiative on the Newcastle and Central Coast line, providing customers with an option for a quieter journey. This initiative has been welcomed by the community, with 98 per cent of customers who had used the quiet carriages indicating they would do so again in the future. I am glad that the Minister for Transport has extended this fantastic initiative, which also will be trialled on the South Coast and Blue Mountains lines. I am sure commuters from those regions will be glad to have some relief from loud music and telephone conversations on their daily commute. To improve travel times for all customers Transport for NSW is undertaking a major review of the CityRail timetable. This review focuses on matching service frequency with customer demand, providing consistent stopping patterns and improved connections.

The timetable review is scheduled over the next six to 12 months and the team is looking for opportunities to reduce travel times, where possible, including on the Newcastle and Central Coast lines, to ensure the provision of true express services to Sydney from those locations. Timetables are developed after patronage levels across the rail network are monitored, which has been ongoing since the Coalition has been in office. This is based on ticket sales, counts of customers' arriving and departing stations and passenger counts on trains. Importantly for Newcastle and the Hunter, the Government recently announced its decision to establish NSW Trains, a new rail operator dedicated to the needs of intercity and regional customers. I have been pushing

very hard for the headquarters of that new body to be located in the Hunter. For too long RailCorp has tried to be all things to all people. It is time that regional and intercity customers had an organisation focused on their needs, which is why we are pushing so hard for it to be based in the Hunter.

NSW Trains will deliver on the needs of these customers—comfortable services with on-board facilities. I am sure the member for Wallsend welcomes the Government's decision in this regard. She knows the former Labor Government ignored the needs of regional and intercity customers. All members, particularly Government members, know that Labor has a woeful record when it comes to the delivery of services to regional New South Wales, not only in rail but in every portfolio area. In 2004 Labor closed the Casino to Murwillumbah rail line. In 2006 Labor imposed its infamous pensioner booking tax on CountryLink services, costing pensioners riding on CountryLink services up to \$10,000 a day. I am glad that the Minister for Transport and the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals worked so hard to have Labor reverse that foolish decision. Also in 2006 Labor began closing CountryLink travel centres—11 in total. Under Labor, the last time CountryLink met its on-time running target was in 2002-03.

Labor's record on regional and intercity travel is woeful. I am glad that the Government will deliver an organisation dedicated to the needs of these customers. The Government is getting on with the job. I note that the member for Cessnock is sitting with his head in his hands. He is aware of what is happening. Since this Government has been elected it has made huge changes to the way rail is managed in this State. However, more needs to be done. Cardiff station is receiving a major upgrade after years of talk from members opposite. Improvements under the Transport Access Program are also being delivered for Gosford, Greta, Hamilton, Scone, Singleton, Aberdeen and Adamstown stations. The Government is delivering better rail services, although that work is still in progress. I am confident that during this term of Government we will see a complete change in the running of rail in this State, while for 16 years Labor talked and did nothing. The Government is committed to enhancing and continually improving both rail services and network infrastructure for Newcastle and Hunter residents.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [11.46 a.m.]: I note that the member for Newcastle did not speak to the leave of the motion but I will try to do so. The motion states:

That this House:

- (1) notes that Newcastle is the second and most prosperous city in New South Wales, and the lower Hunter is a growth area for both population and employment; and
- (2) notes the need for a faster train from Broadmeadow to Central and that a two-hour train journey from Broadmeadow to Central is achievable.

Newcastle and the Hunter are located in one of the fastest—if not the fastest—growing areas in the State. Over the past five years Maitland has regularly expanded at more than 2 per cent, which by any population demographer's standard is the top of the scale. That is followed closely by Cessnock at 1.9 per cent over the past three years, and the Lower Hunter Regional Strategy has identified more than 40,000 home sites in the coming two decades. Newcastle and the Hunter are booming. Accessing Sydney will be a priority for all governments—Labor, Liberal, Green, Nationals or Independent—in the coming decades.

Bob Bell, a gentleman residing in the Newcastle area, is known to most members of this Parliament. He has been involved in the Commuter Council of Newcastle and the Hunter Region for more than 25 years. Bob has considerable insight into rail services between Sydney and Newcastle and I wish to share some of that insight with members. Bob notes that in 1989, when Newcastle was first adopted into the CityRail scheme of things, two trains an hour travelled between Newcastle and Sydney. At that time one service would be an all-stations service and the other would be an express service. He notes that the express service could be achieved in two hours and 17 minutes, but in 2012 the trip takes three hours. That is not progress, which causes frustration for people like Bob Bell and the Commuter Council of Newcastle and the Hunter Region. It is important for Newcastle to be better linked to Sydney. The member for Wallsend has deliberately moved a motion incorporating the words "Broadmeadow to Sydney" because we do not want to get into the argy-bargy of whether the Newcastle rail line stays or goes.

This motion is about being positive and proactive about the needs of people in the Hunter and more broadly. Broadmeadow brings the people of Newcastle 10 minutes closer to Central station. In 1989 we were able to achieve that trip in two hours and 17 minutes. However, in 2012 it now takes us three hours. An express service is required to achieve faster access; it is not acceptable to have an all-stations, all-stops trip. People will

not patronise a service that takes them far longer on public transport to access the city when they can drive a car. I accept that car congestion is a problem in the city. For what other reason would billions of dollars have been spent in the past decades, and billions of dollars more will be spent in the future, on road and rail services? We need to ease car congestion. In 1989 the express service stopped only at Sydney, Strathfield, Hornsby, Woy Woy, Gosford, Wyong, Morisset, Fassifern, Cardiff, Broadmeadow, Hamilton and Newcastle. We need to turn the clock back to that time in order to go forward so that people of the Hunter can access the city of Sydney. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [11.50 a.m.]: It is interesting that the member for Wallsend chose to move a motion in this place when the previous Labor Government had 16 years in which to deliver better travel times for her constituents. Labor's record on rail services to the Hunter is woeful. In 2005 Labor slashed 416 daily rail services from across the CityRail network. It also slowed down services and began calling trains that skipped only one or two stops "express services". Yes folks, under a Labor Government commuters missed stops at Wandabyne and Booragul but they still had an express service, according to Labor. Labor failed to deliver frequent and reliable services to the people of the Hunter and Labor received the strongest message on 26 March last year. Under Labor New South Wales had the slowest patronage growth compared to other major Australian States.

It is a bit rich for the member for Wallsend to move this motion when Labor had 16 years in which to deliver better travel times. Perhaps she could have asked the Leader of the Opposition for faster travel times when he was Minister for Transport, but regrettably he was probably too focused on leadership to deliver anything for long-suffering commuters. As the member for Newcastle noted, the member for Wallsend held the position of Parliamentary Secretary assisting the Minister for Transport for 15 months. Maybe then she could have had an input into the problem rather than waiting until now to move this motion. I recall that in October 2010 the member for Wallsend was asked by the Wallsend Heritage Group about the increase in travel time from Central to Newcastle. She discussed how the train was historically called the "Flyer" but then said, "I don't know if it flies now but we'll leave that response to the House." She admitted that the Flyer takes much longer than it used to. I commend the member for Wallsend for mentioning the scenic and beautiful route to the Hawkesbury through my electorate of Gosford, and I agree with that description.

As I said, the Leader of the Opposition was too focused on leadership to worry about commuters when he was Minister for Transport. The Labor Government cut services and slowed trains but I am glad to say that we have a Minister for Transport who is turning that record around. Already the Government has delivered 1,102 public transport services each and every week. That includes 63 additional weekly rail services delivered in October last year. For the Hunter, customers are now enjoying an additional 33,000 seats each and every week on selected services. That is great news for Hunter commuters—more seats for a more comfortable journey. Where Labor cut services we are bringing them back. As the member for Newcastle mentioned, Transport for NSW is already working on the timetable for 2013, looking to reduce travel times and match service frequency with demand.

The New South Wales Liberals and Nationals committed to 135 additional express services, in contrast to Labor whose services were slower than those in the 1960s. I know that Central Coast residents are looking forward to those additional express services and the new timetable next year. This is important work, which is why the Government has already made a down payment on the commitment with 63 additional services delivered last October. I was pleased to hear the announcement of the Minister for Transport on 15 May establishing a new rail operator dedicated to the needs of regional and intercity customers. RailCorp has tried to be all things to all people and has failed. Customers in Newcastle have different needs from those of customers in Newtown; Woy Woy is different from Wynyard and Broadmeadow is different from Blacktown. I congratulate the Government on the announcement and I look forward to hearing more about how this Government and the excellent Minister for Transport intend to further fix the trains in future.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [11.54 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend, as have the member for Cessnock and the member for Newcastle and, I am sure, the member for Gosford. Whilst some criticism was aimed at the historic delivery of services by the former Government I certainly have not heard any criticism of the two points of the motion in, firstly, noting the size of Newcastle as the second and most prosperous city in New South Wales and the lower Hunter as a growth area for both population and employment and, secondly and more particularly, the need for a faster train from Broadmeadow to Central and that a two-hour train journey is achievable. There has been no argument against that part of the motion. A number of matters were raised by Government members, the member for Newcastle and the member for Gosford, and I acknowledge some of the good work that has been done particularly by the Minister for Transport.

Additional seats have been made available and quiet carriages have been introduced. An opportunity may arise from the establishment of NSW Trains, particularly if it is based in an area such as Glendale. I think that would be fantastic for the area. However, that is not the issue raised by the motion. Paragraph (2) of the motion goes to the nub of the matter. There is a need for a faster train from Broadmeadow to Central. While we are talking about some improvements to the system, nevertheless we are tinkering at the edges. There is talk of changes to timetables and the member for Wallsend talked about a proposal to introduce a regular limited-stop rail service from Broadmeadow to Sydney. I see those as stopgap measures. What we really need to note is the historic failure to deliver infrastructure improvements that people need. People who wish to use public transport in New South Wales would expect a system that delivers safety, reliability and comfort but, more importantly, timeliness and well-timed travel to Sydney.

People who want to catch a train from Newcastle to Sydney really have to consider whether it is worthwhile in comparison with a trip on the F3—assuming the F3 stays open and is not affected by some problem—which will be vastly superior in speed. We are largely talking about commuter transport between the Sydney metropolitan area and Newcastle but I note that the Assistant-Speaker who is in the chair comes from Coffs Harbour in regional New South Wales. Many people from outside the Newcastle area who wish to use the rail network also would like a greatly improved service from State rail. The section north of Sydney is extremely important. There has been some discussion about high-speed rail and I have said, a little tongue-in-cheek perhaps, that we do not necessarily need high-speed rail or a very fast train, we need a reasonably fast train. I believe that is something the Government should look at delivering in its term in office.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.58 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Newcastle, Cessnock, Gosford and Lake Macquarie for their contributions. I express some disappointment with the speeches of the member for Newcastle and the member for Gosford in that there was no attempt to address the motion. I was not asking for too much on behalf of commuters—just for an improvement in services. However, for members to spend three of the four minutes they are allocated talking about the Labor Government does not help commuters. We have had two budgets from the Coalition Government and it has been in office for 15 months, so it is now time to initiate changes. I support and acknowledge the Government's initiative providing an extra 35,000 seats on trains and quiet carriages, which have been very well received by the community. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that it was not clear how the initiatives will lead to more frequent and reliable trains.

The community is very pleased to hear that Transport for NSW will improve train journeys by making the service more frequent and reliable. Unfortunately, we heard a litany of grumbles from the member for Newcastle about the history of Labor. Again, he did not add anything to the debate on this motion, which I moved on behalf of commuters in New South Wales, particularly the commuters from Broadmeadow to Sydney who simply want a faster train. The member for Newcastle referred to the Cardiff railway station upgrade. Like many members of the Government, he delightedly took credit for infrastructure that was fully funded in May 2010 by the former Labor Government. In particular, that initiative was brought about as a result of representations by the former member for Charlestown Matt Morris and me. I thank the Labor Party and the former member for Charlestown who, together with me, brought about this initiative. The member for Cessnock acknowledged population growth in Newcastle and the Hunter and pointed out the benefits of an express service. He talked positively about advancing a better link to Sydney. My motion relates to train services from Broadmeadow to Sydney.

I was not trying to cause consternation but the member for Cessnock, the member for Lake Macquarie and I want a more reliable and regular express service. That is not too much to ask. Our quest is that the journey takes less than two hours. Ninety-five per cent of the speech of the Minister for Resources and Energy, the member for Gosford, referred to Labor's record. At no point did he address my motion. That does not benefit commuters who live in the Newcastle area. The member for Lake Macquarie, who is very knowledgeable about population growth in his electorate, said that we can help to accommodate the growth by providing better rail services in the Hunter. He talked about a proposal for a regular, limited-stops service from the Newcastle area to Sydney. All local members support that proposal. I ask members to support my motion to improve our Broadmeadow and Newcastle rail services. The Liberal-Nationals Government has delivered its second budget and what I seek is achievable. Let us not live in the past; let us look to the future.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 191 postponed by Mr Ryan Park, on behalf of Ms Anna Watson.

CLUBS INDUSTRY

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [12.04 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges the contribution local clubs in New South Wales make to their local communities;
- (2) recognises the significant contributions made by the seven local clubs in The Entrance electorate;
- (3) acknowledges that the Government supports the principle, "strong clubs, stronger communities"; and
- (4) notes the damage that the Federal poker machine pre-commitment proposal will have on New South Wales clubs.

Across New South Wales local clubs continue to make a significant and important contribution to our local communities. Registered clubs provide quality facilities and services, employment opportunities and social activities and enhance the community through financial and in-kind support for organisations across the State. New South Wales has 1,375 registered clubs with 2.5 million members. Clubs generate 45,000 jobs, 26,000 of which are in regional New South Wales. The Allen Consulting Group report entitled "Socio-Economic Impact Study of Clubs in NSW 2007" indicates that sporting facilities maintained by the club industry in New South Wales includes approximately 1,550 bowling greens, 366 golf courses, 163 playing fields, 80 gyms and 66 swimming pools. Registered clubs are dedicated to supporting their local communities and focusing on the core community values of health, education, safety, children and town prosperity.

Through the ClubGRANTS Scheme community groups, sporting groups and charities can receive funding for organisational development and assistance with equipment and facilities as well as for larger scale development projects. Without the support of local clubs many of these groups and charities would struggle to survive, if indeed they could survive. The Entrance electorate has seven registered clubs: Diggers at The Entrance, Mingara Recreation Club, Ourimbah-Lisarow RSL Club, the Bay Sports Club, The Entrance Leagues Club and The Greens, The Entrance, as well as a non-taxpaying club, Shelley Beach Golf Club. Those clubs provide an enormous benefit not only to my own electorate but also to the wider Central Coast. Combined, they provide more than 600 casual, part-time or full-time employment opportunities and have more than 350 club volunteers and approximately 87,000 members. Mingara Recreation Club, as part of the Mingara Leisure Group, has a lengthy list of beneficiaries for 2011, including 28 health and special needs groups, 49 sporting groups, 50 education and childcare groups and 65 welfare organisations, special interest groups and service clubs.

Mingara supports 28 sub-branch and affiliated clubs, and 51 local schools utilise its facilities for sports carnivals. Diggers at The Entrance supported 88 community groups and organisations in 2011, including sporting groups, health groups, youth programs, charity and volunteer organisations, and seniors groups and activities. In 2011 The Entrance Leagues Club supported 55 groups, organisations and programs that directly benefit the area, ranging from Central Coast Aged and Disability Support to Surf Life Saving Central Coast. On the Central Coast, and throughout New South Wales, clubs support all types of community groups that benefit an assortment of ages, abilities, participation, activities and causes. The Government supports our local clubs and acknowledges the principle "Strong Clubs, Stronger Communities". We honoured an election commitment to help ensure the sustainability of the clubs industry and assist them in their vital role in local communities across New South Wales by reducing the gaming machine tax payable by New South Wales clubs and introducing the ClubGRANTS Scheme.

Those reforms ensured that 2.25 per cent of registered clubs profits over \$1 million in a tax year are made available as direct community support expenditure through the ClubGRANTS Scheme. The reforms increased the tax rebate for registered clubs from 1.5 per cent to 1.85 per cent on gaming machine profits over \$1 million which is made available for community support expenditure, and also provided for a future 0.4 per cent of gaming machine profits over \$1 million that would otherwise have been paid in tax to go into a new

ClubGRANTS Fund on behalf of clubs. These reforms, among others, are just some of the ways in which the New South Wales Government is strengthening the clubs industry and, in turn, injecting more funds into supporting our local communities. The ClubGRANTS Scheme is set to expand to provide at least \$264 million to New South Wales communities over the next four years. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.10 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I speak on the motion moved by the member for The Entrance and offer my qualified support. I support paragraphs (1), (2) and (3), which recognise the contribution that local clubs make to their communities and accept the significant contribution made by the seven local clubs in The Entrance, although I will speak about the wonderful work done by clubs in the electorate of Cessnock. I agree that strong clubs lead to strong communities and vice versa. However, I do not support and will not speak to paragraph (4), because it relates to a Federal issue. Once again a Federal issue has found its way into this House for reasons that are beyond me. As has been my practice in the past—and it will be my practice in the future—I will not speak on matters that are more appropriately dealt with in the Federal arena.

Having outlined my qualified support for this motion, I will get to the meat of it. New South Wales clubs do fantastic work for their communities. New South Wales has 1,500 clubs that employ more than 43,000 people and service 5.5 million members. These clubs provide 1,550 bowling greens, 366 golf courses, 163 playing fields, 80 gymnasiums and 66 swimming pools. Clubs have taken on the provision of an incredible range of community infrastructure that would otherwise be left to local councils. In many instances the local council simply could not afford the infrastructure and, as such, communities would go without. Beyond providing sporting infrastructure, clubs also offer themselves as centres for community activity. In doing so, they can be a key driver in the local economy through purchasing and employment. I ask members to contemplate how many local butchers rely on club raffles as a mainstay of their business. Clubs in New South Wales carry a considerable load.

An Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal review of contributions made by clubs in New South Wales found that in 2007 clubs contributed \$811 million to the community. Of that, \$676 million was discounted food and drink, entertainment, raffles, the use of sporting facilities and donated room hire, and a further \$44 million was the value placed on the volunteer hours provided by club members and staff. The O'Farrell Government has recently announced a \$300 million tax break for New South Wales clubs. This will allow them to spend an extra \$22 million a year on community donations and on the repair and maintenance of their own sporting facilities, including the extensive array of bowling greens, golf courses and other facilities that I listed earlier. Some people might ask why the State would forgo \$300 million so that clubs can donate just \$22 million. My response is that I trust the clubs more than I trust this Coalition Government. Its recent slashing of the Community Building Partnerships Program is best described using one of the Premier's favourite terms as "an act of bastardry".

Clearly, community groups and community infrastructure are not high on this Government's list of priorities. With the clubs of New South Wales handling the cash we can be sure that communities will benefit. If the Coalition Government were handling the cash, who knows what would happen. Perhaps it would simply fund some of the 682 functions that the Premier has budgeted for, which is 582 more than the former Government planned. Under the old Community Develop Support Expenditure Scheme clubs were required to return 1.5 per cent of their poker machine profits to the community if that profit exceeded \$1 million. Despite the 1.5 per cent figure, clubs routinely returned more than that—the accepted average has been 2.7 per cent. This higher-than-expected contribution by clubs has now been enshrined in legislation as part of the \$300 million tax break, which requires a 2.25 per cent return to communities through a new process called ClubGRANTS.

The ClubGRANTS scheme replaces the old Community Develop Support Expenditure Scheme. That will not cause clubs in my electorate to break into a sweat because they do far more than the legislation requires. The electorate of Cessnock is serviced by 18 clubs, from West Wallsend to Beresfield, Greta, Heddon Greta, Branxton, Paxton, Kurri Kurri, Weston, Abermain and, of course, Cessnock. The bulk of these clubs would definitely not be considered large. Many of them sit nestled in small villages of fewer than 1,500 people. They are typically and quintessentially the epicentre of their local community. Only a handful of the 18 clubs in the electorate qualify for the \$1 million poker machine profit levy to be returned to the community through ClubGRANTS. I draw the attention of members to three clubs that gave generously in 2010-11.

Cessnock Supporters Club gave direct cash to the value of \$84,368 to 28 different community groups; West Wallsend Workers Club provided \$17,460 in direct cash to the community; and East Cessnock Bowling Club gave \$87,160 in direct cash donations, support and sponsorship. That was in just one year. I hasten to add

that this does not mean or suggest that the other clubs did not also contribute to their communities, but these are the limited figures that I have been able to access. Clubs are not always great at blowing their own trumpet, but they should because they do great work. The clubs in the electorate of Cessnock are obviously generous and giving, engaged with their communities and well placed to identify some of the best and most worthy organisations to support. I commend paragraphs (1), (2) and (3) of the motion to the House.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [12.15 p.m.]: I support this great motion moved by the member for The Entrance. Unlike members opposite, the member for The Entrance supports his local clubs. I reiterate the member's statement that this Government supports the principle of strong clubs leading to stronger communities. It is my respect for our local clubs and admiration for what they do in the community that compels me to speak on this motion today. The Liberal-Nationals Government's support for the principle of strong clubs leading to stronger communities has been demonstrated throughout its first year governing this great State with the introduction of amendments designed to support and strengthen the clubs industry in New South Wales.

This support of the clubs industry has direct yet far-reaching implications for communities across Wollondilly, given the support that clubs have provided to local community groups and organisations which, in turn, strengthen our community. The Wollondilly region is home to many great clubs that contribute enormously to our local communities. They include the Bargo Sports Club, Campbelltown Catholic Club, Oakdale Workers Club, Picton Bowling Club, Warragamba Workers and Sporting Club, to name just a few. The nature of their support within our communities is often varied but it is always valuable. That characteristic has been continuously demonstrated by our local clubs. For example, the Campbelltown Catholic Club's donations in 2009-10 totalled \$582,095, which represents more than 40 per cent of the club's operating profit for the year being donated to our local community.

The beneficiaries that year included internal sports clubs and school sporting associations, which received \$48,250; Mater Dei, which received \$40,000; Youth Solutions, which received \$40,000; Lifeline Macarthur, which received \$20,000; Kids of Macarthur Health Foundation, which received \$10,000; Youth Off The Streets, which received \$10,000; and other local charities which received \$24,000. I have recently spoken in this House about the Anna Dudas Memorial Concert—"A Night of Nights"—which raised money for a local family in need. This commendable community event was made possible by the generosity of Campbelltown Catholic Club. The club provided access to The Cube venue and staff at no cost and donated the compulsory booking fee and 100 per cent of the proceeds to the cause. Bargo Sports Club also donates the use of its function room to the Picton Theatre Group. Mr Assistant-Speaker, I know that you are familiar with that club.

Warragamba Workers and Sporting Club makes donations to support sporting groups such as the local football, netball, athletics and swimming clubs. Clubs across the electorate are fervent supporters of our local schools and their families. These examples provide a snapshot of the intrinsic role that clubs play within my community. It is similar to the community-club relationship that exists across the State, but that relationship is now in jeopardy. It is the potential loss of support that clubs offer that outrages me. The Federal Labor Government's intention to introduce mandatory pre-commitment in clubs will bring the industry to its knees. That will, in turn, strip away the vital support that these clubs provide to our schools and sporting and community groups. As I have previously stated in this House, I have major concerns about Labor's proposal—a proposal which clearly demonstrates that both Federal and State Labor are against this valuable industry. The implications are concerning not only because of their immediate impact on the community but also because they have stemmed from an inaccurate assessment that mandatory pre-commitment will reduce problem gambling behaviour.

Our communities will suffer because Labor members are more concerned about conceding to peer pressure than developing necessary and effective legislation. Members opposite are falling into line with their Federal Labor colleagues in attacking our local clubs. I ask those who intend to speak on this motion what they will say to their local clubs when the implications of the proposal are felt within their electorates. What will they say to their local community groups, which will now miss out on grants and donations from local clubs? Those groups depend on those donations to continue to deliver services to the community. What will they say to the local families who will ultimately bear the brunt of these reforms? They are the same local families that members opposite claim to represent. Members on this side of the House recognise and appreciate the great work done by the clubs of New South Wales and we will stand beside them in fighting for their survival. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.19 p.m.]: I thank the member for The Entrance for his motion and speak in support of it. I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak once again in support of my local clubs. I have had the pleasure of being a patron of Bankstown RSL Club for almost five years and I recently became a patron of Bankstown Sports Club. Other clubs in my electorate are Mt Lewis Bowling Club,

Greenacre Bowling Club and Bass Hill RSL Club. These clubs are an integral part of our local community. They do much more than provide an entertainment venue for residents; they provide a great deal of community support. I have always opposed mandatory pre-commitment technology, and I have made that clear in my electorate. I do not see the value of that policy. I agree with the club movement that the introduction of mandatory pre-commitment technology would result in significant job losses and certainly would result in a number of clubs being forced to shut their doors.

I am pleased that the Federal Government is not going down that path and that the issue of mandatory pre-commitment technology is now officially off the table. New South Wales Labor supports the ClubGRANTS Scheme—previously known as the Community Development and Support Expenditure [CDSE] Scheme, introduced by the former Labor Government in 1998. The scheme provides a tax deduction for clubs in relation to their gaming revenue. If a club has over \$1 million dollars each year in gaming revenue and contributes to its local community it will receive the tax deduction. The scheme has evolved into an important infrastructure and community development program in local communities. There are committees in place across regions, often chaired by a local club representative, and councils are also involved in providing assistance. These regional programs should be supported.

I am proud to be a patron of Bankstown Sports Club. Since 1995 that club has contributed over \$60 million to community infrastructure and development. I agree with the sentiments of the member for Cessnock when he says that often clubs go beyond their requirements under the Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme—now rebadged the ClubGRANTS Scheme. Bankstown Sports Club has put more than its fair share into community development and Bankstown would not be the city it is today if it were not for the support it has received from that club. I acknowledge the other clubs in my electorate for their tremendous efforts in supporting local groups and organisations by making sure that much-needed funds are channelled into recreational, cultural and sporting programs.

Clubs also support a number of programs that assist the aged and disabled. Bankstown Sports Club has put a large amount of money into Bankstown City Aged Care and many of our clubs have donated a large amount of money to local organisations. The Recreational Sports and Aquatics Club provides recreational opportunities to people with a disability. That club is now housed within the Bankstown Sports Club's premises and receives regular support from Bankstown Sports Club. I concur with the motion of the member for The Entrance. However, paragraph (4) should be amended, given that the Federal Government is no longer supporting mandatory pre-commitment.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [12.23 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the good motion of my colleague the member for The Entrance in support of the club industry of New South Wales. Amongst the many clubs I have in my electorate I want to recognise two in particular. I first mention Everglades Country Club, a great club, a social club and a club that puts a huge effort into supporting its community. As many clubs do, it gives financial and in-kind support to sporting organisations. The Everglades Country Club is no different from many other clubs. It supports the football clubs of Woy Woy and Umina, as well as Umina Junior Rugby League Football Club and Woy Woy Cricket Club, of which I am a proud patron. That is just the sports clubs. Some of the charitable organisations that Everglades Country Club supports are: Mary Mac's Place, which through Centacare at Broken Bay supports the homeless; the Working Age Group Stroke of Woy Woy; Glenvale Special School; Camp Breakaway; Woy Woy Community Aged Care; and Fairhaven Services.

Everglades Country Club also supports an interesting organisation that is not heard of much in New South Wales because it is based in Victoria: Hand Brake Turn, Central Coast. This program gives students who have difficulty completing their schooling an opportunity to work in the automotive industry by putting them through a course of panelbeating, spray-painting and general motor mechanics. It is a great course and I suggest all members look at ways that Hand Brake Turn can operate in their electorates because it does a great job. As well as supporting sporting organisations, Everglades Country Club assists with care of the homeless, health services, aged care, disability services, education and youth. In relation to working with youth, I particularly draw attention to a program run by Gosford RSL Club called Max Potential. As a community leader in local government, I have had many years involvement with the Max Potential program. On many occasions I have spoken to young people about leadership and I have seen the benefits of the program.

Max Potential connects community leaders with emerging young leaders. The aim of this 22-week program is to accelerate the potential of young people to achieve. It builds their can-do attitude for community projects, it challenges them to lift their game through 12 hours of personalised coaching, and it develops their entrepreneurial spirit by encouraging leadership. Max Potential is not a course; it is a program of personal

leadership and coaching. Max Potential is about building lives, leadership and the future. It is a very good program for our youth and many high schools on the Central Coast have become involved in it. It has assisted young people in the area to develop their skills and leadership abilities. There are 22 clubs across New South Wales involved with Max Potential—two on the Central Coast. I commend Max Potential to members of this House and encourage them to look at the opportunities it can provide for leadership development in our youth. I fully support the motion of the good member for The Entrance.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [12.27 p.m.]: I support the member for The Entrance in his acknowledgement of the contributions that clubs make to our communities not only in his electorate but across New South Wales. I also acknowledge the contributions of members who have spoken about the work of clubs in their electorates. I thank the member for Bankstown for supporting all of the motion, including paragraph (4), and acknowledging the damage that the Federal poker machine pre-commitment proposal would have had on New South Wales clubs. I have 12 clubs in my electorate: Camden Haven Golf Club; Harrington Bowling Club; Kendall Services Club; Lake Cathie Bowling Club; Lansdowne Bowling Club; Laurieton United Services Club; North Haven Bowling Club; Port Macquarie City Bowling Club; Port Macquarie Golf Club; Port Macquarie Panthers, Port Macquarie Panthers Sports Club and Westport Club. I am pleased to say that I am a member of some of those clubs but I have taken the opportunity to visit all the clubs and acknowledge personally the great work they do for our communities.

All those clubs are outstanding community organisations and they all have a positive impact on the lifestyle of my electorate. Clubs also play a significant part in the economic support of communities. Local businesses in my area derive a direct benefit of approximately \$6.3 million annually on local goods and services. In addition, clubs employ around 518 local people and some \$21 million is injected into the local economy through their salaries. Over the next four years local clubs will pay more than \$26,500 million in State taxes, as well as cash and voucher donations and in-kind support of more than \$9.1 million annually. These significant contributions deliver real benefits to so many organisations, local schools, social groups and sporting teams. Recently the Port Macquarie Panthers hosted Australia's Biggest Morning Tea to raise funds for cancer research. I am an ambassador of Australia's Biggest Morning Tea.

I was pleased to address more than 150 people who supported that event. The Port Macquarie Panthers not only provided the room in which the morning tea was held but it also donated many prizes for the auctions and raffles that day. The list of other fundraising groups in my electorate is almost endless. It includes local Rotary clubs, bridge clubs, woodworking groups, Probus clubs, Lions Clubs, fishing clubs, high schools and primary schools, snooker clubs, dart clubs, football clubs and the local Hastings Cancer Trust, which holds an annual ball at Port Macquarie Panthers. More than 59,000 people belong to local clubs in my electorate, and they have almost two million visitations per year. Clearly many share my view that the club industry is strong and deserves the support of local communities, rather than the proposal of the Federal Government to damage it. I congratulate the member for The Entrance on moving this very important motion. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [12.31 p.m.], by leave: I thank the member for The Entrance for moving this motion, which highlights the importance of local clubs in our communities. Indeed, local clubs play a very important role in my electorate. They range from Leonay Golf Club to organisations such as Penrith RSL and Penrith Panthers. My electorate is also home to a number of cultural clubs such as Penrith Gaels, which was established by members of the Irish community who live in Penrith. But the key driver of all these clubs is the fundamental premise that clubs are grassroots organisations and the O'Farrell Government, in recognising the wonderful contribution that clubs do make, has strengthened their position. After all, those funds that are reinvested in local communities have not been taken from the public purse.

The Panthers on the Prowl program is a solid example of that. Traditionally, in addition to Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme [CDSE] grants, Penrith Panthers has funded the Panthers on the Prowl program—I expect that will continue to be the case through the Clubs Grant Program. In this high-profile program Penrith Panthers utilises its facilities to conduct classroom exercises for students with learning disabilities and those who struggle in adapting to the school environment, et cetera. They are taught by excellent teachers who have left mainstream teaching. A bus goes from school to school. There is little doubt that the investment by Penrith Panthers in this program has gone a long way to repairing some of the damage that may have been done to its brand and how the club is viewed in my electorate. The Panthers on the Prowl program has been led by Warren Wilson. Well-known football identity Phil Gould has also been involved in it.

Penrith Panthers is also a major employer in the Penrith community; it plays a big part in the community. Penrith Panthers continues to demonstrate strong leadership and is a wonderful example of the important role that clubs play in local communities. A litany of other programs and organisations in my area have also received funding through the Clubs Grant Program and Community Development and Support Expenditure Scheme grants, including Penrith Gaels, Penrith RSL and its numerous sub-branches, golf clubs and lawn bowls clubs. In addition, the clubs industry is working hard to look after problem gamblers. They do not want problem gamblers in their clubs and this Parliament should continue to encourage the clubs industry to continue to invest in looking after problem gamblers.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [12.35 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Cessnock, Wollondilly, Bankstown, Gosford, Port Macquarie and Penrith for their contributions to the debate. The member for Cessnock spoke in support of the first three parts of my motion, but declined to speak about the fourth part because it is a Federal issue. But we need to talk about Federal issues, particularly about the impact that the carbon tax will have on the New South Wales clubs industry and local councils. The member for Cessnock said that councils were unable to support community and sporting groups on their own and that they needed the support of the club industry.

The carbon tax will cost councils in New South Wales millions and millions of dollars. For instance, councils on the Central Coast will have to pay more than \$500,000 because of the carbon tax. This will put an increased burden on Central Coast ratepayers. I support the truth and honesty in the contribution of the member for Bankstown. I note that she is patron of Bankstown RSL and patron of the Bankstown Sports Club. I note also that she is opposed to the pre-commitment, but she said that the pre-commitment is officially off the agenda. I remind the member for Bankstown of this quote: "There will be no carbon tax under a government I lead." We are about to have a carbon tax.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I call Opposition members to order. I call the member for Bankstown and the member for Keira to order.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The member for The Entrance should be addressing his motion. If the member is going to quote something then he should be quoting, "We won't sell Port Kembla."

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! There is no point of order. The member for The Entrance has the call.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: The member for Gosford spoke about 14 clubs in his electorate. He also referred to many of the groups supported by the club industry in his area, in particular Hand Brake Turn. I join the member for Gosford in acknowledging the fantastic work done by Hand Brake Turn not only on the Central Coast but also in other parts of New South Wales. The member for Port Macquarie spoke about 12 clubs in her electorate. The member for Penrith spoke enthusiastically in support of Panthers on the Prowl program, an initiative of Penrith Panthers. He also mentioned the work done by Phil Gould. We can only imagine what Phil Gould would say about mandatory pre-commitment, namely, "No, no, no, no, no, no." I will highlight the common theme across all the contributions and that is the overwhelming support clubs give to sporting groups, community groups and schools, and in particular, to aged and disability services. I note that the Minister for Disability Services is in the Chamber. Clubs are major employers in our electorates. I commend the work that they do in their industry and also their support for community groups.

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

Motion agreed to.

WESTERN SYDNEY PUBLIC TRANSPORT USERS GROUP

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [12.40 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the organisers of the 2011 Western Sydney Public Transport Users Association Transport Symposium that brought stakeholders together and advocated for a better deal for transport users; and
- (2) congratulates Patricia Guy, Ken Moriarty, Marianne McCloud and John Svoboda from local networks in the Londonderry electorate, St Marys and Mount Druitt who are lobbying for the restoration of local bus services that were cancelled by the former Government.

There is great news today that relates to paragraph (2) of the motion. When the Coalition was in Opposition Ken Moriarty, Patricia Guy and many others lobbied hard—and we supported them—for reinstatement of the 782 bus service, which was cut by members opposite. The Labor Government cut that bus service without considering those who bought their homes and relied on the 782 service to take them to Penrith, Werrington, railway stations and so on. When the service was cut, people with no other form of transport had no access to a bus service. I thank the Minister for Transport for hearing their calls and reinstating the 782 bus service. I have met these people twice since the 782 bus service was reinstated. They are thrilled that they again have a bus service that enables them to go shopping, attend medical appointments and do many other things. I am pleased that the Government was able to deliver that. I thank the member for Hawkesbury, who is in the Chamber, for his enthusiastic work in raising that issue when the Coalition was in Opposition.

The Western Sydney Public Transport Users group is an umbrella group that represents many other groups throughout the Sydney community: the Hills Transport Group, the Blue Mountains Commuters and Transport Users Association, the Mount Druitt Commuters Improvement Group, Save our Buses in Mount Druitt and surrounding areas, the South Penrith Residents Action Group, the Liverpool Transport Task Force Group, the Oaklands North Parramatta Group, the Transport for Local Community group at Bankstown, the Blue Mountains Sustainable Alliance and the Blackheath Highway Action Group, to name a few. At the symposium I attended in 2011 a refreshing approach was taken by an organisation that is genuinely interested in representing the transport needs of people throughout Sydney and in western Sydney in particular who had been forgotten by the previous Government.

I am suspicious about the existence of the Sydney Alliance, as many union Labor mates were involved in its formation and operations. I will keep a close eye on the Sydney Alliance in terms of its true intentions. Unlike the Sydney Alliance, the Western Public Transport Users group is genuinely interested in advocating for better public transport in western Sydney. It does not have any ulterior motives and it is not politically driven. Not only did the Minister re-establish the 728 bus service, other things have continued to happen. Preserving corridors in western Sydney was not even on the radar of the former Government. Other issues include the establishment of Transport for New South Wales and examining contracts signed by the former Government, the waste of billions of dollars and the Tcard debacle—all these issues were raised at the Western Sydney Public Transport Users group symposium in 2011. Since then I have had discussions with member groups and they are pleased with the direction the Government is taking with regard to public transport in western Sydney.

I refer, for example, to the current consultation about the corridor for extending the North West Rail Link through to the Marsden Park industrial lands. The Government is getting on with the job of building the North West Rail Link. As I said, we have reinstated the 782 bus service to the St Marys, Mount Druitt, Penrith area. I note that the member for Mount Druitt is in the Chamber. I did not hear him calling out for the reinstatement of the 728 bus service after his Government ripped it out of the community. He is still silent on the issue. He should hang his head in shame that his Government left those people without public transport. We will continue to look at how to improve bus routes, and when the contracts are renegotiated we will ensure that they are more flexible in terms of what commuters and local communities need. We will ensure that the contracts are flexible so that if circumstances in a community change we can alter bus routes in favour of the commuter, not in favour of the government of the day.

In terms of the Tcard ticketing debacle, the Western Sydney Public Transport Users Group raised the need to have a common ticket to make it easy for people to move from one transport mode to another. The Minister is getting on with that job. A common ticket will be introduced on the ferries first and then it will be rolled out across all public transport. We are not reinventing the wheel but using a system that works elsewhere and introducing it in Sydney. I congratulate the Minister on that. Most importantly, I thank members of our community such as Ken Moriarty, Patricia Guy and John Svoboda who are simply representing the community. They are not doing so for political reasons. They are not trying to gain some recognition in the area for any political positions they might want in the future. They simply want good public transport in their local community. They continue to give their time to determine how improvements to public transport can be made to the advantage of their community.

The Government's door is open to those people because, having been involved in lobbying over the years, we know that lobbying can be done professionally and respectfully. When that is the case the Government wants to work with people who have goals, who are not simply trying to score brownie points or political points. The people I have named are genuinely interested in working with the Government to improve public transport for their communities. So we will continue to work with them. Only two weeks ago I attended a public meeting at St Marys, at which both Ken Moriarty and Patricia Guy talked about how changes can be made when the

contracts are renegotiated and how the 782 bus service might be further improved. We are open to suggestions. We want them to tell us how they believe things can be improved for public transport users in my electorate of Londonderry and the surrounding electorates, including Mount Druitt. I will work to make sure that the people in the Mount Druitt electorate are looked after, rather than ripping services away from them.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.47 p.m.]: As the member for Mount Druitt I share some Mount Druitt suburbs with the member for Londonderry. I do not have a problem with the wording of the motion and therefore I will not be suggesting that we oppose it, although I cannot agree with all the member's comments in support of the motion. In relation to bus services, paragraph (2) of the motion states that bus services were cancelled by the former Government. That is a glib way of explaining a major review of bus routes within the broader Mount Druitt area and other parts of western Sydney. The strategy behind that change to bus services, which was not community driven, was to speed up bus services from various Mount Druitt suburbs to Mount Druitt railway station.

Before the changes, most buses travelled through every little street in the suburbs, which was convenient for many residents. However, they felt aggrieved when a bus service was removed. In general terms, the bus services then came down the main streets of Mount Druitt, for example, Carlisle Avenue and Woodstock Avenue and directly to the railway station. The strategy behind it was to carry more people more quickly to the railway interchange, which was a \$12 million project delivered by the former Labor Government. That aggrieved and upset many residents. The Mount Druitt Commuters Improvement Group was active in expressing concern on behalf of those residents who felt that the decision to cancel a bus service that had been coming down their street for 20 or 30 years should be reviewed.

I give credit to the former member for Londonderry, Allan Shearan, who had services reinstated in the Whalan area. We have heard the rhetoric from the member for Londonderry, but I will give the facts. First, the Mount Druitt Commuters Improvement Group is an excellent organisation with a fantastic website. As an ardent user of the Internet I use this facility to read the blogs that commuters post on that website on a daily basis about the operation of a bus or train service. At the moment I am addressing concerns raised by people in the suburb of Shalvey about late-night services. The group lobbied for improvements to public transport under our Government and will do so under this Government, which I hope can achieve the same goals that we achieved in transport. Last year this Government undertook a review of timetables and bus routes in western Sydney. On 9 November 2011 I asked the Minister for Transport a question on notice:

Have new private bus timetables and routes been announced for locations in Western Sydney?

On 14 December 2011 the Minister answered, "Yes." My second question was—and the member for Londonderry might want to hear this:

Do any of these changes affect the Mount Druitt area?

The Minister answered, "No." My third question was:

Has there been an increase in after 5.00 p.m. services to suburbs in Mount Druitt for weekend commuters?

I asked that question because the member for Hawkesbury, who is in the Chamber, made some strong promises in that regard. The Minister answered, "Not applicable". In other words, Mount Druitt received nothing from the review. I am pleased that the member for Londonderry will take up the cause of transport groups in the Mount Druitt area. Prior to the last election the Premier and the Minister for Transport came to Mount Druitt and announced the new metro 71 service linking Mount Druitt to the northern suburbs of Castle Hill and beyond. This was to be an excellent service and was well received; it would link the northern suburbs of Sydney and Mount Druitt with the various universities. The former Government had announced this initiative. On 5 May 2011 I asked the Minister these questions on notice:

- (1) How many Metrobus services are currently operating in the Sydney metropolitan area?
- (2) Has the Metro 71 service been announced to provide a service from Mount Druitt to Castle Towers?
- (3) Will the Government proceed with the introduction of the Metro 71 service?

The Minister answered:

I am advised:

13 Metrobus services are currently operating in the Sydney Metropolitan area. The Department of Transport is currently reviewing growth bus allocations for consideration by Government.

I have read the budget papers and the Minister's press releases and I can say that there is no news on Metro 71. I ask the member for Londonderry, who shares some of the suburbs of Mount Druitt with me, to support my call for the already announced Metro 71 service between Castle Towers and Mount Druitt to be completed. I will conclude my contribution to give other members an opportunity to speak. I congratulate the Mount Druitt Commuters Improvement Group on its excellent website. The feedback and blogs from the local community posting their grievances on that site on a daily basis are of great assistance to me in my role as local member. I urge all members interested in bus and transport services in the western region to be regular users of that website. I have no objections to the motion, but suggest that some of the rhetoric of the member for Londonderry is questionable.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.54 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to support this good motion moved by the member for Londonderry. As members would remember, during 2009 I raised several times in this House various problems that had beset many areas across western Sydney due to the bus reforms, largely to the private bus industry, undertaken by the former Labor Government. In early 2009 those reforms resulted in no fewer than 30 bus services being slashed from Dural to the city. On behalf of those people I advocated strongly through various forums such as the Alan Jones program on 2GB, Ray Hadley, the *Daily Telegraph* and the capable journalist Kevin Wilde of Channel 9. Throughout that advocacy and over the following few days we were able to restore many services to the Dural and Hills areas that had been removed by the previous Government.

However, the removal of those bus runs and a lack of public transport left various children, some disabled people and many elderly people stranded. There was no publication and certainly no advertising of the slashing of those services. People woke up on a Monday morning expecting to catch their normal mode of transport, but they were deprived of those services. Throughout my advocacy people across western Sydney became aware of my involvement in the bus industry and my involvement with the problems that had beset western Sydney. I started to receive phone calls, not only from my own area but from various areas of western Sydney, including Mount Druitt and Whalan where I am proud to say I met people such as John Sybota, Patricia Guy and Ken Moriarty, who explained to me that the services they had had in the area for 40 years had been removed. These services included the 782 run, which the member for Londonderry referred to, in the St Marys area.

Ken Moriarty, an elderly person with a walking stick, walked the streets of St Marys gathering hundreds of names on petitions, trying to force the irresponsible Labor Government to reverse its decision and reinstate the service. I was more than happy to stand beside Ken Moriarty and help him. Through our advocacy and through wonderful forums such as the fabulous *St Marys Star* and other local papers we were able to restore those services. Other groups formed almost overnight, such as the Save Our Buses action group at Whalan. I met with hundreds of people at the Whalan community centre, a suburb close to me because of my family involvement with the Whalan family, including the Oatlands Transport Action Group. We visited many aged and retired people who were impacted by the removal of bus services from Parramatta. I was proud to support those groups but even more proud to be a member of a Government that recognises that public transport is important to all areas of western Sydney. I am happy to support this motion. I know that the member for Londonderry will be prepared to stand up on behalf of these commuters in the future.

By consent, the take-note debate on committee reports postponed to permit the conclusion of the current debate.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.58 p.m.]: I attended the Western Sydney Public Transport Users Association Symposium held at Campbelltown, along with the member for Cabramatta and the member for Macquarie Fields, to represent the New South Wales Opposition on south-west Sydney transport issues. Paragraph (2) of the motion refers to the former Government. As the Government of the day this Government has the responsibility for this task, rather than doing the Benji Marshall flick pass and fobbing it off. It is interesting to note that this Government has privatised Sydney Ferries and has in its sights Sydney Buses and the Liverpool to Parramatta T-way bus service, which will mean fewer services and higher fares for the people of Liverpool, Parramatta and Fairfield, for example. So before the member slags the former Labor Government he needs to look at his Government's record thus far. Members will know that the former Labor Government introduced the Metrobus services—

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: I do not think the use of the word "slags" is appropriately parliamentary. The member should be asked to elaborate on what he means by "slags" and if he will not will he please withdraw it from *Hansard*?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I advise the member for Fairfield to choose his words carefully.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: How about "rubbishes"? How does that sound, Minister? I will not stand corrected on that point. Members will know that the former Government introduced Metrobus services across regional Sydney which are now enjoyed by constituents in Coalition-held electorates. For the information of the member for Londonderry, I have made representations to the Minister for Transport regarding the inclusion of bus services at Woodpark Road, Woodpark, to connect constituents from Upper Warren Road to the T-way. All I can report to constituents is a lack of action by the Government and the constant blame game directed at the former Labor Government by the Minister for Transport.

I say to constituents in any electorate that come together to advocate for a better deal from public transport that I support them. It is up to people in electorates if they have concerns about transport to voice their opinions and to bring them to their local members. I congratulate those people who are mentioned in paragraph (2) of the motion. However, the last part of the motion refers to the former Labor Government. Members opposite are the Government now. It is about time they acted responsibly and stopped doing the Benji Marshall flick pass to the former Government. They are in Government now.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [1.00 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Hawkesbury and the member for Fairfield for their contributions. It is very easy to sit in this Chamber and to say, "Do not get involved in the blame game." We are just highlighting the fact to the community and we will not let them forget that we are picking up the pieces, cleaning up the mess and trying to get the budget back in order so we can deliver public transport to the whole of New South Wales. We will not forget. We will continue to remind the community of what members opposite did for 16 years. It was not 16 months, or a year and a half, or two years; it was 16 long years.

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

Mr BART BASSETT: Opposition members get excited when we mention those 16 years. In 15 months we have got on with the North West Rail Link. In my local community we have reinstated the 782 bus service. Let us consider the question asked by the member for Mount Druitt about the Metrobus and let us look at the dates. It is interesting to look at the dates. Did the member for Mount Druitt raise the idea of a Metrobus during those 16 years? No. He asked the question on 5 May 2011, five weeks after the State election. All of a sudden he found his voice. He looked out his window and said, "Gee, we need a Metrobus here after 16 years. Where is the Metrobus?"

I assure communities in Sydney and throughout New South Wales that they will have public transport based on demand and need, not based on a political whim or a favour for a few mates who have been set up under the Sydney Alliance. It will be based on need, which is why the 782 service was returned. It was returned because the community needed that bus service, which was taken away by those opposite. We will keep talking about the North West Rail Link because communities were lied to for over a decade. We have got on with the job of putting the North West Rail Link in place. We are also getting on with the South West Rail Link. We are asking community members for their thoughts on a corridor to extend the North West Rail Link.

Ms Noreen Hay: Ask them about Port Kembla.

Mr BART BASSETT: Is that not great? We are talking about spending \$100 million down south—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I call the member for Wollongong to order.

Mr BART BASSETT: If the member for Wollongong does not want the money I am sure there will be plenty of people around the State who will take the money.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. The member opposite at no stage asked the former Labor Government for any increased transport and he has no business talking about lies—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! That is not a point of order. The member for Wollongong will resume her seat.

Mr BART BASSETT: You have been told that it is not a point of order.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Wollongong will resume her seat.

Mr BART BASSETT: You are on a call at the moment so be careful before question time.

Ms Noreen Hay: Who is the Speaker?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I am the Acting-Speaker. I called the member for Wollongong to order. If the member had been listening instead of talking she would not have been called to order.

Mr BART BASSETT: I thank the Mount Druitt Commuters Improvement Group. I agree with the member for Mount Druitt that it does a great job. The shock of the day is that the member for Mount Druitt is actually blogging. Well done, he is blogging, and well done to the Mount Druitt Commuters Improvement Group. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION

Report: Review of the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 Annual Reports of the Health Care Complaints Commission

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

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [1.06 p.m.]: I speak in my capacity as Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission in relation to its review of the commission's 2009-10 and 2010-11 annual reports. Examining the commission's annual report is a key function of the committee under section 65 of the Health Care Complaints Act and it is the principal means whereby the committee exercises its oversight responsibility. This is the committee's first review in the Fifty-fifth Parliament. Due to the expiration of the Fifty-fourth Parliament in 2010 and the ensuing process of reconstituting the new committee, the committee's consideration of the reports was delayed. The report which is now before the House reflects on the past two years of annual reports of the commission and includes transcripts of evidence from the public hearing held at Parliament House on 20 February 2012 as well as responses to questions which were sent to the commissioner before and after that hearing.

This is the committee's first report since the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for Health Professionals took effect on 1 July 2010. Ten professions were covered by the new scheme, which was introduced in 2010 with about 500,000 being practitioners registered nationally across those professions, and which is due to be extended from 1 July 2012. In recognition of the well-established independent system of complaints handling under the Health Care Complaints Commission, New South Wales was allowed to continue with its existing and separate arrangements but remain within the national scheme for the purposes of registration and accreditation matters. Another significant legislative reform in the period under review was the passage by this Parliament of the Health Practitioner Regulation Amendment Act in 2010, which rectified a number of shortcomings identified by the commission during an investigation of a complaint against a dental technician in 2009.

The committee notes that this amendment, together with new code of conduct regulations which will come into force under the Public Health Act this year, considerably enhances the commission's power to act in relation to unregistered health practitioners where it believes that the code of conduct has been breached or there is a serious threat to public health and safety. The committee welcomes advice by the commissioner of any further legislative changes required to ensure the commissioner has sufficient and appropriate powers in relation to investigations of health care practitioners. Aside from legislative changes, there have been noteworthy new policy developments in the wider health care environment in which the commission operates. These include the commission now referring an increasing number of complaints for local resolution, and it is hopeful that the recent restructure will allow this trend to grow.

Resolving complaints locally at the source can allow for complainants to have their concerns heard in a more informal setting and can achieve resolution of the complaint within a shorter time frame. The committee encourages the commission to continue to give support to local complaints handling staff to enable even more complaints to be resolved at the local level. Turning to the challenges faced by the commission during the period under review, both the 2009-10 and 2010-11 annual reports note an increase in the number of inquiries and complaints received by the commission. During the past five years the commission has experienced a 40 per cent increase in the number of inquiries and a 50 per cent increase in the number of written complaints. At the same time this increased workload has been managed with decreased staffing levels. As a result the commission has had to alter its complaints handling practices in order to manage the increasing number of complaints, which include lessening contact with complainants and respondents.

The commission has assured the committee that these changes do not compromise how the commission takes action in relation to complaints that involve serious risks to public health and safety. Nevertheless the committee is mindful that changes which simplify the assessment of complaints, even those of a less serious nature, may potentially undermine public confidence in the work of the commission. The committee's current inquiry into health care complaints and complaints handling in New South Wales will enable it to explore best practice models of health care complaints handling and customer service standards more completely, and hopefully the report will provide valuable feedback to the commission for it to consider in relation to its future service delivery. Finally, I thank the commissioner and his staff for their enormous dedication in keeping pace with an ever-increasing workload and for providing information in a timely way to the committee. I also express appreciation to my fellow committee members for their ongoing interest and to committee staff for their assistance in the preparation of this report.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [1.12 p.m.]: As Deputy Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission I contribute to debate on the report entitled "Review of the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 Annual Reports of the Health Care Complaints Commission", dated 31 May 2012. I add to what the Chair, the member for Port Macquarie, already mentioned by bringing to the attention of the House the general complaint trends dealt with by the commission over this period. The commission is the main authority that receives complaints about individual practitioners and health organisations, both private and government. Complaints can be made about practitioners registered under the national registration system such as doctors, dentists and nurses, or unregistered practitioners such as naturopaths and massage therapists.

The commission uses a complaints classification system with categories that include access, communication and information, discharge and transfer, environment and management of the facility, fees and costs, grievance processes, medical records, medication, professional conduct, reports and certificates and treatment. There has been an increase in the number of inquiries and complaints received by the commission. In the past five years the commission has seen a 40 per cent increase in the number of inquiries and a 50 per cent increase in the number of written complaints. Almost half the complaints that have been received relate to treatment of a patient by a practitioner. The next most common complaint relates to a lack of communication, or miscommunication between healthcare professionals and patients. The third most common complaints are to do with the professional conduct of practitioners and those most commonly complained about are general medical practitioners, dentists and nurses or midwives. There was a notable increase in complaints about dentists and pharmacists.

As I know a bit about dentists I am aware of a 33.2 per cent increase in complaints in 2010-2011 as opposed to statistics for 2009-2010. The commission attributes that to the number of patients being treated by the Chronic Diseases Dental Scheme—a scheme introduced by the Federal Government that placed many restraints on the administration of the scheme that were not well publicised or communicated to the dental profession. That caused a lot of angst and it impacted on administrative procedures which I am sure added to the number of complaints about the system. I hope that those issues will be resolved after discussions have been held with the Australian Dental Association and the Commonwealth. There were complaints also against pharmacists which reflected the changes to the way in which the commission identifies complaints. The commission now identifies specific pharmacists rather than pharmacies. Currently the committee is undertaking an inquiry into health care complaints and complaints handling in New South Wales so that it can better monitor and address those issues. I commend the report to the House.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [1.15 p.m.]: As a member of the Joint Standing Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission, I will make a brief contribution to debate on the committee's report entitled, "Review of the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 Annual Reports of the Health Care Complaints Commission" and touch on some of the significant legislative and policy changes in that report. The Health

Practitioner Regulation National Law (NSW) came into effect in June 2010 and became a model for national registration in a number of medical professions, including medical practitioners, nurses and midwives, dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, osteopaths, pharmacists, physiotherapists, podiatrists and psychologists.

The 10 national boards are supported by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. The role of this agency is to support the national boards in protecting public health and safety, managing the health registration process for health practitioners and students Australia-wide, and managing investigations into professional conduct and performance issues of registered health professionals, although this final function is not applicable in New South Wales. Apart from the 10 identified boards, four additional boards will be joining from 1 July 2012—the Chinese Medicine Board, Medical Radiation Board, Occupational Therapy Board and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board.

New South Wales will still be responsible for handling complaints made against practitioners in that field. In New South Wales, however, the commission is responsible for complaints against all registered practitioners, regardless of specific professions. The new registration scheme will have no impact on the commission's workload. Through regular and constructive meetings, the commission has established a good working relationship with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and the Health Professional Councils Authority. The committee is pleased that the transition to the National Registration Scheme has not disrupted the operation of the commission. I applaud the report, and I commend it to the House.

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

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 19/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.20 p.m.]: As Chair of the Legislation Review Committee, I take this opportunity to comment on the recent Legislation Review Digest No. 19/55 tabled on 12 June 2012. This is the nineteenth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. It is well known that the Legislation Review Committee is the hardest working committee of this Parliament. That is evidenced by the number of reports tabled by the committee compared with the number of reports tabled by other committees.

Ms Robyn Parker: It is about quality, not quantity.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: The quality is there. I hear comments from members on both sides of the House about the high quality of the digest. The committee's role is to identify issues in proposed legislation and newly made regulations as outlined in sections 8A and 9 of the Legislation Review Act. It is indeed a pleasure to see the member for Mount Druitt in the House today. I have missed him over the past two days. I trust that he is recovering well.

Mr Richard Amery: I am and I have been reading the digest.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: I was speaking to a professor of medicine the other day who said that it is a pleasure to read. In fact, he recommends it to all his patients. The nineteenth Legislation Review Digest examined the five bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 19 May 2012: the Crimes Amendment (Reckless Infliction of Harm) Bill 2012, the Fiscal Responsibility Bill 2012, the Motor Accidents and Lifetime Care and Support Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, the Tobacco Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 and the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2012. The Fiscal Responsibility Bill 2012 provides fiscal targets for maintaining the State's triple-A credit rating. The committee noted that clauses of the bill presented issues relating to the exclusion of judicial review and the inappropriate delegation of legislative power; namely, allowing for the source of definitions of the words used in the legislation to be decided by a body external to the Parliament and Government. However, the committee felt that in the circumstances neither issue necessitated a referral to Parliament.

The Motor Accidents and Lifetime Care and Support Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 amends the Motor Accidents Lifetime Care and Support Act 2006 in relation to the treatment and care needs of participants and corrects the Supreme Court's interpretation of the Act in the case of *Thiering v Daly* [2011] NSWSC 1345. The bill states that the amendments take effect from the date on which the bill was introduced into Parliament. The committee has referred to Parliament whether allowing this bill to amend the Act prior to it being passed constitutes a violation of the rule of law. The committee also was concerned that the bill permits the regulations to prescribe what treatment and care needs can be permitted or excluded for participants in the scheme. The committee also has referred to Parliament whether it may be more appropriate for all the treatment and care needs to be prescribed in the legislation rather than in regulations.

The committee also considered the Tobacco Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which amends the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000 to extend the prohibition on smoking in enclosed spaces to additional outdoor places. The committee noted that the bill encroaches on the rights of individuals to pursue and participate in an otherwise legal activity. However, it also noted the rights of other persons to enjoy a smoke-free environment. In recognising the broader public health interest, the committee made no further comment. The committee considered the Crimes Amendment (Reckless Infliction of Harm) Bill 2012 and the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2012 and made no comment on either bill in respect of issues set out in section 8A of the Legislation Review Act 1987.

For a detailed consideration of the identified issues in the bills, I invite members—including the member for Mount Druitt—to review the digest. I remind the House that the digest aims to assist members in their consideration of bills and highlights the issues that the committee considered when reviewing the bills that have been tabled in the House. I thank the committee staff who worked on the digest together with the members of the committee—that is, the member for Swansea, the member for Rockdale, the member for Bankstown, the member for Parramatta and our colleagues in the other place the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps and Mr David Shoebridge—who provided invaluable assistance in scrutinising the bills and in ensuring that the digest will continue to be of great assistance to all members.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.26 p.m.]: I promise not to be as inspiring as the member for Myall Lakes. This week's Legislation Review Digest deals with five pieces of legislation. The committee considered the Crimes Amendment (Reckless Infliction of Harm) Bill 2012 and made no comment. It also considered the Fiscal Responsibility Bill 2012 and noted that it makes rights, liberties and obligations dependent upon non-reviewable decisions and seeks to exclude judicial review. The committee also noted that, given the circumstances, it did not consider it unreasonable for judicial review to be excluded. The digest also includes commentary on the potential for the bill to delegate legislative powers inappropriately in that definitions refer to an external body—in this case the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The committee also reviewed the Motor Accidents and Lifetime Care and Support Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill and referred the issue of retrospectivity to the Parliament. The committee questioned whether allowing the bill to amend the Act from the date the bill was introduced constitutes a violation of the rule of law.

As I have said many times, as members of Parliament we must be vigilant in preventing the introduction of retrospective legislation whenever possible. The committee also referred to Parliament the question of whether the bill allows too much to be decided by regulation and, in particular, whether it may be more appropriate for all treatment and care needs to be prescribed in legislation rather than in regulations. The committee reviewed the Tobacco Legislation Amendment Bill, which proposes a series of further restrictions on smoking in enclosed spaces and in outdoor dining areas from 2015. The committee referred to Parliament the question of whether the bill unduly impacts on personal liberties in that it restricts the consumption of an otherwise lawful substance; that is, tobacco. However, it appropriately concluded that there is a broader public interest in limiting the areas in which smoking is permitted and thereby reducing the incidence of smoking. As such, the committee made no further comment.

The committee considered the Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2012. I have already addressed aspects of that legislation in debate in this House in my capacity as shadow Minister for Fair Trading. While the committee made no comment about this legislation, I once again put on the record my concerns about its scope. I firmly believe that elements of this bill would have been more properly dealt with in separate legislation. I wish the committee and its staff much luck. I acknowledge Emma Mathews, Emma Wood, Jason Arditi, Todd Buttsworth and Carrie Chan who now have to speedily prepare the digest for next week in the limited time they have. I am sure they will do a great job, as always. I again acknowledge the members for the electorates of Myall Lakes, Parramatta, Rockdale and Swansea and our upper House colleagues the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and Mr David Shoebridge. I commend the digest to the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I note the time. However, with the leave of the House the debate will continue until it is concluded.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.30 p.m.], by leave: Although I am not a member of the Legislation Review Committee, as Opposition Whip I find it important that documents published by the Parliament provide briefings and background information on legislation in order to assist members. These documents are particularly beneficial for the Opposition which, of course, does not have the resources of Government. That is just a statement of fact. On looking at Legislation Review Digest No. 19/55, I commend the secretariat for being able to create an 18-page document on an agenda which, it must be said, is extremely light. The former chair, Allan Shearan, should ask for his allowance to be retrospectively doubled for the amount of work his committee did compared to the legislative program that is dished up to this committee.

Once again the chair of the committee has said with much pride that this committee is the hardest-working committee in the Parliament. I warn him that it is fast losing that reputation. The agenda today lists five pieces of legislation of varying degrees of importance. In virtually the dying days of this session of Parliament one would expect this digest to be more of the order of 50 or 60 pages and to contain a substantial program. The Crimes Amendment (Reckless Infliction of Harm) Bill sounds important, and I note that the chair, during his contribution to debate, read out the name very slowly. In the digest the purpose and description of the bill states:

The Court of Criminal Appeal held in *Blackwell v Regina* [2011] NSWCCA 93 that the effect of the amendments was that the offence of recklessly inflicting grievous bodily harm now required recklessness as to causing grievous bodily harm, not just some physical harm, as was the case before the amendments.

The point is that this bill only clarifies a term of law, as recommended by the Court of Criminal Appeal. The chair also referred to the Fiscal Responsibility Bill. Again one would say it seems to be an important bill, but it is merely one of the packages of bills that come through at budget time. The Government has introduced a law to require it to do what the previous Government did for 16 years: retain a surplus and keep the State's triple-A credit rating. Therefore, the bill contains nothing substantive and it is not a major reform. As outlined in the digest, the purpose of the Motor Accidents and Lifetime Care and Support Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill is to clarify certain aspects of the scheme—a scheme that was introduced by the former Government during its 16 years in office. The Tobacco Legislation Amendment Bill just extends the areas where smoking will not be allowed, and that is merely an extension of the Smoke-free Environment Act 2000 which was enacted by the previous Government during its 16 years in office.

Although this digest is an important document and it is helpful to members, as the chair brings it forward each week it serves to highlight the light nature of the Government's legislative program. The document is very thin and contains no legislation that jumps out as being something really new from this Government. I commend the members of the committee for their work, but I have to remark on the brevity of their meetings and the brevity of this document. The committee should go to the Olympics because Usain Bolt would be challenged over 100 metres by the speed with which this committee can do its work. Committee members spend only a few minutes each week to complete their legislative review. This incarnation of the Legislation Review Committee probably has the lightest workload in the history of this Parliament, even though it may be the busiest committee in the Parliament.

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

Report noted.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.34 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I draw the attention of members to the presence in the gallery today of Mr Mario Ste-Marie, the Consul General of Canada, whom it is always a pleasure to have visit the Parliament. I draw the attention of members also to the presence in the gallery today of Mrs Inga Peulich, a member of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of Victoria, whose company we very much enjoyed over lunch.

**DEATH OF THE HON. FRANCIS JOHN WALKER, QC, A FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN
AND MEMBER FOR GEORGES RIVER**

The SPEAKER: It is with regret that I inform the House of the death, on 12 June 2012, of the Hon. Francis John Walker, a former Minister of the Crown. On behalf of the House I extend to his family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services will answer questions addressed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast, who will be absent during question time today.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Private Members' Business Notices of Motions (for bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

ELECTRICITY PRICES

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given the Premier has broken his promise to drive down the cost of living, will he now back Labor's \$55 million plan to help more than 8,000 new families access up to \$640 a year to pay their energy bills?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I welcome this question from the Leader of the Opposition. The Royal Bank of Scotland folder that I have in my hand is not mine, but I will tell members that the first word on it stands for "Robbo". I am delighted to get this question because, as I sat here this morning trying hard to continue to pay attention to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition—and I thought that I should, given that half his own team did not turn up to hear his speech—I had a sneaking suspicion that I had heard the promise before. The problem with being in politics for too long is that one remembers things. One remembers that the man who said he now, and always has, opposed privatisation was part of the previous Government, which flogged off the State's electricity assets. On 20 May 2009 the then Labor Government promised \$55 million over five years to increase funding for the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance Scheme. The Minister who made that announcement was one of the more esteemed alumni of those opposite, someone I am sure we will hear more about—Ian Macdonald, a former Labor Minister for Primary Industries, Minister for Energy, Minister for Mineral Resources and Minister for State Development.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Labor having announced three years ago the policy that the Leader of the Opposition re-announced today, what happened? Labor never delivered on its promise and it reduced its budget allocation the following year. Even less surprising, what has happened from the man who earlier today preached transparency and openness?

The SPEAKER: Order! As excited as Government members might be, as I indicated yesterday I will not tolerate cheering, which has become commonplace in this Chamber.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. Three minutes have now passed and the Premier is yet to answer whether he will support the Opposition's plan.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure that the member would like an answer to that question but at the moment the Premier is being relevant to the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Maroubra would do better if he stopped counting numbers and started listening to the answers being given in this place. My answer has been completely relevant to a commitment of injecting \$55million over five years to increase funding for the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance Scheme. It was first announced three years ago by those opposite but they never put it into practice. What did those opposite do with the money instead?

Mr John Robertson: What are you going to do?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Leader of the Opposition now asks, "What are you going to do?"

The SPEAKER: Order! I call Government members to order. I call the member for Monaro to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I really hope those opposite agree to giving me a two-minute extension for this answer. Having promised it three years ago, and not delivered it, what did those opposite do when they made the change that they never announced? They put the money into Labor's energy rebate and increased it from \$130 to \$145—a \$15 increase. What did the O'Farrell Government do last year in response to its election promise to assist families in low-income households to cope with their electricity increases? We increased the Low Income Household Rebate by \$15 but we also said that we would increase it to \$235 by 2014. In July last year my Government also introduced a \$75 Family Energy Rebate, which will increase to \$150 by 2014. That is what this Government will do. This Government will deliver real assistance to those in need. We will not talk about it. We will not pretend we are going to promise something. We have not said how that will be funded but when those opposite had the chance to do this, they failed to do so.

STATE BUDGET AND EDUCATION

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: I address my question to the Premier. How does the budget provide for the schoolchildren of the future?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am so pleased that I have been asked this question in front of the school students who are seated in the gallery today. I refer, of course, to the students from Budgewoi Public School, who are represented so well in this Chamber by Garry Edwards, and the students from St Aloysius College Junior Campus—there were other St Aloysius students here earlier in the week—who are represented so well by the member for North Shore. I thank the member for Drummoyne for his question. We all saw yesterday in question time just how excited the member for Drummoyne is about what is being delivered through the budget for his electorate.

This morning I was delighted to visit the site of one of six new schools that were announced in Tuesday's budget. The budget is a significant investment in the future of education. From memory, some \$535 million will be invested this financial year in building and upgrades of schools across New South Wales. For the growing numbers of families both in Sydney and across New South Wales it is important that education infrastructure, as well as roads and other infrastructure, keeps pace with population growth. That is why in the inner west, one of the fastest growing parts of this city, families will be the big winners with new schools at Concord West and Wentworth Point. Those new schools will ease pressure on existing local schools and will reduce the need for further demountables in the area. They will also provide an opportunity for those families moving into the area to access fine public schools.

This morning, along with the member for Drummoyne and the Minister for Education, I took a look at a 2.3 hectare parcel of land owned by Canada Bay Council that will be transformed into the new Concord West Public School. That school is expected to open in 2015. It will have 24 classrooms, a communal hall, library, canteen, special education facilities, and student, staff and administration areas. In accordance with the usual Department of Education and Communities guidelines, it will cater for around 600 students. That is great news for the people of the inner west and it is a win-win of the highest order for the member for Drummoyne. I could not help but notice the great Blue Steel photograph of the member for Drummoyne in his local paper—although I must say that it was not as good as the shot of Benji Marshall on the back page. The new school at Concord West is one of two planned for the area; another will be built at Wentworth Point, to serve the expanding local and Sydney Olympic Park communities.

The school will have 18 classrooms, including four special education classrooms, and while the exact site is still being negotiated, the school is expected to open in 2017. So there will be two new schools for the area. But wait, there is more. As the Minister for Education highlighted this morning, the budget also allows for

improvements to be made at Newington Public School where students will benefit from a significantly enlarged site. With the growth in the area, new classrooms have had to be built and the school has lost play and recreation space. Education has been working closely with the Sydney Olympic Park Authority to develop options to expand the school's playgrounds. The project will include much-needed improvements to recreational facilities for students and staff at the school—something that is particularly important after this week's Auditor-General's report into the amount of exercise and recreation that students in our schools across the State are getting.

It is not only the inner-west that will benefit from the Government's commitment to ensuring that students and teachers have the best facilities in which to teach and learn. There is funding for six new schools this year. That is part of our record Education budget of \$13.83 billion—up almost \$400 million, which is a record amount despite the carping of members opposite. So The Ponds will get two new schools. That is great news for another expanding area. Lakemba will get a new school. We are all proud finally to deliver what former members of Port Macquarie could not deliver, that is, a new school for the Lake Cathie area. We all know that we are dealing with a difficult economy. Despite that, we understand the value of public education and giving current and future students the best possible start to their lives. That is why we continue to invest in great schools like those to which I have referred.

STATE BUDGET AND INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Premier promised to restore integrity to New South Wales, why has he cut the budget for the Independent Commission Against Corruption by \$500 million in the State budget?

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members were not asked the question; the Premier was. The member for Oatley will come to order. The member for Hawkesbury will come to order. The member for Baulkham Hills will come to order. I call the member for Oatley to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: When the Independent Commission Against Corruption was established by the former Liberal-Nationals Government in 1989 a commitment was given to it—the same commitment was given to successive commissioners by the Liberal-Nationals Government, whether led by Nick Greiner or John Fahey—that it could have the resources it needed, and if it ever needed additional resources it simply had to approach the Premier of the day and it would get those resources. I regret—I particularly regret this, looking at the work the Independent Commission Against Corruption is now doing about the past 16 years—that that commitment did not survive Bob Carr's premiership. Under members opposite, the Independent Commission Against Corruption was treated like other agencies. As a result, over time a number of commissioners publicly complained, through their annual reports, about the lack of support and resources they received from the Labor Government. I have endeavoured to make it clear to the Independent Commission Against Corruption and its commissioner, David Ipp, that he need only ask for resources and he will get those resources.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will come to order. The Leader of the Opposition has asked the question. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I can reveal that in the financial year that is about to end the commissioner came to the Government in relation to a matter and asked for additional resources, and I can say that I granted those additional resources.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As I said, like former Liberal-Nationals Premiers, that will continue to be my approach—an approach in stark contrast to the one adopted by members opposite when in government.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Regrettably—actually, thankfully—as the Labor Government left office we started to see the Independent Commission Against Corruption conduct inquiries into some matters that a number of us who have been in this House for too long suspected had been going on. Those inquiries have not reached their completion. We are waiting on at least one report relating to a former planning Minister. In recent months the Independent Commission Against Corruption has announced inquiries into other matters that concern the former Labor Government. No doubt the Independent Commission Against Corruption will undertake the appropriate inquiries into those matters. I make the point that before the appointment of Justice

Ipp as the commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, when I was the Leader of the Opposition I was critical of the way the Independent Commission Against Corruption was operating. I think I said at the time that I thought its inner spring had wound down. I always said that the Independent Commission Against Corruption was an important institution and that politicians, Ministers and others should be concerned when making decisions in the public interest.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We are now seeing the Independent Commission Against Corruption investigate matters relating to the former Labor Government. Last week I told the Leader of the Opposition that the problem with his approach to question time is that he has been hanging around with Labor members for far too long; he mixes with his own type. This Government is determined to operate openly and transparently. It is determined to make decisions in the public interest, not in the interests of mates, whether or not backdated letters are involved.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I repeat: The Independent Commission Against Corruption has my full support; it will get the resources it needs. In the past 12 months the Independent Commission Against Corruption has been granted additional resources, and should additional resources be needed for whatever inquiries it will get them. That is in stark contrast to a Labor Party that understood what it had to fear from the Independent Commission Against Corruption; a Labor Party that broke the agreement between Premiers and Independent Commission Against Corruption commissioners that if they needed additional resources, they got those resources; a Labor Party that required Independent Commission Against Corruption commissioners to go through the star chamber under Labor that was the expenditure review committee process. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has a friend in the Premier of this State. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has someone who is committed to cleaning up the past abuses of the State, and I am happy to say that in this place.

STATE BUDGET AND HOUSING

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure New South Wales. What has been the response to the Government's housing package from new homebuyers and the home building industry?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member for Campbelltown for his question and, more importantly, for his enthusiasm and interest in ensuring that there is new housing in south-western Sydney. It is exciting to be part of a government that is delivering excitement to New South Wales and delivering the housing that members opposite could not deliver for 16 years.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The magnificent Liberal members in north-western Sydney, in south-western Sydney and in south Sydney are now in excitement central because we are delivering the housing that Labor failed to deliver.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: What we are doing is in stark contrast to that which was done by the former Government.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Fairfield will come to order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: And the excitement goes beyond the Liberal members of this place; it goes out to the community.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: It goes out to those who will be able to buy new homes, those who will build new homes and those who will have jobs as a result of the building of new homes. The industry has said that this is a good day for housing in New South Wales. Yesterday, the Housing Industry Association—this is a bit of a reflection on the Labor Party—said:

Through policy failure, after policy failure, we effectively killed off housing in this State and the economy has been underperforming year in, year out as a result.

The association was referring to the Labor Party; it was talking about 16 years of Labor. It is worth telling our visitors in the public gallery today that when the Labor Party came to office it came in on a pretty good wicket. Back in 1995, 55,000 homes were constructed in New South Wales. The year after Labor took office the decline started, and by 2008-09 Labor was producing only 26,000 to 27,000 homes—half the number delivered by the Coalition Government. Of course, the former Premier and member for Heffron, Kristina Keneally—the planning expert—presided over the lowest number on record; hence we ended up with the lowest housing starts in 50 years. What a debacle. Of the budget delivered yesterday, Stephen Albin from the Urban Development Institute of Australia had this to say:

We haven't seen a Budget this favourable to stimulating housing supply for generations, and the generations of the future will thank us for it.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber from Government members while the Minister is answering a question.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Glenn Byres from the Property Council stated:

The Budget has a smart mix of solutions to accelerate substantial new release areas, invest in infrastructure and pave the way for more efficient project assessments.

What did the Sydney Business Chamber have to say? Patricia Forsythe had this to say—

Mr John Robertson: Who?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Leader of the Opposition would not know anything about the Sydney Business Chamber because he has never understood business at all. She said:

The housing sector is an important economic driver for the Sydney economy. I welcome the NSW Government's \$761 million investment in essential infrastructure to support the construction of 76,000 new homes.

What do people on the ground say? Down at Oran Park Nathan Johnson, a supervisor of Wisdom Homes, said—

[*Interruption*]

I would love to have an extension so I can fully explain all the details.

Ms Noreen Hay: It is sad you have to ask for an extension.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: You can invite it if you want. Most of your property deals were done over a kebab table down in Wollongong. [*Extension of time granted.*]

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will return to the leave of the question and not incite the member for Wollongong.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Dirty deals—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: The Minister is now seeking to impugn the character of a member. He must do so by way of substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: Yes, and that is why I pulled him up. The point of order is upheld.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted by the wheeler-dealer from Wollongong, Nathan Johnson, the supervisor of Wisdom Homes at Oran Park, stated:

To hear the news come through that the stimulus is happening is great.

He went on:

The more work that comes through, the more people we need to get all the tasks done.

Mr Johnson said that encouraging younger workers to enter the housing construction industry was vital to ensure its longevity and he was looking forward to the changes coming into effect later this year. David Taylor of Dart West Developers is delivering the new suburb of Gregory Hills, just across the road from Oran Park—a great area. He said:

Where we are, at Gregory Hills, that money for a house and land package gets you a lot.

[Interruption]

The member for Heffron should not raise her voice. She was part of the critical problem.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will address his comments through the Chair.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Mr Taylor further said:

There is a lot of bling on a \$650,000 project home. You can get a really good single-story home on a 540 square metre lot for around \$550,000. So the government's threshold is really strong. It is just about perfect for the south-west.

I cannot tell the House how exciting this has been. Yesterday I stood out on Richmond Road with the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Roads and people were yelling out and honking their horns in support when they heard about what we were doing. They were so pleased that members opposite are no longer in government.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Toongabbie will find himself out of the Chamber shortly.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Government is committed to continuing this program. I also welcome the Consul General of Canada and say we are interested in your money and we want to build more infrastructure. Give us the money and let us get on with the job.

JOBS GROWTH

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given the Premier has broken his promise to create 100,000 new jobs, will he now back Labor's plan to establish an independent jobs commission to boost employment in New South Wales?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The only people who hate good news on the employment front are members opposite. We have the second lowest unemployment rate in the nation and what do they do? They grizzle, they grumble, they grinch around.

[Interruption]

It is not our fault that the Labor Party lost so badly; they should blame the member for Heffron. The fact is we will stand behind our policy to help grow jobs across New South Wales. In part we are doing that this year by spending almost \$15 billion on infrastructure—an increase of 11.8 per cent. That will help a construction sector that has hit some shoals because of national economic conditions.

Mr Clayton Barr: More like the Barrier Reef.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Members opposite might want to make light of troubles and job losses in certain sections of the economy but we will not. We will get on with the job of investing taxpayers dollars wisely, into building infrastructure such as the South West Rail Link, which is six months ahead of schedule, and the Erskine Park Link Road, which is powering ahead out there in the west, and the upgrades to the Princes Highway.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Never let it be said that Labor does not say the odd nice thing about our budget. I do not want to incite the favourite member of the member for Murray-Darling.

Mr John Williams: Noreen.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier should not encourage the member for Wollongong or the member for Murray-Darling.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Apparently the opposite is the problem, to discourage the two of them. An endorsement by the member for Wollongong of our commitment to additional dollars to the Princes Highway was so unusual that a transcript of a radio interview in the Illawarra came across my desk. I thought for a moment it was the member for Kiama. We are investing in the type of infrastructure that people need because it not only provides services and facilities that people deserve but also supports the construction sector. We have on the table payroll tax rebates for employers who are able to take on additional employment because it means that we can assist them with one of the tax burdens that occur at a State level. We will continue to argue this.

I noted when the Leader of the Opposition was in the Hunter last week that his solution to the job crisis affecting this nation was to establish a jobs commission. This was going to be a middle management-led jobs commission, a middle management-led jobs recovery. It would not take long for members to guess where that policy idea came from. Here we have a statement from the Leader of the Opposition which is not to address jobs in areas of private sector employment but to create more public sector jobs. Is the Public Sector Association still affiliated? It must be. I take advice from my industrial adviser that it is not. During the budget reply speech today I noted two matters. First, I noted when the Leader of the Opposition described this jobs commission he talked about cutting public service jobs. So he would consider cutting public service jobs.

Mr John Robertson: No, I didn't.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Leader of the Opposition should go back and read his sentence. Secondly, the other matter I noted in the budget reply speech was that despite the lie about there being 15,000 jobs set out in the budget to go, that was not there. Page and paragraph number, please?

Mr John Robertson: I will give it to you afterwards. I will have it delivered to your office.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: For the second year in a row there is no commitment from the Leader of the Opposition to reverse those job cuts, any more than there was a commitment last year to reverse this Government's wages policy. He has a heart the size of a pea.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. This is a Premier who is gutting injured workers.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. I call the member for Maroubra to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: All I can say is that Labor preselections must be coming up.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Maroubra that he is on a call to order.

STATE BUDGET AND SMALL BUSINESS

Mr GLENN BROOKES: My question is addressed to the Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business. How is the budget delivering more support for our State's 650,000 small businesses?

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: I thank the member for East Hills for his very considered question. The member has a lot of small business experience and he brings that experience to this place, as do so many members on this side of the Chamber. Many Liberals and Nationals members in this place have small business experience. Compare that to those opposite: union experience, multiplied by 18.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: The member for East Hills and I share a determination to ensure that small and medium enterprises have the best possible access to business advisory services, whether they are in East Hills, the northern suburbs, southern suburbs, western suburbs, central business district or the north, west and south of the State.

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: What a difference a year makes. It has been a year full of positive action for our State's small and medium enterprise sector and, most importantly, the 2012-13 budget—thank you, Treasurer—is boosting support for our State's 650,000 small businesses through a 50 per cent increase in funding for small business programs. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government appreciates the small and medium enterprise sector and as a result of the budget we will now see funding for programs, including the new Small Biz Connect program, increased to \$7.5 million each year over the next four years. Where the previous Government continually slashed and centralised small business programs and support this Government is unashamedly pro business and pro economic growth.

This funding boost means that local communities will have up to 50 Small Biz Connect advisers available to them whether it is in the far-flung corners of the State or in any part of the metropolitan area. Small Biz Connect will be there for all New South Wales. With Small Biz Connect, small and medium enterprises will be able to get tailored and practical advice from qualified senior level advisers in person or over the phone. This is fantastic news for our 650,000 small businesses who for too long under Labor had very limited or no access to small business advisory services. Small and medium enterprises have a Government now that is actively exploring new ideas, new approaches and new ways of doing business with them. They see more funding, more jobs, more business confidence in State Government policies and more economic growth in New South Wales than they saw a year ago.

After years of slipping back, small and medium enterprises see a budget that will recover the economy's competitive edge step by step as the regulatory burden is pushed back. They do not want us to let up on our initiatives, and we will not. That is an important point of difference because businesses lost faith in New South Wales under consecutive Labor governments when they were burdened with higher taxes and inundated with massive amounts of regulation and had far less support than their counterparts across the border. I put on record that the Opposition regrettably is still not showing any interest in small business matters. There has been not one small business related question from members opposite.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister does not need the assistance of anybody on the government benches.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: This confirms that they simply do not care about this State's economic powerhouse. In contrast, this year's budget reconfirms our support for this very important sector. I am also pleased to inform the House that as part of our commitment to the small and medium enterprise sector I will soon be introducing a bill outlining the roles and functions of the Small Business Commissioner as an independent statutory officer. Unlike those opposite, this Government is about genuine consultation with our stakeholders. We therefore encouraged the small business community to have its say on the proposed legislation at smallbusiness.nsw.gov.au.

Furthermore, as part of the 2012-13 budget, New South Wales red tape troubleshooters will be trialled to help the small business sector across New South Wales overcome the administrative burden. The Office of the Small Business Commissioner has already achieved several successes in combating red tape by reducing it at a grass roots level. For example, a council recently re-evaluated its application process for advertising signage and designed a new process in consultation with the Small Business Commissioner to make it more efficient for small business owners. Those of us who have been involved in small business know what a pain red tape can be— [*Extension of time granted.*]

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation coming from Government members, and not necessarily the backbenchers. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: As I was saying, those of us who have been involved in small business in the past know how painful it can be to get approval for things like signage, even if it is a sandwich board outside the shop advertising one's wares. It can be terribly burdensome and I am thrilled that we have a Small Business Commissioner in place who is willing to take action on behalf of small business.

Mr John Robertson: You could put on a sandwich board—

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

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON: The Leader of the Opposition would not know anything about small business. We can just ignore him. As the Treasurer said in his Budget Speech, this is not just what the community expects from its Government but what it deserves. Small and medium enterprises in New South Wales are responding well to our positive and practical plans to reduce red tape and to increase support for small businesses. This Government will continue to deliver change for our State's small business sector by expanding small business advisory services at the grass roots level. It is very clear that the 2012-13 budget is yet another important step towards achieving our goal of making New South Wales the number one place to live and to do business.

STATE BUDGET

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Given that the State budget is built on broken promises, what is the status of the Premier's commitment on 16 March 2011—"I'm happy to resign if I don't deliver on these promises"?

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn members again about excessive noise and interjections.

[Interruption]

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Was that a question or a statement? That is a good question. We are delivering on our promises that we made during the election last year. We are delivering on promises, for instance, to build roads in Sydney's west. I cannot go up to the electorate of the member for Penrith without driving past the Erskine Park Link Road because the member for Penrith, the member for Mulgoa and other members were very excited about that road. Why? Because it will link people to employment lands that we said we wanted to create where people live. We are also delivering, as we demonstrated yesterday in the electorate of the member for Riverstone, extra housing lots adjacent to additional employment lands. Nineteen thousand housing lots are to be developed as a result of specific measures in this year's budget; 19,000 people will live on those housing lots adjacent to employment lands where 10,000 people will—

Mr John Robertson: What about public service job cuts and hunting in national parks?

The SPEAKER: Order! What about the Leader of the Opposition ceasing to interject? I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Ten thousand people will be able to end the huge commute and get jobs locally. When I opened the Masters hardware store at Camden a few months ago that was exactly what those workers were pleased to know—that they finally had jobs. Whilst I am referring to the south-west, we are getting on with the job of building the South West Rail Link, which thanks to the Minister for Transport is six months ahead of schedule. That is another promise of ours. It was promised by those opposite but axed by the member for Toongabbie when he was Premier. The first stop on the South West Rail Link was when he was Premier of the State. I will get back to the north-west for a moment. What is happening with the North West Rail Link?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: An environmental impact statement was released in April because of the great work done by the Minister for Transport in her first 12 months in office. She has done more in 12 months in office than those opposite did in 16 years. The proof of the pudding is the people who have to commute each day on the north-west rail route either by bus or by car because those opposite promised long and hard that that rail link would be completed by 2010, and of course not a jot was done. I remember visiting the member for Campbelltown when he was just a humble policeman on leave running for the seat of Campbelltown. We stood at that station, together with the member for Wollondilly and the member for Camden, and promised people reductions in the cost of periodic rail tickets. That too was delivered in our first year in office.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We have been delivering and we will continue to deliver. I am happy to table that great report we issued last year to show what we have been doing. I would hate it to be ignored by those opposite. Contrast our experience of promise and delivery with that of those opposite. It is true that the member for Wollongong is probably the only person in the House with a memory as long as mine. For the benefit of the member for Wollongong, I remember those vast rail services promised in September 1998 in Action for Public Transport. I get criticised by the Federal Labor Government and by the spouses of people in this Chamber for daring to suggest a fast rail line to Canberra. I have to say to those opposite, it is the only fast rail link that was not promised, but in Sydney, not a single one was delivered.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I appreciate that in 1998 we were promised a high-speed rail link to Newcastle and the Central Coast, we were promised a Hurstville to Strathfield rail link and in 1998 we were promised a high-speed rail link from Sutherland to Wollongong, none of which was delivered. Enough of that—I will go back to electricity. We delivered on our rebates in electricity and lest there be some confusion in this House, three years ago not only did Ian Macdonald, a Minister in the former Government, promise what the Leader of the Opposition promised again today, and not only was it not delivered, but the Minister for Energy who axed it is now the Leader of the Opposition.

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. How will the Gillard Government's carbon tax increase the cost of providing social housing?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for Charlestown for his question and I congratulate him on his terrific work with the local housing office. He looks after his constituents very well. As we know, the carbon tax is adversely impacting on the economy of New South Wales—

Mr Nathan Rees: It is not even in yet.

Ms PRU GOWARD: It will be.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: In preparation for it we can see business confidence declining and people in this State are already seeing what it is about to do to electricity prices and other key government services such as health, education and local councils. Social housing will also be hit hard. New South Wales provides social housing for approximately 290,000 people; vulnerable people living in homes that need to be maintained, modernised and adapted to meet their changing needs. The carbon tax will affect all those people because it affects the price of every nail and every pot of paint that is put on the walls and every kilowatt of electricity that is used to do the repairs.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: Federal Labor's broken promise will stretch our maintenance budget that those opposite know full well was already way behind schedule. They left this Government with a maintenance backlog of \$300 million and we are now facing a carbon tax impost that will make the cost of maintenance that much higher. Naturally, Federal Labor has not told us just how much its carbon tax will drive up costs for social housing, despite the economic modelling that can be found throughout Treasury. What is even worse, it has not committed to compensating State and Territory housing authorities in managing the adverse impact on our vulnerable people. Federal Labor is certainly inflicting the pain, but Julia Gillard has not yet told us the true extent of the cost increases caused by the carbon tax.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: We have certainly heard industry commentators forecast increases to property costs of up to 1.7 per cent. If increases of that magnitude eventuate there would be a significant impact on social housing. If we experienced a 1.7 per cent increase in costs New South Wales would have to find an extra \$50 million over four years. That would mean social housing clients would miss out on approximately 150 new

properties, or approximately 8,000 new bathroom upgrades, or approximately 6,900 new kitchen upgrades. It is a significant impost on our vulnerable client base. That is Federal Labor's legacy. I will now refer to State Labor's legacy.

State Labor left our State with a social housing maintenance backlog of more than \$300 million and a waiting list of 56,000 households. New South Wales has to contend with Federal Labor's insult to State Labor's injury—Julia Gillard's costly new carbon tax. We know that vulnerable people are doing it tough and that is why the Government has not included this year's lump sum carbon tax compensation payment in social housing rents. But just as we did in this week's very difficult State budget, we need to make some hard decisions to fix Labor's mess, especially in tough economic times when housing waiting lists will only grow longer. Therefore, from March next year, regular fortnightly carbon tax payments to social housing tenants will be included as assessable income to calculate heavily subsidised social housing rents.

Opposition Members: Shame. Shame.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Those opposite might want to—

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: They might want to keep the privilege of a few in public housing, but they are very conveniently ignoring the needs of people living in housing that deserve—

[Interruption]

They can say what they like, but we know what is running through their veins and plainly it is not justice. This will mean that a single pensioner's rent will rise by approximately \$1.50 per week. Most social housing tenants will pay between \$1 and \$2 more in rent per week. The alternative is longer waiting lists. The people in the electorate of the member for Wollongong can complain to her. *[Extension of time granted.]*

Ms PRU GOWARD: Even with this very modest increase these tenants will still only pay between 25 per cent and 30 per cent of their income—highly subsidised by the taxpayer, and much lower than rents paid by other households with similar incomes in the private rental market.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Lakemba will come to order. I direct the member for Lakemba to remove himself from the Chamber until the end of question time. If members ignore directions from the Chair they will be removed from the Chamber.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Lakemba left the Chamber at 3.08 p.m.]

Ms PRU GOWARD: This decision will help our Government deliver vital maintenance to social housing properties and provide new properties as a way to address the needs of the most vulnerable households in New South Wales who have been left waiting for years by the former Labor Government. In this budget the Government is investing \$2.2 billion in housing assistance to provide better social housing, tackle homelessness, and improve services for people in need. Similar to the decisions made in relation to the 2012-13 State budget, our decision about the treatment of carbon tax payments is not easy, but it is the right decision, especially in difficult economic times when the most vulnerable are the most likely to suffer by being placed on extended waiting lists and living in houses that most of those opposite would think were considerably beneath them. The people of New South Wales entrusted the Liberal Party and The Nationals to fix this State, and after 16 years that is what we will do.

HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS

Mr GREG PIPER: I direct my question to the Minister for the Environment. With the Government providing sporting shooters with access to some national parks, will the Minister ensure that assessments establishing baseline information about feral animals are carried out so that any alleged benefit to native fauna can be measured?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: We know that almost 25,000 feral animals were removed from parks last year and data is available about what animals were taken from where. However, we do not know exactly how many feral animals are in the parks. As members know, licensed shooters are now permitted to hunt in 79 parks in New South Wales.

Mr Clayton Barr: What about the brumbies?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: Brumbies are not part of this program—they are not the feral animals listed. Volunteer shooters will assist with the feral animal eradication program. They will be able to access 79 parks that are neither close to metropolitan areas nor world heritage listed. The details of the program are being developed. I point out that access will not be permitted 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. This program involves using volunteer shooters to assist in removing feral animals from parks and it will be done scientifically. The eradication of feral animals will assist our native animals and it will benefit park users.

We involve volunteers in bushfire management, and volunteer shooters will be involved in our feral animal eradication program. The member for Lake Macquarie is interested in the science behind this. We can use the same approach that we use with bushfire management. We study part of the park and determine what needs to be done and we then utilise volunteers to assist in the process. This is an extension of that program. The details are being worked out. I have met with environmental groups and I will be meeting with members of the union tomorrow. We can manage this program. Last week when I visited Victoria to discuss its approach I was provided with examples—

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: What about New Zealand?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: New Zealand has an open hunting season and I am advised that it is not comparable.

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

Ms ROBYN PARKER: It is not the same as the program in operation in Victoria. I consulted with the Victorians about their program and they offered to show members of the union and rangers what they are doing in Mildura. They and their staff think the program has been very successful. I also will be talking to the South Australians about their program. I believe that this will add to our feral eradication program. We know why this arrangement has been introduced and I will ensure that it works in the best possible way.

EDUCATION INFORMATION

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I address my question to the Minister for Education. What is the Government doing to provide information to students and members of Parliament about education?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Leader of the Opposition made a fascinating contribution to a debate this morning, but I must confess that I was not in the Chamber to hear him. In fact, I was not even watching him on the television; I was in the cafeteria having coffee with at least half of the Labor caucus. I had to remind them that their leader was making a speech. Someone pointed it out to me in the same way as people do when they have seen a funny video on YouTube or on *Australia's Funniest Home Videos*. Of course, I made an in-depth study of his speech—which I am sure all Ministers did—to discover any new initiatives, policies or ideas. I found a gem in the education area to add to the gem that we have heard before—that is, the one education policy the Opposition has announced since the election: to keep open schools that have no students. That was a strong start.

There was another policy announcement today. Did it relate to new pedagogical practice in schools? No, it did not. Did it relate to a change in the curriculum or reform of capital works? No, it is a piece of plastic. The Labor Party's great education reform policy is to retain the Higher School Certificate portfolio. That is its great contribution to the education reform. It wants the Board of Studies to continue to give every Higher School Certificate student a bit of plastic. What a contribution to education. I know that students across New South Wales are jumping for joy. I have digressed from the question, which was about what the Government can do to provide information about education to students and members. Yes, we have closed down the Higher School Certificate advice line. When it was established about 15 years ago it received 39,000 calls each year. Last year it received only 600 calls at a cost of about \$275 each call.

Students can still ring the Board of Studies for advice; there will simply be no dedicated telephone line. Members opposite want the dedicated telephone line reinstated. I have news for them: Students use a thing called the "internet". I advise the member for Mount Druitt that telephones have changed in recent times and that people now use the internet to get information. I have received some interesting questions on notice from members opposite. The member for Keira has asked me whether the Government has any plans to make changes

to the art faculty at the Wollongong campus of TAFE Illawarra. There is no art faculty at the Wollongong campus. I also received an email from the office of the Leader of the Opposition. As an aside, he should talk to his staff because they do not know how to spell his name. They can join the 98.9 per cent of people in this State who do not know who he is.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The Minister's answer has nothing to do with the question he was asked. He says that he likes to talk about education. Perhaps he should try—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question. There is no point of order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: My answer is about ensuring that members know what is going on in their own electorates. The member for Cabramatta asked me about the time frame for the replacement of demountable classrooms at Lansvale East Public School. There are no demountable classrooms at that school. The member for Marrickville asked what assessment of maintenance requirements the Government had carried out before new contracts were awarded in February 2011. That was before the change of government. The first part of a question from the member for Maroubra asked about enrolments in schools in his electorate at the beginning of 2011. He is so concerned about the situation that the second part asked about the corresponding figures for 2011. That is an absolutely critical question. I could go on, and at some time in the future I will. I ask members opposite to get their heads around education in their own electorates.

STATE BUDGET AND INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In an earlier question I was asked about the budget for the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I am advised that last year's budget included \$700,000 for a planned relocation that did not proceed. In response to the last question asked by the Leader of the Opposition, I provide a document detailing the O'Farrell-Stoner Government's achievements during its first year in office.

Question time concluded at 3.18 p.m.

UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 14 June 2012.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, the report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled "Investigation into the payment of \$4,500 to a councillor of Auburn City Council", dated June 2012.

Ordered to be printed.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

Reference: Inquiry into Administrative Funding for Minor Parties

Mr ANDREW FRASER: On behalf of the Chair and in accordance with Standing Order 299 (1), I inform the House that the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters has received a referral from the Premier and Minister for Western Sydney to conduct an inquiry into matters relating to the administrative funding for minor parties and specifically, the annual amount to be distributed from the Administration Fund to eligible minor parties, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

PETITIONS

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

Coal Seam Gas Mining

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

Pets on Public Transport

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

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Pet Shops

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

Container Deposit Levy

Petition requesting the Government introduce a container deposit levy to reduce litter and increase recycling rates of drink containers, received from **Ms Clover Moore**.

The Clerk announced that the following Ministers had lodged responses to petitions signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Michael Gallacher—Public Safety—lodged 10 May 2012 (Mr John Robertson)

CITY OF SYDNEY AMENDMENT (CENTRAL SYDNEY TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE) BILL 2012**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 24 May 2012.**

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [3.22 p.m.]: The City of Sydney Amendment (Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012 sets up a joint State and city committee that will make decisions about traffic and transport in the city's central business district. I heard about the proposal after a late night phone call from a journalist and I expressed support for the committee because I believe that partnerships between the city and the State are essential for the future of Australia's most important city. At the time of his media announcement, the Premier said that the new committee would be:

Modelled on the successful Central Sydney Planning Committee for major developments in the City.

The Urban Taskforce congratulated him on his announcement, saying:

The Central Sydney Planning Committee has been a successful model for combining State and local interests and it can be replicated in other areas.

However, the bill in its original form was not modelled on the Central Sydney Planning Committee because meetings would not be public and I welcome the Government's amendment to make them open to the public. When he made his announcement, the Premier promised greater integration and coordination between the city and the State. However, all city transport projects already require support from the State Government's Traffic Committee and Roads and Maritime Services, which must approve various stages of development of a project. While these approvals will still be required this legislation will require additional approval from the proposed Transport Committee, thus creating a new layer of bureaucracy that could further delay a project indefinitely. The cooperation between the city and Roads and Maritime Services during project development will provide no guarantee to the city because the bill explicitly states that the committee can override any approval provided by Roads and Maritime Services to the city. This does nothing to promote State and city cooperation or to achieve outcomes on transport projects and traffic initiatives. In his second reading speech, the Premier said:

The committee will also oversee the many councillor State-run committees and working groups that are currently working on specific transport issues or precincts within the Sydney central business district.

The Premier attempts to paint a picture of multiple committees working on multiple transport projects. But there is only one committee—the State Government's Traffic Committee—which the City of Sydney calls the Pedestrian, Cycling and Traffic Calming Committee, which approves all the city's transport projects. The bill in

its current form would require the committee to approve maintenance of city roads and other infrastructure that is routine, slowing work that should proceed with minimum bureaucracy. I will move an amendment at a later stage to include this type of work in the list of exclusions in the bill. The City of Sydney does not need more bureaucracy. It needs big, bold decisions with real action, funding and outcomes. I had hoped that would be what the committee would provide. Congestion is one of the city's greatest threats. It is choking the central business district and it already costs businesses and residents \$4 billion a year. That figure is projected to increase by more than double to \$8 billion by 2020 if we continue with "business as usual".

There are 600,000 people in the Sydney central business district every day. By the year 2030 it is predicted that there will be 300,000 more people and 1,800 more buses in the central business district. Sydney's train system is reaching capacity, bus passengers face major delays, our roads are grinding to a halt and our footpaths are overcrowded. We do not have the option of changing the space between buildings. Doing nothing is not an option. If bold approaches are not taken, the city will be close to a standstill in 20 years. However, the City of Sydney is taking action. It has set aside \$180 million to support the public domain works required for light rail in George Street, and it has established a safe bike infrastructure, improved pedestrian links, promoted car sharing and made it easier for taxis to pick up and drop off passengers.

Our draft "Connecting Our City" transport plan outlines necessary improvements to commuter services. This includes reconfiguration of the 192 bus routes coming into the city in order to make them more reliable, the addition of more train services throughout the day, the reduction of waiting times for pedestrians to cross at traffic signals and the introduction of light rail on George Street. I was pleased that the Premier acknowledged the importance of Sydney's global city status. For eight years I have argued that the contribution of the central business district to the gross domestic product of both New South Wales and Australia requires State and Commonwealth investment in Sydney city's transport infrastructure. I was surprised by the Premier's reference to the city's parallel vision of a "City of Villages". Although the City of Villages strategy is just one part of our vision for a global Sydney, it is an important element.

The cities where people want to live are also the places people want to visit and do business. Global cities promote their villages: New York with Manhattan, Little Italy, Greenwich Village, East Village, Soho, and the Upper East Side; London with Soho, Highgate, West End, and Camden; and Paris with Montmartre, Montparnasse, the Latin Quarter, and the Champs Elysees. In his media release the Premier implied that bike lanes are "at odds with Sydney's position as a global city". However, other global cities are introducing similar projects to the City of Sydney to tackle congestion and improve pedestrian experience. I understand that those opposite are not interested in what I am saying, but Sydney is a global city and this is a significant issue. Perhaps members opposite could carry on their conversation outside the Chamber.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind the member for Drummoyne that the member for Sydney has the call. She will be heard in silence.

Ms CLOVER MOORE: Other global cities are introducing similar projects to that of the City of Sydney to tackle congestion and improve the pedestrian experience. In London, more than one million people use a bike hire scheme. New York City has also introduced a bike network and pedestrianised Times Square—arguably the most famous street in the world—and business has thrived. Sydney businesses are crying out for action on transport. When I was first elected Lord Mayor, it was the voice of the chief executive officers in suits that were the loudest in calling for safe, separated bike lanes into the central business district. They are now using those bike lanes—along with thousands of other city workers—to commute to work each day. The latest figures show a massive 82 per cent increase in bike riders using our bike network over the past two years.

No traffic lanes were removed for our bike lanes. I repeat that no traffic lanes were removed for our bike lanes. Bike lanes provide a safe cycling option that takes people out of their cars and off overcrowded public transport, thereby freeing up city roads for those who have to drive. Cycling also creates a healthier community and saves the national health bill. Recently, Patricia Forsythe, the Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber, said she would not lobby the Government to get rid of bike lanes because many business owners were not opposed to them. The only people lobbying the Premier to stop the completion of a safe bike network are the shock jocks. The city and the State share the same economic goals for growth in the city and many targets for improving transport. These include increasing the share of commuter trips by public transport to the Sydney central business district in peak hours to 80 per cent and, before this budget, increasing bicycle trips to 10 per cent.

What a retrograde step it would be to cut cycling targets when lifestyle-related illnesses such as obesity and type 2 diabetes are increasing and when air pollution, climate change, peak oil and traffic congestion are serious threats. The transport targets of the City of Sydney include a 5 per cent reduction in public transport

travel time to the city by 2020, a 10 per cent reduction in pedestrian delays at the city's 20 most important intersections, a 10 per cent improvement in on-street public transport speed by 2015, sufficient on-street and off-street loading capacity for commercial vehicles, an 8 per cent increase in public transport capacity by 2015 and 35 per cent by 2036, 10 per cent of local trips by bike and 50 per cent by foot by 2030, and approved and funded transport plans for all major land-use developments by 2015. Achieving these targets will help the movement of the 600,000 people in the city each day—be they residents, workers or visitors. There are many competing demands on our roads by buses, taxis, delivery vehicles, emergency vehicles, trucks and private car owners and that will only get worse as our population grows.

Sydney competes for business with global cities such as Singapore and Hong Kong. Business will set up where it can attract an intelligent workforce, and workers are attracted to liveable cities that provide quality of life. If we do not urgently address congestion, Sydney could lose its global city status. Each year the City of Sydney invests millions of dollars in support of business, which is the powerhouse of our economy and up there with the mining industry—worth \$85 billion annually. Our Better Building Partnership between the City of Sydney and major commercial property owners, who own 60 per cent of all commercial office space in the Sydney central business district, is creating the highest-quality sustainable office spaces in Australia. Our planning work has seen billions of dollars invested in sustainable construction in urban renewal sites such as the Carlton United Brewers site, Green Square and Harold Park.

We are reducing red tape for small and medium businesses and our annual Sydney Business Awards, Let's Talk Business seminars and 101 Workshop Series help them to innovate and thrive. We also invest millions of dollars each year in events such as New Year's Eve, Chinese New Year and Art & About Sydney to boost tourism. We support festivals, musicals, exhibitions and conferences to attract more visitors. Our retail advisory panel, grants and support for not-for-profit business associations, local chambers of commerce and start-up companies stimulate economic activity and innovation. A liveable city with efficient transport, high-quality parks, a healthy environment and a diverse cultural life attracts investment and jobs. By tackling these issues and showing real leadership, the City of Sydney is ensuring it can compete with other great cities such as London, Paris, Shanghai and New York. The business community is frustrated that traffic and transport improvements in Sydney are too slow.

The City of Sydney is doing what it can to address congestion and all proposals get sign off from Roads and Maritime Services and the Local Traffic Committee. The proposed committee is likely to slow progress further by adding more red tape. It is a mean-spirited reaction to shock jocks who do not like bike lanes and has been developed without any genuine collaboration with the City of Sydney or the people of Sydney that it will affect. As the City of Sydney and I, as the Lord Mayor, are committed to working closely and constructively with the State Government and its transport agencies, I will not oppose the bill. I am hopeful that the new committee will provide for the collaboration that is essential, and I hope that all members of the new committee are directed to pursue effective cooperation, discussion, consultation and action. I commit the City of Sydney to continuing to work to get action on transport and to cut congestion for the 600,000 people in our city centre each day doing business to promote our global city.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [3.32 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the City of Sydney Amendment (Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012 and indicate from the outset that the Opposition will not oppose the bill. The front cover of the bill has a detailed and comprehensive overview of all the things it aims to achieve but certain relevant objectives have been omitted. Let us be clear. The bill is not about giving the New South Wales Government or Transport for NSW powers to intervene in traffic and transport issues that it does not already have. Rather, it is an attempt to politicise traffic and transport planning in the city of Sydney in response to those who disagree with the popularly elected Lord Mayor and member for Sydney. This is a sop to those who think democracy in local government is fine, until a popularly elected mayor starts implementing the agenda that he or she was elected to do by his or her community.

There is little or nothing in this bill that could not have been managed without the need for this Parliament enacting legislation. As many members will be familiar, local councils across the State implement road and transport decisions through their local traffic committees—that is, elected councillors meet with council engineers and planners, as well as police and Roads and Maritime Services representatives, to endorse actions. While councils can make decisions on traffic calming and thresholds, their actions require the consent and approval of Roads and Maritime Services. The object of this bill is to amend the City of Sydney Act to require a committee of elected councillors, council appointed staff and representatives of the Roads and Maritime Services or other New South Wales Government appointed delegates, which does not sound too dissimilar to what exists at present.

As I said, the Opposition will not oppose the bill but it reserves the right to seek or support amendments both in this Chamber and in the other place. Regardless of our position, the bill appears to fly in the face of so many utterings by those opposite prior to the election. At that time there was a consistent mantra by those opposite on the issue of local decisions by local communities. We heard it when it came to hospital boards and local health networks. We heard it when it came to local schools—the introduction of Local Schools, Local Decisions has not proved to be popular. We heard it ad nauseam about planning decisions and returning decisions affecting local communities back to local councils. In order to give an insight into the mindset of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition I will now read from a document that was circulated prior to the election. I quote:

A government's only role is to serve the people—

We like that. The document continues:

Having a say in decisions that affect people and communities is fundamental to liberty and trust—

That sounds okay. It then states:

In other words, giving power to the people to make decisions and take responsibility for the decisions they make. The NSW Liberals and Nationals believe that decisions are best made by the people they affect and as close as possible to the places where they will have an impact—

So far, so good. It goes on to state:

A big difference between NSW Labor and the NSW Liberals and Nationals is that we trust people to make good decisions about issues that affect them.

The quote concludes:

We know that personal responsibility is one of the most valuable forms of leadership in our civil society, and the more it is encouraged and valued, the more we prevent difficult problems developing among us.

That quote was taken from Start the Change—Liberals and Nationals Manifesto 2010. Few people would argue with those sentiments. However, when given the opportunity to live up to the ideals espoused by those words, the Premier has decided to junk the sentiment and to play politics. This bill is all about being seen to be tough and pandering to the anti-Clover cabal which seems to have the Premier's ear. Notwithstanding the crass political nature of this bill, and notwithstanding that the Opposition will not oppose it, I wish to raise an issue more as an observation and suggestion to the Minister as to how it could be improved. Membership of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee is to include three persons representing the State Government and appointed by the Minister. It is my view that those three persons should possess qualifications or experience in the area of traffic, transport and/or planning disciplines. It would be a travesty if the Minister's appointments to the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee were political rather than practical and experienced appointments. The section of the bill dealing with membership states:

51G (1) (c) 3 persons representing the State Government and appointed by the Minister.

With such a broad and undefined selection process, it is conceivable that the Minister could appoint individuals to the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee with little or no planning, traffic or transport experience. Given that under section 9 any two members of the committee may notify the chairperson of a matter or topic to be included in the agenda for a meeting, and the chairperson must ensure that the matter is included on the agenda, the Minister could use his or her delegates to set the policy framework of the City of Sydney. Again, this appears to contradict the laudable sentiments of the Liberal-Nationals Coalition pre-election manifesto from which I read earlier. That manifesto talked about the importance of local decisions being made by local communities but, given the actions of the Government since being elected, we should not be surprised. We should be pleased that the Government is at least pretending to address the issues of traffic congestion in the central business district because it is doing nothing about traffic congestion in the rest of Sydney.

More than a year after winning office we have heard absolutely nothing from the Premier or Minister for Roads and Ports about fixing traffic congestion in Sydney. It has been left to the Federal Government to give those opposite a hurry-up and to drag them kicking and screaming to begin planning for the roads that Sydney needs. Interestingly, we are debating a bill about taking control of traffic and transport issues in the Sydney central business district but we are nowhere near a solution to traffic congestion on Parramatta Road and nowhere near a solution to fixing the problems that cause motorists to be stuck every day on the M5, M4 and the M2. It is little wonder that the people of New South Wales are already disillusioned by the Government's efforts and why they refer to the Premier as "Do Nothing Barry." In the words of the *Daily Telegraph* editorial a few weeks ago—

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: I note that the member for Lakemba is talking about matters that are outside the leave of the bill, which is clear. We are debating the City of Sydney Amendment (Central Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012. Talking about matters outside that is not particularly helpful; nor is insulting the Premier, who has done a great deal of work across a range of areas. I ask the member to come back to the leave of the bill.

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

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: To her credit, the Lord Mayor of Sydney has indicated both her willingness to work with the State Government to improve traffic arrangements through the central business district and her surprise that the Government has felt the need to be so heavy handed in its attempts to wrest control. As Councillor Moore stated in March when this policy was foreshadowed, "I am interested in finding out how it will differ from current working arrangements, given the city has limited powers and the New South Wales Government already has to approve all of the city's transport projects, including bike routes." As I said, Opposition members will not oppose the bill, but we reserve the right to support amendments both in this Chamber and in the other place.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [3.40 p.m.]: As the Minister for Local Government I am pleased to support the thrust of the City of Sydney Amendment (Central Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012, with foreshadowed amendments from the member for Sydney and the Government. The bill reflects the Government's ongoing commitment to rebuilding the State's economy. Sydney is one of Australia's major capital cities, and the central business district lies at the heart of the New South Wales economy. When it works well the economic benefits can be felt across the State. I support the establishment of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee as it will provide for effective and coordinated management of all traffic and transport-related matters in the central business district. It will also ensure that both levels of government are working together to deliver the best results for Sydney and the State's economy.

The committee will for the first time bring all significant traffic and transport decision making for the central business district under one umbrella. In establishing a new committee, the Government draws on the success of the Central Sydney Planning Committee, which has been responsible for major developments in the central business district since 1998. I am aware of the concerns raised by the City of Sydney that the decisions on routine maintenance of city roads and other infrastructure would fall within the purview of the committee, rather than with the council. Similar to the Central Sydney Planning Committee, it will comprise members of the City of Sydney and State representatives. Three council representatives will ensure that the council's future concerns are taken seriously and are resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. The committee will have discretionary powers to determine what types of works will require a notice to be given by the council.

The functions of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee are described in section 51H and include providing high-level coordination of the development of transport and traffic policies, plans and projects affecting the central business district; assessing the impact of traffic and transport management decisions and actions within the central business district on the efficiency and effectiveness of the transport network that provides access to and movement within the Sydney central business district for persons and goods; coordinating the management by road authorities and parking authorities of traffic and transport within the central business district; reviewing and approving certain projects within the central business district having a significant impact on central business district traffic and transport; and promoting the efficiency and safety of the public transport network in the Sydney central business district.

This bill does not change the responsibilities of a roads authority. The council will remain responsible for funding and developing road and road infrastructure proposals and maintaining those public roads for which it is the roads authority. Maintenance of the State's economic engine room requires a body that has the power to ensure that an effective and efficient transport network is delivered for the benefit of greater Sydney and the State. I am confident that the new committee will significantly improve the coordination of transport and traffic management in the central business district. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [3.43 p.m.]: It is difficult for the Government to justify introducing the City of Sydney Amendment (Central Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012 because, basically, everything that the new committee will do is already being done. The member for Sydney clearly outlined the reasons the bill is unnecessary, but she has graciously accepted it with a greater commitment by the city to work

closely with the State Government. I will outline a few issues that have been raised. As the Opposition speaker said, I am not opposing the legislation; I will be supporting it. However, I will highlight some concerns about it. As we have heard, the bill amends the City of Sydney Act to create a new committee to make decisions about significant transport questions in the inner city. The inner city is defined in the Act as Sydney's central business district and it is prescribed and identified on the operational map.

The Government said that the new committee will do three things. These are the arguments we heard from the Government. First, the committee will introduce coordination. However, traffic and transport in Sydney are already coordinated by the council's traffic committee. As the mayor at Leichhardt council—the member for Drummoyne, who is a former mayor, knows this—I know that traffic and transport matters are coordinated by traffic committees, which have different names in different areas. The city of Sydney traffic committee has a detailed make-up and includes a range of agencies, and it is required to sign off on any decisions made by the council. But now the State Government is creating a committee. For goodness sake, one would think the Director General of Roads and Maritime Services, Les Wielinga, would have something better to do than sit on a committee that deals with matters that are already dealt with by local government via a traffic committee. Surely the director general has something better to do than decide where to stop traffic or to install a "no standing" sign. It is ridiculous.

From my perspective, coordination already takes place. The bill does not provide either the council or State government agencies with any new responsibilities. Basically, this bill will take the heat off the Premier, who can say, "I am doing something about this crazy city of Sydney that is building bike lanes." I emphasise—and several people have made this point—that not one traffic lane has been used for cycleways. Lanes that were used for car parking are now used for cycleways, not traffic lanes. The introduction of cycleways is not reducing traffic flow, because no traffic flowed along lanes that are now used as cycleways. Therefore, in my view the coordination argument is empty. The Government's second argument is that the new committee will promote working together in collaboration. Where is the problem? As a councillor on a council area adjoining the City of Sydney I have not seen explosive arguments, breakdowns in communication or problems between Roads and Maritime Services and the city council.

Indeed, from my perspective and my understanding of the situation, the relationship between Roads and Maritime Services and the City of Sydney is a positive one. So the argument that the Government needs to create another layer of bureaucracy to enable them to work together is pointless. The Government's final argument is that it wants to put everything under one umbrella. However, there is only one thing to put under the umbrella. The only thing the Government is putting under the umbrella is the traffic committee, which already does all those things that the new committee supposedly will do. If the genuine intention is to coordinate and work together in a partnership, as we heard, why has the committee's make-up been proposed in this way? Where is the partnership between the City of Sydney and the New South Wales Government, because the committee will have discretion to opt out of dealing with certain matters and determining who will make the final decision. In other words, the Minister basically will run the show.

I do not think the partnership is genuine; I think this is a knee-jerk reaction by elements in the Government who are concerned about the campaign being run relating to the City of Sydney and why the Premier is not doing something about it. The Government will not put the facts on the table. Instead, it has introduced legislation that makes it look like something is happening. As mentioned by the member for Lakemba, my biggest fear relates to the Government's promise about reducing red tape. Reducing red tape is important in maximising the capacity and efficiency of the system. Yet it seems that the bill provides for additional layers of notification and the word "coordination", although we have not had a clear indication of what that is expected to achieve. Frankly, if the committee is being established merely to make the Government look like it is making work, this is unnecessary red tape and it generates concerns.

I emphasise, from my perspective as a mayor who was part of the Inner City Mayors Forum, as a mayor in an adjoining council area and as a local member whose electorate covers areas that are covered also by the City of Sydney, the working relationship between Roads and Maritime Services and the City of Sydney is good. If anything, this makes the relationship even more difficult. There will always be disagreements on traffic committees but the Sydney 2030 strategy is a sound one. Getting people out of private motor vehicles and onto bicycles and public transport is a good measure. The Government and the Minister would agree that this does not happen overnight; it requires long-term planning and it takes many years, particularly after the many years of neglect of the former Government. The approach of creating more committees, more notification and more bureaucracy is not the way forward. We know that projects are often time specific. Arrangements can be made, such as the current arrangements with Roads and Maritime Services, to make an agreement with the City of Sydney to progress the matter.

Under this arrangement, instead of going to the traffic committee we have an additional and convoluted process that is totally unnecessary. I conclude by stating that the Director General of Transport has better things to do than to sit on a committee dealing with transport issues in the city of Sydney. That is ridiculous when we have some of the biggest transport issues facing this State in generations and massive issues in the central business district. I want to attend the first meeting as an observer to see the standard of issues with which this committee will deal. I understand the Government wanted to have a high-powered committee so that the *Daily Telegraph* could run a good story; it has fulfilled that goal. I will not oppose the bill. I hope the goodwill shown by the Government and the member for Sydney results in a positive outcome because what happens in this city is crucial to Sydney and to the whole of New South Wales. I thank members for the opportunity to make a contribution to the bill. I hope we do not create any more bureaucratic red tape committees to deal with what are essentially political issues.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.52 p.m.]: First I want to contest some propositions put forward by the member for Lakemba, who stated that this bill was about politics. It is not about politics and pretence; it is about putting into place a mechanism to resolve transport issues that are not agreed on between the New South Wales Government—which has an important role to play in the city of Sydney—and the City of Sydney. It is a mechanism to resolve issues that need to be resolved in the interests of our city and our State. It is important to have that coordination, which is the Government's approach to traffic issues in the central business district and it is the approach that we have taken on other issues.

As the member for Sydney has made clear, we all agree that Sydney is, first and foremost, a global city. The Coalition Government is proud to have such a city in New South Wales. It is at the heart of our central business district and its needs are great. Therefore, all New South Wales citizens and tourists deserve first-class roads and transport to match our city's international reputation. Most people who come to the central business district—and those who live in the electorate that I represent in Vaucluse—to work, shop, explore, dine and for entertainment—do not live in the central business district. They rely on efficient public transport or access to car parking to get to and around the central business district.

Transport, traffic and planning issues in the central business district have a much broader impact than just on the central business district; indeed, they have an impact on the State's economy. For that reason the relevant levels of government must work together to deliver the best possible results for the whole State. Currently the New South Wales Government and the City of Sydney share transport and road responsibilities. However, the Government and the City of Sydney do not agree on a number of central business district transport issues. These include important things such as speed limits and car access, the extension of the network of bikeways, the provision of layover space for buses and the extension of low-speed shared zones. They are important issues for the operation of our city.

The Government recognises that we need better planning, more effective coordination and cooperative decision-making on traffic and transport matters. That is what this bill seeks to achieve. The Government is taking action on behalf of workers, businesses, residents and visitors to ensure that major transport and traffic management decisions affecting them, our city and our State are properly coordinated between the New South Wales Government and the City of Sydney. It is a similar approach to that which the Minister for Transport took in relation to her Transport portfolio. We now have Transport for NSW—the biggest restructure of transport services in the history of New South Wales. It fundamentally changes the way in which the Government and the people of New South Wales approach public transport.

Transport for NSW is responsible for coordinating services through all modes of transport—that is a first ever. It is tasked with ensuring that the customer is placed first. It brings together policy and planning staff from all transport agencies in order to coordinate the entire transport system for the benefit of the people of New South Wales. Transport for NSW frees transport agencies from focusing on the policy and administration of transport needs. Previously these tasks were performed by eight separate organisations across the State. In contrast, Transport for NSW ensures that these organisations can get back to the job of focusing on providing quality transport services to customers rather than working on policy and administration.

This bill provides for the establishment of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee. Hereafter I will refer to it as "the committee". The committee will be responsible for coordinating plans and policies for public transport and traffic within central Sydney and for making decisions on major transport issues. This legal framework, which requires coordination between the council and the New South Wales Government, is modelled on the central Sydney planning committee for major developments in the city, so there is a precedent. Indeed, the committee will work closely with the planning committee, an issue on which I will touch shortly.

The committee will remove ad hoc coordination between the two levels of government sharing responsibilities for roads and transport. As I understand it, currently there are 14 transport working groups on which the State and the council are represented—which again is a large number. For the first time the committee will bring together all traffic and transport decision-making under one coordinated umbrella. As my colleagues in the House have noted, the Director General of Transport, Mr Les Wielinga, will chair the committee, with a further three members to be jointly nominated by the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Roads and Ports. The City of Sydney will also nominate three members. In this bill proposals that involve certain roadworks or traffic control works in the central business district will be referred by the relevant roads authority to the committee for approval.

The City of Sydney, the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and the Barangaroo Delivery Authority are all roads authorities in the area over which the committee will have oversight. It is important to note that the committee will not become a roads authority and will not assume the responsibilities of the City of Sydney, the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority or the Barangaroo Delivery Authority. The planning committee will consult with the committee before it makes a decision that will require roadworks or traffic control works that are likely to have a significant impact on traffic and transport in the central business district. Any disputes arising from a decision made by the committee will be resolved through consultation between the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Roads and Ports and the Minister responsible for the relevant roads authorities in relation to the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority or the Barangaroo Delivery Authority, or the Minister for Local Government in relation to the City of Sydney. If no agreement is reached the Premier will intervene to resolve the matter.

We always need to break a deadlock; it is important for the progress of the central business district and the State. The Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee will take control of transport and traffic planning to give this city the level of attention and efficient coordination it needs to resolve the outstanding issues that the council and the State Government cannot agree on at present to create a city of which we can be justifiably proud—a city that works not only for people who live in its vicinity but also for visitors and workers who come from far afield. This bill has the hallmarks of the Coalition's approach to government. I believe it has clear policy, it has a strategy incorporating that policy and there is a plan for execution, a method of bringing this about. These things are fresh to New South Wales. They are things that the people of this State and our city need and want. On that basis I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [3.59 p.m.]: I am delighted to support this important legislation, the City of Sydney Amendment (Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012. This legislation is critical if business is to be able to continue to operate in this bike-bound city. There is a desperate need for an impartial umpire to make decisions about blocking off streets and creating more bike lanes. The current situation forces people working or visiting the city into bankruptcy to pay for parking. This is madness and it has to stop now. The city is in gridlock with traffic turning the streets into parking lots and no-one using the bike lanes. I take this opportunity to talk about these bike lanes and what they have created for the poor sods who are forced, for whatever reason, to bring their cars into the city. Motorists have already lost over 400 parking spaces to bike lanes because of the City of Sydney's obsession with shutting cars out of the city completely in order to "pedestrianise"—not my word but the council's—the entire central business district.

I was shocked to read recently that the latest plan is to pedestrianise George Street. Imagine what that would do to traffic flow. Delivery vehicles already have serious issues supplying retailers and other businesses with the tools of their trade. I am not here today to dismiss what the City of Sydney council has done in terms of planning and traffic flow through the central business district, but I do want to talk about how they can be improved for the 800,000 people a day who travel to work in this great city. Of those, 600,000 people come by buses or trains and 200,000 come by cars. I point out that the city of Sydney belongs to the people of New South Wales and that is precisely why it is the responsibility of the New South Wales Government to have a say in its transport and traffic planning. The present arrangements are unacceptable. What this legislation will do is give the city back to all the people, not just those with bikes.

The bill will establish a committee comprising seven people. The committee will be chaired by the head of Transport for NSW, Les Wielinga, and will include three members from the City of Sydney and three members nominated by the State Government. The Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee will be established in this legislation. The three Government members will be jointly nominated by the New South Wales transport Minister, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, and the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay. It is only right that these Ministers have direct input into the traffic and transport needs of this city. The Premier was correct when he announced this important legislation and said a situation had developed where the Government was in complete disagreement with the City of Sydney council in a number of key areas.

These issues include speed limits and car access to the central business district; provision of layover space for buses; extension of the network of existing bikeways; and extension of low-speed shared zones. The majority of people coming to the city do not live in the central business district and nor do they live close by. Many people travel from the Central Coast to work in the city. They cannot ride a bike from Gosford, unless they are Lance Armstrong. As the Premier said, "Sydney is the beating heart of the NSW economy." How true that is. He went on to say that both levels of government, State and local, need to get involved in traffic and transport management. I agree with the Premier that it is increasingly apparent that the people who use the city every day of the year have become increasingly cynical about the City of Sydney council and whether it operates in the best interests of the users of the central business district. They need to get involved and the Government needs to have a say in how to tackle the enormous problems facing traffic and transport in the city.

The committee will be modelled on the successful Central Sydney Planning Committee for major development in the city. This is a joint committee that has been working well since 1988. When the Premier announced the formation of the committee in March this year it was strongly supported by the Executive Director of the Sydney Business Chamber, Patricia Forsythe. As reported in the *Daily Telegraph* after the Premier's announcement, Ms Forsythe described the initiative as "a sensible approach". She added that unless we get the traffic flow right there are many flow-on effects. The *Daily Telegraph* also reported that the Chief Executive Officer of Urban Taskforce Australia, Chris Johnson, backed the idea all the way. He is quoted as saying, "The prosperity of the State cannot be delegated to local governments who are focused mainly on their local voters." He was also quoted as saying, "There needs to be a balance between all transport networks."

Also quoted in the *Daily Telegraph* report was Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, whose Chief Executive Officer, Brendan Lyon, said it was a positive step that ideology was being taken out of the equation. Mr Lyon said, "With congestion pressures costing Sydney and NSW billions of dollars each year, we need a joined-up strategy that needs to be driven by better traffic and transport outcomes, not ideology." These are three key independent people who are in charge of organisations representing the business sector as well as experts in the field of planning and urban design. It is no wonder they support the legislation because it makes commercial and planning sense. This is important legislation because it creates a mechanism whereby the arms of government, both local and State, can come together under one coordinated body. This is great legislation and I commend the bill to the House.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [4.05 p.m.]: I support the City of Sydney Amendment (Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012. The objective of the bill is to amend the City of Sydney Act 1988, the principal Act, to establish a committee, the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee [CSTTC], consisting of representatives of the State Government and the City of Sydney. This is an important bill because the city of Sydney is arguably the centre of commerce in New South Wales and it plays a vital role as the capital of this State. It is a global city with something like 600,000 workers and it is a major traffic thoroughfare both through and around the city.

Mr Victor Dominello: Parramatta is catching up.

Dr GEOFF LEE: I acknowledge the comment of the good Minister for Citizenship and Communities that Parramatta is right on Sydney's heels in terms of importance. But I reiterate that Parramatta is the capital of western Sydney, so we are not really competing; we are adding to that diverse framework. The congestion in Sydney, even last night when I was driving through the city in a taxi, is out of control. Without taking measures and doing something differently it will not get any better. That is why this bill has been introduced. In my experience many people complain about the cycleways. Do not get me wrong; walkways and cycleways are an important part of a city's fabric. Certainly in Parramatta I encourage the use of cycleways but not at the expense of car traffic and other vehicular traffic, because they are also essential to a functioning city. Cycleways, walkways, lanes for buses, roads for cars and train lines are all important parts of the mix. Cycleways are just one part.

The question is whether the current situation is working. I suggest it is not working very well. It is not just a local issue; it is an issue that affects the whole State and its prosperity. I wonder what the couriers, taxi drivers and delivery van drivers would say if we asked them what they think about the cycleways and whether they have helped them do their jobs. These hardworking people are just trying to make a living and I suggest the cycleways are making their lives even harder. It is not only those people who have concerns. The media also has concerns about the cycleways. James Madden said in the *Australian* on 9 November 2010:

Sydney's CBD could be compromised if the city's Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, pushes to turn the city into a European-style urban village.

Amos Aikman said in the *Australian* on 23 November 2010:

The revelations come in the wake of widespread public concern over the safety and utility of Sydney Mayor Clover Moore's \$76m plan to build 200km of bike paths across the CBD.

I could give other examples from the media of concern about cycleways at the expense of other forms of transport. Many people need to use their cars or public transport, especially people in western Sydney. In the Parramatta electorate the Liberal-Nationals Government has made great strides to improve public transport. It has put in busways and pathways. The latest busway, which is on Victoria Road, enables people on buses to get into the city faster. The Government has scheduled 30-odd express trains from Parramatta to the city and has increased night rail services for patrons. People in the central business district of Parramatta have access to a loop bus which delivers on a \$2.4 million election commitment. Parramatta, the capital of western Sydney, has a population of more than one million people.

This Government is establishing cycleways and walkways in areas that do not compete against vehicle traffic. My solution to the congestion is for businesses that are fed up with the traffic in the city of Sydney to consider moving to Parramatta. By doing so they would increase their productivity and efficiency. Parramatta provides lower rentals and access to workers in western Sydney and in the next 25 years the predicted growth is two million people. This bill is important because it addresses the needs of the city of Sydney, a global city that needs a coordinated approach between the State Government and the local council. The city of Sydney is not an isolated island but is an integral part of the economic and community framework. For those reasons I support this bill.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [4.11 p.m.]: I support the City of Sydney Amendment (Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012, which is very sensible legislation. Prior to my election to the New South Wales Parliament I served on Parramatta City Council for 25 years. From September 2008 until September 2009 I was Lord Mayor of Parramatta City Council, during which time traffic management was a major priority. Although Parramatta is a city, it is not nearly the size of the city of Sydney. The bill provides for the establishment of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee to promote better planning and cooperative decision-making on the traffic and transport matters in the Sydney central business district.

Let me remind members of the importance of providing this great city with the best transport and traffic system it deserves. Sydney itself belongs as much to the people who live there as it does to the people who inhabit it every day, for whatever reason. Each day the population of the city swells from 60,000 residents to more than 600,000 people. The demand for a proper traffic and transport system in the city has reached crucial levels. That is why the Government is proposing this legislation. A key part of this legislation is the establishment of a joint committee, the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee, on which the Government will have four members, including the chair. The City of Sydney council will have three representatives. Three remaining Government members will be jointly nominated by the Minister for Transport and the Minister for Roads and Ports.

The bill gives control of the traffic and transport needs of the city to the relevant body—the Government, which represents everyone in New South Wales. From my experience in local government I know that even in a city the size of Parramatta it is essential that people are able to drive and park in the city itself, because that is where the retail centre and businesses are. People working in those businesses need to be able to get to work and park their cars and not pay a fortune to do so. Many people who work in Parramatta live on the other side of the city. They cannot ride a bike to work and some of them are unable to access public transport. The city of Sydney should be no different. When the Premier outlined his plans for the establishment of this committee he referred to his election promise to make New South Wales number one again. He told Parliament that he was determined to make Sydney Australia's gateway to the world. He said to achieve this aim the city must be able to work for prospective employees.

Having been involved in traffic and transport management, I know the best results are achieved through negotiation. As far as the city of Sydney is concerned, its transport and traffic flow needs a good examination. The purpose of this bill is to give the State Government a say in how that can be achieved. The proposal is modelled on the successful Central Sydney Planning Committee. Under the provisions of the relevant Act that is a joint committee and its structure is similar to the committee structure proposed in this legislation. The Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee will coordinate the work of more than a dozen committees. Currently

these committees are represented by a combination of representatives of the council and the State Government. The central business district of this city deserves a first-rate and efficient road and transport system where the interests of workers and visitors are considered.

It is important to note at this time that the proposed legislation has the full support of the Sydney Business Chamber. The chamber claims this proposal is long overdue given the importance of the central business district to the economy of the entire State. It was interesting to note that when this proposal was reported in the newspapers last March it received overwhelming endorsement from the people. This Government has once again proved it listens to the concerns of all the people and is working to restore confidence to the business sector. This committee will bring for the first time traffic and transport decision-making under the one umbrella. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [4.16 p.m.], in reply: I will speak in reply on behalf of the Premier on the City of Sydney Amendment (Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012. I acknowledge the contributions of members who have spoken to it, including members representing the electorates of Sydney, Lakemba, Balmain, Vacluse, Drummoyne, Parramatta and Granville. The speakers in this debate obviously appreciate the importance of this legislation and have provided their insights, for which I thank them. The Premier referred to the importance of the Sydney central business district to the economic activity of the State and said that traffic and transport management is a vital component of the efficiency and competitiveness of the city.

Sydney's central business district, on anyone's reckoning, deserves a first-rate and properly functioning road traffic and transport system. We clearly need a mechanism that delivers first-rate outcomes in an environment where responsibility for the road, traffic and transport systems in the central business district is shared between the City of Sydney council and the New South Wales Government and its agencies. While there has been frequent, and often fruitful, collaboration at an operational level between the two levels of government, the Government considers there have been occasions, particularly around issues related to bike lanes, where there has been a lack of appropriate strategic coordination and oversight.

The Government's view is that the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee will, for the first time, bring all significant traffic and transport decision-making under the one umbrella. This committee will have the authority to ensure that significant decisions on road works or traffic control works in the central business district are made with proper consideration of the impact on the broader transport network for greater Sydney and the State. The committee, to be chaired by the Director General of Transport for NSW, in exercising its functions will consider the future economic welfare and the development of Sydney and the State. It also will deal with more specific considerations, such as maintaining access for freight to the central business district, as well as the needs of commuters, residents, pedestrians and visitors to the central business district.

The committee's strategic oversight and coordination of traffic and transport in the Sydney central business district will support Sydney's pivotal role as Australia's only global city and the gateway to the nation. The committee will ensure that both levels of government work together to deliver the best results for the State's economy and for all the people who use the city, whether they are residents, commuters, visitors or business owners. I note also that the City of Sydney and the State Government have done considerable work together, particularly on planning issues, in our first 14 months in government.

Ms Clover Moore: Thanks to you.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member. I acknowledge that this committee is intended to continue that work, and certainly it is imperative that the City of Sydney and the State Government have a good working relationship. From opposition I observed that one city in this country, the City of Brisbane, was doing extremely well with a Liberal Lord Mayor and a Labor Government. Politics should not be what drives decision-making for the City of Sydney; it should be about achieving the best outcome for residents, commuters, visitors or business owners. I indicate to the House that shortly we will move to the consideration in detail stage as the Government has had continuing discussions with the Lord Mayor and member for Sydney about some issues that the City of Sydney raised following the bill's introduction. The fact that the City of Sydney has had discussions with the Government reflects a relationship that is intent on delivering in the best interests of all those who are impacted by our decisions.

The City of Sydney raised a number of issues, as did the member in her capacity as Lord Mayor of Sydney. We worked through those issues. There has not been agreement on all matters and we acknowledge that some areas are worthy of amendment. The Government will move an amendment during the consideration stage. The member for Sydney will also move an amendment. I do not anticipate any opposition to those amendments. The Labor spokesman reserved the right to examine them but indicated that the Opposition is not disposed to oppose them. I hope that these initiatives will have a productive outcome.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Brad Hazzard.

Consideration in Detail

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [4.24 p.m.]: I move my amendment No. 1:

No. 1 Page 9, Schedule 1 [6], proposed section 51K (1). Insert at the end of line 20:

, or

- (g) in the nature of routine operational maintenance of infrastructure, including, but not limited to, maintenance of roads and road related areas, and the installation or maintenance of water or utility pipes, bus shelters, seating, lighting or street furniture.

The City of Sydney Amendment (Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012 in its current form does not allow for routine maintenance work that is necessary to manage the city effectively and efficiently without the approval of the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee. My amendment excludes such minor routine maintenance work, ensuring it can proceed without delay and without unnecessary red tape. The exclusion in my amendment will not apply to construction work such as the construction of separated cycleways. I commend the amendment to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [4.25 p.m.]: I note the amendment moved by the member for Sydney would amend new section 51K to exclude routine maintenance works from referral to the committee that this bill will establish. It has never been the intention of the Government that works that will have only a minor impact on roads, traffic and transport in the Sydney central business district will be considered by the committee. In the Government's view this amendment is not necessary. The bill already allows for the committee to decide which minor works are not required to be referred to it. Under new clause 51K (2) of the bill the committee will have the power to exclude works from the need for referral when those works will not have a significant impact on roads, traffic and transport.

As with so many bills before the House, there is a variety of views on interpretation of the provisions and there is a mutuality of view in regard to what the City of Sydney and the Government are trying to achieve. We did not intend for this high-level committee, chaired by the Director General of Transport, to usurp the city's role in regard to operational maintenance issues. Accordingly, the Government will accept the amendment of the member for Sydney as a clarification of the situation. The amendment will specifically exclude routine maintenance works from referral to the committee on the clear understanding and basis that the amendment will lead only to the non-referral of works that will have a minor impact on roads, traffic and transport in the Sydney central business district. I thank the City of Sydney for its involvement in deliberations on this issue.

Question—That amendment No. 1 of Ms Clover Moore be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment No. 1 of Ms Clover Moore agreed to.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [4.26 p.m.]: I move Government amendment No. 1:

No. 1 Page 15, schedule 1 [7], proposed schedule 2. Insert after line 9:

- (2) Meetings of CSTTC (other than meetings referred to in clause 15) are to be open to the public, except as provided by subclause (3).
- (3) If CSTTC is satisfied that it is not in the public interest for a meeting to be open to the public because of the confidential nature of any matter or topic to be included on the agenda for the meeting or for any other reason, it may direct as follows:
 - (a) that the part of the meeting that relates to that matter or topic be closed to the public,
 - (b) that only certain persons may be present during that part of the meeting.
- (4) CSTTC is to give reasonable notice of meetings that are required by this clause to be open to the public.

The bill as introduced provides for the committee to determine how its meetings will be conducted. Following further consideration of the matter and consultation with the City of Sydney the Government has decided to move an amendment to the bill to clarify that the default position is that meetings of the committee will be open to the public. Under this amendment the committee may close a meeting only when it is of the view that it is not in the public interest for that part of the meeting to be open to the public. For example, the committee may close a meeting if it is to consider a confidential matter. Having said that, since day one the Government at all levels has been committed to openness and transparency, and the default position is certainly the Government's preferred position. There is a mutuality of interest between the City of Sydney and the Government.

Ms CLOVER MOORE (Sydney) [4.28 p.m.]: In response to the Government amendment I point out that the Central Sydney Planning Committee is a successful public model and a positive partnership. It works well because it operates openly, transparently and with accountability. Meetings are open to the public and the Central Sydney Planning Committee can hold public hearings. Minutes are published and the conduct of the meetings and of members is governed by law. Public accountability is essential to good governance and it is in the public interest. Important decisions about the future of traffic and transport in the central business district should not be made behind closed doors. I welcome this amendment and the move to make meetings open to the public. I note that under this amendment the Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee will be able to exclude the public for any reason, which is not possible for the Central Sydney Planning Committee. The committee should establish a transparent code to indicate when the public can be excluded. The criteria in the Local Government Act apply commercial-in-confidence provisions in addition to a public interest test. I support the amendment.

Question—That Government amendment No. 1 be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Government amendment No. 1 agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council with a message seeking its concurrence in the bill.

CENTRAL COAST RADIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [4.31 p.m.]: This 10,000 signature petition was presented to the Parliament by the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast. Radiotherapy is a very important component of cancer treatment. To provide the best care for patients radiotherapy should be part of an integrated and comprehensive treatment regime provided by highly skilled, multi-disciplinary teams. In New South Wales radiotherapy services are provided by both the public and private sector, and each makes a valuable contribution to the expansion of the number of linear accelerators provided to respond to the growing demand for cancer treatment. The services provided by the Radiation Oncology Institute are acknowledged and appreciated by the Central Coast community.

Radiotherapy is one of the more complex treatments provided by the health sector and it is generally used in conjunction with surgery and chemotherapy. The Central Coast is an area of significant population growth and the number of clinical services must expand to respond to the consequent increasing demand for health services. The statewide planning process for radiotherapy, which guides the growth in services to 2016, identified the need for expanded radiotherapy services on the Central Coast. There is an opportunity for both public and private sector services to operate in a complementary way, given the growing demand for these services. Based on the estimated number of new cancer cases and clinical evidence that overall 52 per cent of cancer patients benefit from receiving radiotherapy, by 2016 the Central Coast will need four linear accelerators to respond to expected demand.

Two linear accelerators are available through the Radiation Oncology Institute, which is a private sector provider. NSW Health was successful in its funding application for a regional cancer centre at Gosford Hospital under the Commonwealth Government's Regional Cancer Centres initiative. The New South Wales Government is contributing \$10 million and the Commonwealth Government is contributing \$28.593 million in capital funding to that project. The project also includes additional medical oncology services at both the Gosford and Wyong hospitals and the State budget includes funds for staff services when the facilities are operational. Two more linear accelerators will be available when the Central Coast Regional Cancer Centre opens at Gosford Hospital in early 2013.

I had the pleasure of attending the sod-turning ceremony for the project in October 2011. Construction work on the buildings at Gosford and Wyong is now well advanced. Works required for the expansion of chemotherapy services at Wyong Hospital will be completed later this month. Construction of the Regional Cancer Centre at Gosford Hospital is expected to be completed at the end of 2012 and, after the commissioning of the linear accelerators, it is expected that radiotherapy services will be provided from the first half of 2013. The establishment of a cancer centre at Gosford Hospital is an important part of the ongoing development of a comprehensive, integrated cancer service in the district. It will increase local access to those services and reduce the need for patients to travel for some elements of their care. It is important for many clinical services, including cancer services, to continue to develop and grow on the Central Coast to provide for the increasing population.

The longstanding support of Cancer Voices NSW for the establishment of public sector services is acknowledged and appreciated. The organisation provides an independent voice for people affected by cancer in New South Wales and beyond. It has recently written to the Minister for Health reaffirming its strong support for a public sector service on the Central Coast. Pending the establishment of public sector radiotherapy services at Gosford Hospital, transport is provided free for Central Coast residents to access other services. I encourage local residents to talk with their referring doctor about the options that may be available to them if they are experiencing financial difficulties. Radiotherapy services are generally delivered on an outpatient basis; that is, the vast majority of radiotherapy treatment is delivered to patients who are not admitted to a hospital ward. In addition, most patients who receive radiotherapy have a referral to a radiation oncology specialist and are therefore covered by Medicare.

The Commonwealth Government is responsible for setting rebates for all Medicare eligible services and it has highlighted the availability of the Extended Medicare Safety Net. As a result of the 2012-13 Commonwealth budget there is an upper limit on the amount of benefit paid for some services. I am pleased to advise that radiation oncology will not be affected by those changes. The Commonwealth Government's Extended Medicare Safety Net covers a range of doctor visits and tests that are performed out of hospital. The safety net is designed to assist families and individuals with high out-of-pocket costs for these services. The Ministry of Health has asked radiation oncology treatment centres, including the Radiation Oncology Institute, to ensure that patients are aware of these schemes. The New South Wales Government has demonstrated its commitment to improving access to cancer services and we will continue to see growth in the provision of radiotherapy services over the next three years.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [4.36 p.m.]: In 1942 Winston Churchill said that as long as the job is done it does not matter much who gets the credit. That applies to all aspects of health care. For many years the Central Coast has had been underserved with regard to radiotherapy. It is very pleasing that the Gillard Government has contributed \$28.6 million and the New South Wales Government has contributed \$10 million to build a regional cancer centre that will include two linear accelerators and other cancer services at Gosford and Wyong. As the member for Gosford said, construction began in July 2011 and the project is expected to be completed by March 2013. This petition asks that the Ministry of Health partner immediately provide free public access to radiotherapy services. That is a laudable goal.

More people are surviving cancer because they are provided with better treatment. That has led to an increase in the incidence of cancer and an increase in the demand for radiotherapy services. Those services are extremely expensive and that is why they are provided primarily by the public health sector—the margins are too low for the private sector. However, as the member for Gosford said, the private and public sector can work together to provide radiotherapy services. Although the services provided at Gosford and Wyong will be funded by the Federal Government, they will be staffed and paid for by the New South Wales Government. Those services will be an enormous benefit to the people of the Central Coast and also to the people of northern Sydney and the Hunter who are on long waiting lists.

It is clear that a co-payment from the State Government to a practice is outside the Medicare agreement; to my knowledge, that has not been done and is not done anywhere in New South Wales. So that will not be a viable long-term solution. Patients' need of prompt radiotherapy treatment of their cancers will ensure that the institute, even with the increased capacity provided by the public sector, will have a viable future on the Central Coast, which has one of the more vigorous private health networks in New South Wales. The institute will continue to grow and thrive with the involvement of the public sector, and will continue to provide a valuable service. I am pleased that the service on the Central Coast will come on line next year, and I am confident that the institute will continue to grow and thrive and thereby provide the people of the Central Coast with choice about what treatments they get, and when they get those treatments.

Yesterday the member for Terrigal put out a press release announcing \$20.6 million to continue work at the Central Coast Regional Cancer Centre. The Federal Government did not get a mention in that press release. But, as I have said before and as Winston Churchill said, as long as the job is done, it does not matter much who gets the credit. The patients will benefit from this funding. As a politician who still sees patients—some pro bono one day a week—I applaud the fact that the institute continues to see patients pro bono one day a week. I very much look forward to the institute supporting patients who have difficulty paying for these services. I am pleased that, as I give one day of my week to see patients without cost, the institute will continue to do likewise. I look forward to a continuation of that service.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [4.41 p.m.]: I too had the pleasure of attending the sod-turning for the cancer centre on the Central Coast in October last year, and I appreciate the support for the expansion of radiotherapy services. The provision of many clinical services benefits from strong public and private sectors operating in a complementary way. This is particularly so for cancer services when multidisciplinary care is so important in the diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care and support for patients and their families. Radiotherapy services need to expand on the Central Coast to meet the needs of a growing and ageing population. Progressing the Regional Cancer Centre at Gosford and expanding chemotherapy services at both Wyong and Gosford are a priority. Works required for the expansion of chemotherapy services at Wyong Hospital will be completed in June 2012. The construction of the Regional Cancer Centre at Gosford Hospital is expected to be completed at the end of 2012.

After the installation and commissioning of linear accelerators, provision of radiotherapy is expected to commence in the first half of 2013. Out-of-pocket costs arise for patients when services are charged above the Medicare schedule fee. While acknowledging the request for "free" public treatment, the Government would need to provide additional funding to the private sector to meet these additional costs. I am advised that a proposal of this type has been considered previously by government. The focus of this Government is providing local residents with comprehensive cancer services and also the choice of providers. The establishment of a comprehensive cancer centre at Gosford Hospital is an important part of the ongoing expansion of more complex clinical services at the hospital, thereby increasing local access and reducing the need for patients to travel for most types of cancer care.

It is important for many clinical services, including those for cancer, to continue to develop and grow on the Central Coast to provide for the growing community. I am very much aware of the financial difficulties that patients often face when having treatments for diseases such as cancer. I encourage local residents to talk with their referring doctor about what options may be available to them if they are experiencing financial difficulties. Once the Extended Medicare Safety Net threshold is reached patients are required to pay only 20 per cent of the out-of-pocket costs in that calendar year. It is important that patients are made aware of these entitlements to minimise out-of-pocket costs. The out-of-pocket costs occur not only for radiotherapy but also for a range of other clinical services provided out of hospital, such as general practice and specialist consultations, ultrasounds, blood tests, CT scans and X-ray tests. I note the presence in the Chamber of the Minister for the Central Coast. I thank the Minister for bringing this petition to the House.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [4.44 p.m.]: I acknowledge the very hardworking people from the Central Coast who have put this petition together and come into to Parliament this afternoon. I pay tribute to each and every one of you and thank you for your efforts. This is an important matter for the Central Coast. I had the honour to be with the Prime Minister at the concrete pour a couple of months ago. I thank the Prime Minister both for her involvement and for the Federal contribution of some \$28 million. This is a great example of Federal-State cooperation. The Prime Minister was gracious on the occasion, and I thank her for her interest.

As the member for The Entrance said, and as I am sure the member for Macquarie Fields also said, the Central Coast has had for many years a higher than average ageing population. This service has been sought for a long time. I recall, when Morris Iemma was Minister for Health, debating in this House the provision of this service on the Central Coast. But this has come about because of the efforts of many people. I will not name them now, but it comes as a result of enormous efforts by the community and the medical profession, with the assistance of members of Parliament, State and Federal. The Federal and State members have worked hard for this. I acknowledge the three State members who have worked with me on this: the member for Gosford, the member for The Entrance, and the member for Wyong.

I acknowledge the Federal member for Robertson, who was with me and the Prime Minister at the concrete pour. The Minister for Health was unable to be there on that day, and I had the honour to represent the Minister. This is one of those occasions on which the community has come together, where all sides of politics have come together, and we now have underway a project that is much needed on the Central Coast. I will make sure that the *Hansard* record of this discussion goes to Morris Iemma, who as Minister for Health fought very hard to get this facility. I acknowledge the efforts of Mr Iemma and subsequent Ministers for Health, and the current Minister for Health especially. We on the Central Coast are delighted that this facility is proceeding. It will do wonderful work for the community of the Central Coast.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFORD CANLEY VALE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.47 p.m.]: I acknowledge the AFFORD Canley Vale community, which services south-west Sydney. AFFORD is the Australian Foundation for Disability, which was established in 1952. On Friday 1 June 2012 I had the pleasure to join in with AFFORD clients to fundraise for the Cancer Council's Biggest Morning Tea. As a not-for-profit organisation, AFFORD is dedicated to helping people with additional needs. AFFORD possesses a person-centred approach in partnership with families and carers. This enables more than 1,400 people to lead richer, more rewarding lives. AFFORD provides day programs, skills development, transition to work training, supported and open employment, and accommodation for its clients. AFFORD also provides support and respite for carers. Generally AFFORD offers a wide range of services to help people with a disability. An important observation of my time at AFFORD is the welcoming environment that exists.

It was nice to see big smiles and much laughter from the AFFORD clients during the morning tea. Considering it was the first day of winter, the morning was warm and the morning tea was even better. AFFORD clients are the most beautiful people anyone could possibly meet. The heartfelt concern that the clients have for those around them shows that love and care for others still exists in our community. The Canley Vale Australian Foundation for Disability [AFFORD] clients saw it as their responsibility to help people suffering with cancer. In the past month members have given many examples of recent events that have taken place in support of the Cancer Council's Biggest Morning Tea. Although the foundation's clients are facing their own battles, they supported those suffering cancer by organising a Biggest Morning Tea. AFFORD clients come from humble backgrounds; however, this did not deter them from donating towards the morning tea. They provided fruit and cakes as well as monetary donations and \$450 was raised.

The clients of the foundation have a real sense of ownership of their surroundings. This was demonstrated on the tour that I enjoyed in the fine company of the clients, led by Brionie Lawson. Brionie is a delightful client. She pointed out what the AFFORD community had achieved in landscaping the property. Recent funding ensured the construction of a stencilcrete path which provides easy wheelchair access for clients. To complement the new path the clients planted shrubs and other plants. Brionie spoke with pride of the efforts

of the clients in landscaping and beautifying the area. The clients now have plans to build a sustainable vegetable garden in the corner of the property where a mountain of wild grass grows. I look forward to seeing that project when it is completed. Brionie showed me the outdoor facilities but I was also able to see the indoor sensory rooms where a high level of support is provided to clients.

Whether inside the facility or outside, it was evident that the community believes in what AFFORD is doing to assist adults with disabilities. I spoke to parents of adults with disabilities who have themselves become carers and involved in the many programs provided. Parents recounted many of the things their children had achieved since becoming associated with AFFORD. On behalf of the Fairfield electorate I pay tribute to the clients, carers and staff who make AFFORD Canley Vale a wonderful place. I also acknowledge the work of the Coordinator, Linda Warren; the Chief Executive Officer, Tim Walton; the Manager of Day Programs Met. South, Rachel Bennewitz; and the Team Leader of Day Programs, Josiane Reubens. I congratulate AFFORD Canley Vale for hosting its successful Biggest Morning Tea.

COFFS HARBOUR MARINE RESCUE

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [4.52 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of Marine Rescue NSW in Coffs Harbour, ably led by Graeme King, with his great crew of volunteers. These people volunteer 24-hours-a day, seven-days-a week, to guide vessels along the North Coast of New South Wales and into the port of Coffs Harbour. The group of volunteers at Coffs Harbour has been serving the community for 25 to 30 years. Its headquarters was previously located at the yacht club in the Coffs Harbour jetty area but the opportunity for visual contact with vessels coming in from north and south was limited. Over the years I lobbied on behalf of the group, together with the council and other community members. For a number of years the group has been relocated to Beacon Hill. However, Beacon Hill is now heavily covered in vegetation. I have photographs that show that in 1977 the area had a water tank and no vegetation. In those days it was known as Apex Park and, as a member of Apex, I used to assist in maintaining the park. After the water tower was dismantled Apex requested that the area be returned to parkland. The Apex club erected barbecue shelters and picnic tables there.

Marine Rescue NSW needed a new home and it was located on Beacon Hill. There is a car park there which is also used by visitors. If the vegetation were removed there would be fantastic views up and down the coast. The vegetation is about 30 years old. Unfortunately, a number of people in the community have insisted that this is a habitat for vulnerable species, but it is not. I am the first to acknowledge that there are native species that inhabit the area but the area must be cleared of vegetation so that Marine Rescue NSW can see vessels coming into the harbour. Each year Coffs Harbour hosts the Pittwater to Coffs Harbour yacht race. Many of the yachts that have competed in the Sydney to Hobart yacht race return to Sydney to compete in the Pittwater to Coffs Harbour yacht race. At that time of the year there are dangerous seas and yachts entering Coffs Harbour can have navigational difficulties in relation to Pig Island and sand depths. They rely on Marine Rescue NSW to guide them and their crews in safely.

After many years of procrastination the Coffs Harbour council has been unable to resolve the vegetation difficulties at Beacon Hill. The difficulties arise because of the requirements of the local environmental plan. Beacon Hill adjoins the Coffs Harbour airport and the Civil Aviation Safety Authority had difficulties with the obstacle limitation surface in relation to the landing and taking off of aircraft. Ms Renata Brooks, Deputy Director General of the Department of Catchments and Lands, has resolved that issue and I thank her for that. What is now needed is for the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Lands, together with Ms Renata Brooks and the local people, to inspect Beacon Hill and have a look at the difficulties that the vegetation there is creating for Marine Rescue NSW. This is an organisation manned by volunteers in their own time 24-hours-a-day. They are the ones who assist boats to come into the harbour. I was speaking to John Moran, a volunteer at Coffs Harbour, who was telling me that he was at the jetty area on the northern breakwater when he noticed a yacht in difficulty and about to go aground.

John Moran rang Graeme King, who happened to be on duty at the Marine Rescue station, who advised him that the yacht had overshot the entrance to Coffs Harbour. One of the reasons for that was that Marine Rescue could not see to the south. The yacht had gone behind Mutton Bird Island and headed down the north wall. However, again Marine Rescue could not see where the yacht was. If it were not for the fact that John Moran was down there enjoying the north wall and had phoned Graeme King it is highly likely that the yacht that was seeking shelter at Coffs Harbour would have either run aground or run into the north wall. Graeme King was able to give the yacht instructions to do a 180 degree turn and it successfully navigated into the harbour. Permission should be granted to prune the vegetation. We are not talking about denuding the area but

giving a view to the marine rescue organisation. I commend the volunteers who do such a fantastic job and ask the Government to assist them in doing that job so that they can continue to provide the level of maritime safety which they have provided for so many years.

DARKINJUNG LOCAL ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [4.56 p.m.]: Mr Acting-Speaker, I thank you for your acknowledgement in the public gallery of Mr Alan Vandenburg and Mr David Pross, two very fine members of the Central Coast community. In 2008 I spoke in this House in defence of Mr Alan Vandenburg and Mr David Pross, former members of the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Council. Today I again speak in an effort to restore the reputations of those two gentlemen, both of who are in the gallery today and both of who were the victims of the former Labor member for Swansea, Milton Orkopoulos. On 19 October 2006 the former Minister for Aboriginal Affairs raised vexatious and unsubstantiated claims against Mr Vandenburg and Mr Pross, labelling them "failed directors" and "thieves". In response to a question without notice, Mr Orkopoulos—who was later convicted of serious criminal offences—alleged misappropriation of Darkinjung funds. This statement—made under parliamentary privilege—was false.

For the disgraced former Minister to have made such unsubstantiated claims against two people who did not have the right of reply is despicable. Both Mr Vandenburg and Mr Pross are well-known and well-respected citizens of the Central Coast who have each given a lifetime of commitment to Aboriginal welfare and advancement in New South Wales. They have both worked tirelessly to advance the cause of the Aboriginal community. There was never any evidence of impropriety against Mr Vandenburg and Mr Pross, nor was there any evidence of their misappropriating a single cent of Darkinjung money. Indeed, the Supreme Court subsequently ruled that there had been no intent by the trust to deceive or mislead the members of Darkinjung, nor was there any misappropriation of funds or funds missing. Instead of carrying out his ministerial responsibilities and promoting Aboriginal self-development, Mr Orkopoulos took \$35 million of Darkinjung money and shut the council down.

One of his last ministerial decisions was to sign, just before midnight, an instrument to appoint a handpicked administrator for the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council. That handpicked administrator—Mr Peter Hillig of Smith and Hancock—happened to be a personal friend of Mr Orkopoulos. Mr Hillig went on to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars of the Darkinjung people's money in court cases chasing the directors of the trust, despite no findings by the court of any wrongdoing or guilt. Plans by the council to use its own money—\$42 million raised from the sale of a piece of valuable land in The Entrance—to create a better life for its community by starting commercial business enterprises were destroyed.

The then directors of the Darkinjung Trust—Mr Alan Vandenburg, Mr David Pross, Mr Greg Flanders, Mr Michael Jones, Mr Jeffery Bradford, Mr George Watts, Ms Christine Hammond and Mr Damien Aden—and the group's solicitor, Mr Ian Cunliff, had their reputations trashed at the hands of the convicted sexual predator Milton Orkopoulos. I have the honour to know Mr Vandenburg and Mr Pross personally. They are people of great commitment, great passion and have given great service both to the Central Coast community and to the Aboriginal community. I am proud to stand here today and speak in support of them. I have had the honour to raise these matters with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the member for Ryde, and the Minister will now reply.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [5.01 p.m.]: I thank the member for Terrigal for his comments and I acknowledge the presence of his guests in the gallery today. The member for Terrigal is a long-term and passionate advocate for justice, and his constituents are well served by his advocacy. This is a case that he has held particularly close to his heart for a long time. He advocates strongly on behalf of the reputations and the dignity of the proud Aboriginal people of the Central Coast. It is important that the member's comments help to provide those proud Aboriginal people with some sense of closure and some sense of hope for the future.

I note advice that the contemporary Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, including through the efforts of the local Aboriginal people, is considered one of the better performing land councils in New South Wales. It is my sincere hope that in addition to recognition of the painful past, dialogue and reconciliation are part of the healing in the future. That future holds out an opportunity for the Darkinjung community, with the participation of Mr Pross and Mr Vandenburg, to fully claim the potential the Land Rights Act provides Aboriginal people of this State.

TRIBUTE TO MATTHEW HINGERTY

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [5.02 p.m.]: I am honoured to have the opportunity to say a few words about Mr Matthew Hingerty, who joined me as chief of staff following the election victory in March 2011. Prior to joining my staff Matt worked in the tourism advisory industry and his experience in that field has been a boon to me, particularly as my portfolios include Tourism and Major Events. Matt showed his mettle and diligence with his vital input into the creation of Destination NSW, which brought Events NSW and Tourism NSW under one umbrella. That was an extremely important plank in the tourism and major events areas and required a great deal of planning, diplomacy and, eventually, legislation. Matt's work in the establishment of Destination NSW, which has already shown its efficacy, was invaluable. Matt also played a major role in the tourism and major events budget. Much of the credit for the top-up of the budget for Destination NSW—\$125 million a year for the next four years, or an extra \$167 million over four years to make up for a projected shortfall—can go to Matt Hingerty.

Matt also played an important role in the establishment of the Visitor Economy Taskforce—a group of prominent people and experts tasked with providing the best advice on how to meet the Government's goal of doubling tourism expenditure by 2020. Matt is someone who not only understands the tourism industry but the importance of it to the economy. He also had a hand in assisting me in the passing of the three-strikes legislation, which imposes severe sanctions on licensed venues where licensing laws are flouted or violent incidents are recorded. There are many aspects of his work that Matt Hingerty can be very proud of but I have selected those items as perhaps the most prominent. It is with sadness that he leaves, as his work and advice were invaluable to me. Matt lives with his wife and four young children on the Central Coast. He has told me that he needs to attend to a serious family health issue and pay more attention to his young family—something his job certainly does not allow when he lives on the Central Coast. I wish Matt all the very best in his personal and future professional life. He leaves with best wishes and admiration from me and the rest of my staff.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I also acknowledge Mr Matt Hingerty, who is in the advisers gallery, and add my sincere best wishes to Matthew as he starts the next chapter of his life.

COMPANION ANIMALS TASKFORCE

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.06 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Chair of the Companion Animals Taskforce will be visiting the great city of Orange tomorrow. The number of dogs and cats euthanased across New South Wales is unacceptably high. The Companion Animals Taskforce has been given the job of looking into this issue and finding some solutions to euthanasia rates and rehoming options for surrendered or abandoned companion animals; the breeding of companion animals, including the practices of puppy farms; the sale of companion animals; the microchipping and desexing of companion animals; current education programs on responsible pet ownership; and any other issues of high priority for the task force.

In the past five years 150,000 dogs and cats have been euthanased in New South Wales pounds—32,000 in the past year. In 2005-06 in western New South Wales, of which Orange is a part, 3,383 dogs arrived at pounds, of which 21 per cent were released to owners and 68 per cent were euthanased. This issue is often overlooked. The Companion Animals Taskforce is shining a light on the issue and is attempting to find some seriously needed solutions. Most people would agree that the rate of euthanasia for dogs and cats across the State is unacceptably high. I note that the member for Charlestown will be in Orange tomorrow and he will be having discussions with members of local councils and government agencies to discuss the issue with respect to companion animals out in the Central West.

The Companion Animals Taskforce has not been specifically given a brief to deal with the issue of dangerous dogs, although that may be an issue that the task force will address towards the end of the year. I think it was deemed to be such a large topic in itself that it needed some separate consideration. The issue of companion animals is not just confined to high impounding and euthanasia rates in the Orange electorate. I note that recently the *Central Western Daily* reported that the latest quarterly report on dog attacks for the three months to 31 December last year showed two serious dog attacks from 18 dog attacks during that period and that the number of dog attacks in Orange in the three months was 16 more than the number reported for Bathurst for the same period despite both cities having a similar number of dogs. The *Central Western Daily* also highlighted the fact that nine people were attacked by dogs in Orange between 1 October and 31 December last year, with 21 animals also attacked.

The issue of dangerous dogs was highlighted in a recent article in the *Central Western Daily* about a very savage attack by two American bulldogs on a young woman named Rachel Hepworth. She is still recovering from the ordeal. This issue is of real concern in western New South Wales, particularly in my electorate. As I said, it is hoped that the task force will look at it before the end of the year. I am sure that most people in western New South Wales would agree that the euthanasia rates are unacceptably high. From the figures it is evident that microchipping has had some effect but many dogs still need to be done. I congratulate the Companions Animal Taskforce on visiting my electorate, such a wonderful part of New South Wales, to inquire into this important topical issue. I have no doubt that tomorrow's discussions will be very fruitful.

ALBURY ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.11 p.m.]: On a day when I read a headline in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that said, "Figures show the economy is limping", I also read about infrastructure projects and economic activity underway or planned in my border community of Albury-Wodonga approaching a remarkable half a billion dollars. Our national economy is a very mixed bag, with strong sectors and many small businesses doing it tough—this is true also in and around Albury. However, through the gloom brought down upon us daily with news of financial disasters overtaking whole nations overseas, or our own local troubles, it is refreshing also to note that not just the mining companies are moving ahead. Briefly, here is the good news from Albury and its region.

The Zauner Group is erecting a \$10 million tower building to house its construction headquarters and a new home for the Lavington Library. Albury Galvanizing is upgrading its factory at Jindera at a cost of \$3.6 million thanks to rising demand for its products. Baker Motors is constructing a new \$5 million showroom, which will provide the best of facilities. This is an incredible commitment to doing good business in the area and shows a belief in the ongoing economic stability of the region. Albury is home to one of the divisions of the Australian Taxation Office, which after many years on the border is finally moving into its own purpose-built premises. A seven-storey tower is being developed at a cost of \$34 million and is expected to open in the last quarter of this year. Charles Sturt University continues its expansion to the north of Albury, spending \$5 million on a wellness and allied health centre for its Thurgoona campus. Also to the north, work continues on the Holbrook bypass on the Hume Freeway.

This \$247 million project provides substantial employment as well as putting significant cash through the Albury economy. The bypass is due for completion by June next year. The Federally funded Regional Cancer Centre will soon be underway. This \$65 million project will ensure that Albury remains the leading destination for the best healthcare in the nation. Alongside the Regional Cancer Centre is a construction site for the Albury-Wodonga Carer Accommodation Centre. This privately managed centre will provide accommodation for patients undergoing long periods of treatment at the adjacent hospital. Fundraising continues, with much of the money for the project coming from the local community—a remarkable effort. I am proud to say that, when asked, this Government was quick to hand over the sum of \$750,000 to assist.

Apartment living is starting to appear in new forms in Albury, with The Botanical—a \$10 million residential and commercial tower opposite Albury's historic Botanical Gardens—under construction and slated for completion in September-October. There will be five floors of residential apartments, plus offices, restaurants and more. From the upper levels residents will enjoy views over the Murray River and up to the snow-capped peaks of the Victorian Alps. In June the Federal Government announced it will provide \$3.5 million towards the \$10.5 million art gallery extension planned by Albury City Council. This project will enable us to hold major exhibitions and expand our tourism reach as another driver of local economic growth. Millions more will be spent in Albury, as outlined in the State budget this week: work will begin on our long-awaited replacement ambulance station, new accommodation for people with disabilities and social housing upgrades. This will maintain the flow of employment opportunities in the construction trades in particular. While these are large-scale projects, there is also vitality in the small business sector.

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

Mr GREG APLIN: A number of small businesses have closed, some through no fault of their own but as part of national chains which have gone into administration or liquidation. It is sad and difficult for all concerned. Nevertheless, we are seeing other businesses spread their wings and expand. For example, WAW Credit Union is moving to larger, more prominent premises at a major intersection. A historic bank building is being completely renovated and modernised to house this finance business. That is a sign of confidence. The Early Bird Cafe, a few doors down from my electorate office, has opened a second cafe across town called East

Side Story, in a residential area towards the east of the city. I wish it all the best: it deserves its success. Cafe 15 had to move out of a mall when its lease was not renewed: it is now opening its third location. I see some cafes close but others often expand.

As difficult as the times are, there are still opportunities. I want to send out the clear and unmistakable message that the micro-economy of Albury presents a number of key advantages to those seeking the benefits of regional life without finding themselves stuck in an economic backwater or retirement enclave. Indeed, some businesses report that the position of Albury as a regional centre of substance, which draws upon customers from surrounding towns, helps to provide a more stable cash flow. This acts as a buffer against the rapid ups and downs that bring chaos to the national economy. So come and start your dream business in Albury today.

MAITLAND CANCER APPEAL COMMITTEE

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [5.15 p.m.]: Tonight I draw to the attention of the House a dedicated group of volunteers in Maitland whose commitment to its local community can only be described as awe-inspiring. I speak of the Maitland Cancer Appeal Committee, which celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of its formation this year. The committee, which comprises a volunteer group, originally came together in 1982 with the aim of establishing an oncology unit in the Hunter Valley, which was subsequently established at the Mater Hospital, Waratah, and to which most public oncology patients in the Hunter go. Alice Bennis was one of the founding members and to this day she remains active in the organisation. Mrs Bennis lost her daughter, Narelle, aged 15, to leukaemia. Tragically, it was not the first time that cancer had touched her family; her mother and brother also succumbed to the disease. Alice recruited her friends Lesley Flannery and Ingrid Heyman to the committee and with the assistance of a dedicated band of volunteers they set off on a mission that has produced extraordinary outcomes over the past three decades.

Many long-time residents in the Maitland community well know the name Maitland Cancer Appeal Committee as well as the names of its dedicated members. Indeed, a large number of people in the community have generously donated to the committee over the past 30 years. The committee's most tangible presence in our community is its craft, second-hand clothing and bric-a-brac shop, which is located in East Mall at the Rutherford Shopping Centre. Whilst the committee owns the building, it is keen to point out that it belongs just as much to the broader Maitland community as it does to the committee. These premises also serve the important purpose of housing the committee's free home laundry linen service, which was established in September 1995 to assist palliative care patients.

When committee secretary Lesley Flannery wrote to me earlier this year she told me that the volunteers work for the "care, comfort and treatment of cancer patients". She told me also that "the Committee realises that taking care of such a basic need and relieving the family of such a mundane task gives the carers more quality time with their loved ones". Indeed, that is the mantra that drives those who generously run the linen service, which strives to ease the burden on families who suffer the trials and tribulations of caring for terminally-ill loved ones at home. While patients require a referral from a palliative care nurse or a doctor, the committee then steps in to assist with sheets, pillowcases and mattress protectors. Volunteers even drive the committee's dedicated van to deliver clean linen and pick up the washing on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Beyond providing this wonderful service, the Maitland Cancer Appeal Committee is a fervent supporter of cancer research, and donates its fundraising proceeds to projects within the Hunter Valley area.

However, before I talk about its fundraising feats I point out to members that the work undertaken by this group, selflessly and resolutely, is done out of the generosity of volunteers and the donations of the local community. What is more, its membership totals approximately 25, of which 15 are active members, and they are mostly pensioners. Over the past five years the Maitland Cancer Appeal Committee has raised a remarkable \$800,000, including a target of \$300,000 to mark its thirtieth anniversary year. Cheques for \$100,000 have been presented to three Hunter medical researchers during the committee's celebration of its 30-year milestone: Professor Jim Denham for prostate research, Professor Peter Hersey for melanoma research, and Professor Phil Rowlings for his research into leukaemia. These donations are in addition to those for myriad other cancer research programs given through the committee's efforts, including research into breast, bowel and lung cancer, and brain tumours.

Among the biggest donations is over \$100,000 for the day oncology ward at the John Hunter Children's Hospital in Newcastle. Indeed, the committee is proud that its donations are directed to public hospitals. Specifically, Maitland, Kurri Kurri and Mater hospitals have been the privileged recipients of the committee's

fundraising dollars. When Alice Bennis spoke with the *Newcastle Herald* about the thirtieth anniversary she said that the committee was very proud of what it has achieved, especially after having been told that it would never make it. Alice, to you and your volunteers, on behalf of the people of Maitland and those who gather in this place, I express my heartfelt thanks. Thank you for your perseverance and undying commitment to those in your local community who are most in need. Thank you for serving the sick and their families. Lastly, thank you for helping medical researchers try to find the answers. We all hope that they are closer now than they were when the committee began its quest 30 years ago.

SAMOA INDEPENDENCE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.20 p.m.]: On Friday 1 June I attended a flag raising ceremony in my electorate to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Samoan independence. The function was held at the Michael Wenden Leisure Centre in Miller and was organised by the Samoan Council of Sydney. It was part of a number of activities to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Samoan independence. These activities included an independence ball for 250 people on Saturday 2 June, and other community and sporting events that included a sevens rugby competition on 4 June. There was also a combined church service on Sunday 3 June. All the events were organised by the Samoan council. At the flag raising ceremony there was considerable discussion concerning Samoans in Sydney honouring their forefathers' fight for Samoan freedom.

The Samoan Council of Sydney was formed in 2007. It has an active membership and office bearers. My main contact with the council has been through its legal adviser, Sonny Wilson. The vision of the council is to support and provide appropriate services that will enhance and improve the quality of life for its members and the Samoan community in the Sydney region. The Samoan community adds positively to the wonderfully diverse cultural background of Liverpool and south-west Sydney. Samoa is a group of islands in the South Pacific situated about halfway between Hawaii and New Zealand. Its land area is about 2,860 square kilometres. From the mid 1770s trading ships called regularly at the islands that are now called Independent Samoa and American Samoa. The British Empire also arrived and, commendably, met stout resistance. Missionaries began arriving in the early nineteenth century.

Samoa was the subject of nineteenth century imperialist attention from the United States of America, Britain and Germany. Control was eventually split between Germany and the United States of America after the tripartite convention of 1899. The First World War saw Germany replaced by New Zealand. A radio station in Western Samoa was captured at the request of the British. An Indigenous Samoan movement against the foreign rule of Germany changed its focus thus to New Zealand, and agitation for independence continued. This included peaceful demonstrators being shot in 1929. In 1961 a proposal was put before the United Nations. Independence was achieved in 1962 and the country was known as Western Samoa. In the 1990s the name of the country was changed to the Independent State of Samoa. The Samoans were the first Polynesian people to reclaim their independence in the twentieth century. In 2002 the Prime Minister of New Zealand apologised for some of the incidents that accompanied colonial control, including the shootings of 1929.

I had the pleasure of being invited to address the gathering at the flag raising ceremony. I was able to thank the organisers for the invitation to attend. I also made the point that they were a good example of the great contemporary Australian story, that is, the story of people who are born somewhere else but who choose to live the rest of their lives in this country. All of us except those who have Indigenous heritage have arrived here in the past couple of hundreds of years. That is a powerful reminder that all of us have an equal stance in Australia and that there is real strength in our multiculturalism. If Australia is as good a place to live as most of us think, that must inevitably be the result of wave after wave of migration such as that undertaken by the Samoans. In that sense what they are celebrating is a traditional Australian story. I commend the organisers of the event. I thank them for the invitation to participate and I look forward to working with them again in the future.

WESTERN SUBURBS DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [5.24 p.m.]: I have noticed that a tradition seems to be forming in this House of bragging about something in one's electorate.

Mr Ray Williams: No.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: I am sorry, but I have seen it happening. This afternoon I am going to brag about a club in my electorate and issue a challenge to a number of people from my side of politics including the Premier, the Treasurer, and members representing the electorates of Newcastle, Charlestown and

Penrith. Up until now I have kept silent about a treasure in the Strathfield electorate but I can remain silent no longer. It may seem strange that an Italian would develop affection for a cricket club as Italians are not renowned cricket players, but as an Italian I admire longevity and tradition.

The Western Suburbs District Cricket Club, which has 117 years of history and tradition, has now attracted my attention and my affection after I attended a presentation night to celebrate its 117th year of cricket. Many people would not know that the Western Suburbs Cricket Club is the home of current Australian cricket captain Michael Clarke. Michael Clarke attended on the night and I thought I would be a bit cheeky and give him some words of advice since he has recently been married. Having been married 32 years, I thought I would be in a position to give him some advice on the subject. I said two things to him.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Strathfield will not mislead the House.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: I promise this is true. I said to him, "Michael, you have to love them to death." He looked at me and said, "Yes." I said, "Secondly, you have to do as you are told." I am not sure whether it is appropriate for me to tell the House how he responded but, to hell with it, I will do so. He said, "I have been married a couple of weeks and I know that already." I thought I was on a winner. I went back to my seat and told my wife what I had just done. She looked at me in the way in which my wife normally does. The member for Hawkesbury would know what happens.

Mr Ray Williams: She doesn't look at me.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: She does not look at the member for Hawkesbury in that way. My wife said, "What advice did you give Michael Clarke?" I told her what I had said. She looked at me and said that I should listen to my own advice. I kept quiet for the rest of the night. Let me give members a brief history of this wonderful club. The Western Suburbs District Cricket Club has had the honour of producing three Australian captains, dating back to Warren Bardsley in 1926. Warren played grade cricket from 1898 to 1933. He played 291 innings, scoring 12,116 runs. That is the third highest number of runs in grade cricket today. The club also produced Bob Simpson, OBE, who played between 1963 and 1978. And of course today it has Michael Clarke. I challenge the Premier and all other members to look at their electorates and to tell me whether they have a cricket club that has produced three Australian cricket captains. I say to the member for Newcastle that I think it is worth bragging about.

Mr Tim Owen: It definitely is.

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: The highlight of the evening was seeing young men and women win awards for their outstanding contributions to the local community. What touched me was the genuine affection between the elders of the club—those who have been around for two, three, or four decades—who were mentoring a new generation of cricket players. It struck me that the elders of the club felt they had an obligation to provide leadership for the young talent. The respect that the young players have for those who for decades have proven themselves in the history of the club did not escape my attention. The highlight on the night was when Alan Davidson, who played 44 test matches, scoring 1,328 runs, with a batting average of 24.59, spoke about leadership in the game and in the community.

Something he said drew applause and laughter in equal measure. He said, "Being Australian cricket captain is the highest office in the land." Then he reflected on what he had said and continued, "No, that can't be right. The Prime Minister's office has got to be higher." He again reflected on what he said and continued, "No, I think the cricket captain is the highest office in the land because at least he is honest." I acknowledge the president of the club, John Hardgrove, the secretary, Wendy Stead, and the treasurer, Ian Willis. I extend my thanks to the sponsors of the evening, the Wests Ashfield Leagues Club, Mannatech, Triforce Sports and Activate Cricket Centre. The Western Suburbs District Cricket Club will go from strength to strength. I commend its members for their contribution to the community by developing our youth.

HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.29 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak about some of the wonderful events that have occurred in the electorate of Hawkesbury over the past month. The events commenced on Saturday 5 May when I was invited to the annual general meeting of the Mountain Lagoon Rural Fire Service. In attendance were my good friend Alan McCartney, who has been a member of that

organisation for many years, and the many members who belong to this progressive bushfire brigade, which continues to embrace new educational skills and technology in order to protect our community in times of bushfire. On Wednesday 7 May I attended the Kellyville Rotary Pride of Workmanship and community service awards presentation. Penny Hill, president of Kellyville Rotary, ran an excellent evening. The Pride of Workmanship award recipients were Lauren Asmussen from Interaction Disability Service, John Doraisamy from Chrometech Bronzing Studio and Hannah Argent of Taylored Physiotherapy.

The Community Service award recipients were Leanne Haslam and Gabie Thompson from the 1st Kellyville Scout Group—they are doing a wonderful job on behalf of scouts in the Kellyville area—and Irene Morrison from Red Cross. On Saturday 12 May I attended Pink Day, which was held by the Rouse Hill Rhinos in Kellyville at Wrights Road Reserve. This set the scene for many other events to raise money for cancer research throughout the month. On Wednesday 15 May Dural Rotary, of which I am an honorary member, invited me to attend its changeover meeting. I spent the evening with the President, Allan Forno, Paul Pixton and all the other wonderful members of Dural Rotary. The Pride of Workmanship awards on that night were awarded to Dr Phillip Myers, Mary Caccamo and Rob Pirina, my great mate from Glenorie bakery. Community Service awards went to Emma Chalk and Halina Thompson, and the Youth Award went to Rashmi Chary. The Apprentice Award for the year was awarded to none other than Keith Calver, an apprentice diesel motor mechanic at my former place of employment, Hillsbus at Dural.

The Ben Swane Award was presented to Paul Rapp, who received the award not only for his commitment to business but also for community service in our area. On Monday 21 May I was invited by the president of the Dural Public School parents and citizens association to attend an evening presentation where the regional manager and former principal of Rouse Hill Primary School, my good friend Jason Miezes, gave an overview of the new opportunities that we have created on behalf of education throughout New South Wales. The new opportunities being created in that school on behalf of special needs children were warmly received by all the association's members and others who attended on that evening. On Saturday 26 May I attended the Hawkesbury Relay for Life, another wonderful institution raising vital funds for cancer research. I attended that function with my colleagues the member for Londonderry and the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. I congratulate all those who work tirelessly on behalf of cancer research.

On Sunday 27 May I attended the 150th anniversary of the historic Scots Uniting Church at Pitt Town, along with Reverend Helenna Anderson, Ted Brill and all the wonderful volunteers who work so hard to keep the church and facilities in pristine condition. We had a lovely morning tea following the service. On Wednesday 30 May the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women held the Women of the Year awards in Parliament House. One of my constituents, the lovely Yvonne Kean, was recognised as the People's Choice Community Hero for her work with Hear the Children in Kellyville, an early intervention centre for babies and children with hearing loss. On Sunday 3 June we headed up the mountains to Bilpin for the famous apple pie bake-off and back-to-back wool challenge, where some of the world's best apple pies are baked and then on sold to raise money for cancer research. There is no end to the work being done in my area to raise money for cancer research. I acknowledge the work that Dawn Dunlop does in that area.

On Saturday, 9 June, I attended the naming of Russell Reserve at Rouse Hill. The reserve has been named to honour two brave brothers, Private Arthur Russell and Sergeant William Russell, who lost their lives in World War I. The Russell brothers previously lived in Kellyville. I acknowledge the great work of Mayor Greg Burnett and the contributions of Castle Hill RSL sub-branch members Jeff Lowe, Ron Smith, Mike Lee and David Cronan to organise for this reserve named in honour of the Russell brothers. On Wednesday 6 June I was proud to attend an event for International Women's Day 2012 on behalf of the Windsor Country Women's Association. I must declare an interest: my wife is the president of that association. We had an absolutely wonderful day. I congratulate all the members of Windsor Country Women's Association, especially Doreen Mitchell. It was great to catch up with her. They are just some of the wonderful events that have happened in the Hawkesbury over the past few weeks.

PUBLIC HOUSING RENTS

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [5.34 p.m.]: Once again I raise a matter of importance to the people of my electorate. Lakemba is home to a number of public housing tenants, including approximately 1,500 in the old Hearne Bay army base in Riverwood, as well as hundreds in a variety of properties from bedsit units to Turner Rigby garden units, renovated units, single dwellings and duplexes. The vast majority of tenants living in social or public housing in my electorate are in receipt of Centrelink payments, whether they are

elderly, disabled, single parents or job seekers. Many are responsible for large families and are doing their best to make ends meet. Others are struggling with their own demons, including substance abuse, but more commonly mental health issues.

What they all share in common is that to a man and woman they are struggling to make ends meet. They are living at or below the poverty line and they watch every dollar to ensure that there is enough left over at the end of each month for their electricity, food and essentials. For those with children things are especially tight. Paying for school uniforms, shoes, clothes and food for growing children is difficult for most families, but especially so for those who live on a couple of hundred dollars a week—more so now that the Government has introduced fees at local preschools, including at Riverwood and Punchbowl. I have been working with public housing tenants since 1994. We campaigned successfully to have the Riverwood Housing office reopened after the former Liberal Government closed it. We campaigned to save Canterbury Hospital from being closed by the former Liberal Government, and we saved it.

Mr Mark Coure: That's not true.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: Of course it is.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! I will not tolerate interjections during private members' statements. I remind the member for Oatley that he is on one call to order. If he continues to interject I will place him on three calls to order.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: Canterbury Hospital was then rebuilt and is now a great community hospital. Today we face a new challenge. The decision of this heartless Government to use the Federal Government's carbon price payment to calculate the rent of public housing tenants is reprehensible. To attack the most vulnerable, the most disadvantaged, the elderly, the sick and the frail and to take their payment designed to offset the impacts of carbon pricing is just plain wrong. What makes this worse is that at the same time as the O'Farrell Liberal Government is hitting the most vulnerable with increased rent for public housing pensioners and families it is cutting the rent for jetties and pontoons for millionaires with their waterfront homes.

That is right: hit the pensioners in public housing with a rent increase and cut rent for millionaires in waterfront properties. What kind of topsy-turvy world is this? What does that say about the Government's values? A petition organised by concerned local residents and tenants has been circulated in my community and already has been signed by hundreds of people. There is a strong campaign against this decision. I call on the Minister, who I know is a decent person, the Premier and all those opposite to do what we all know is right and fair: drop the rent increase for pensioners in public housing. The rent increase is wrong and it must be rejected. The people of my electorate stand together and call for the increase to be rejected.

AGL POWER STATION PROPOSAL

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [5.38 p.m.]: On 2 June I attended a public consultation meeting held by AGL at St Matthew's Church hall in Dalton. The meeting was well attended by almost the entire population of Dalton and many residents from Gunning. Dalton and Gunning are villages located just off the Hume Highway between Yass and Goulburn. Gunning and Dalton have a strong sense of community and offer what many would consider a perfect country lifestyle of peace and tranquillity. Dalton also lies close to both the main natural gas transmission pipeline and the 330 kilovolt electricity high-voltage transmission line. AGL has proposed to build a peaking power station about three kilometres from the village of Dalton. While the meeting in Dalton was orderly, feelings and emotions within both these communities are running high and this proposal is strongly and vocally opposed by many residents and landowners in the area.

Regardless of whether one supports or opposes the construction of this power plant, no-one can deny that it will have a significant impact on the community of Dalton and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Gunning. AGL submitted the major project application on 25 March 2010 under the old part 3A provisions, which were so significantly abused by the previous Government. The environmental assessment was exhibited in August-September 2011. However, many residents of Dalton and Gunning remained unaware of the proposal. Only 24 submissions were received by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, but I have concerns that many of those were not properly classified by the department as objecting to the proposal. In the period since

October last year AGL lodged a response to submissions report, which was subsequently rejected by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure as inadequate. A revised response to submissions report was resubmitted by AGL and that was forwarded to the Planning Assessment Commission [PAC] for decision last week.

This proposal was automatically referred to the Planning Assessment Commission because AGL made political donations to the New South Wales Labor Party of \$40,000 and to the Liberal Party of \$33,000. After the planning scandals of the previous State Labor Government it is appropriate when a political donation has been made for applications to be independently determined by the Planning Assessment Commission. I have made many formal representations to the relevant Minister on behalf of my constituents. I met with AGL management on a couple of occasions also. I also have toured the Uranquinty gas-fired power station to see firsthand its impacts on the local area. I also have spoken with the solicitor who represented the local residents who have been forced off their properties by the Uranquinty gas-fired power station. When I told him that a gas-fired power station was proposed for Dalton his short response was not encouraging. In fact, he said, "It's madness."

Recognising the independence of the Planning Assessment Commission, through the Minister I asked whether the commission could visit the local community and listen to their concerns before determining this project. I also wrote personally to the Chair of the Planning Assessment Commission, Ms Gabrielle Kibble, AO, strongly urging her to hold a public meeting that is open and accessible to local residents. I received replies from the Minister and Ms Kibble that my request would be considered. I conveyed that to the residents of Dalton and Gunning at the public meeting. To date AGL has held five public consultation meetings in the area. However, none of the meetings has been able to address the concerns of residents about the negative impact that many who live in the local area believe that this proposal would have on their lives. AGL also has not answered many requests from the community for information about noise and exhaust emissions.

It was not until public consultation on 2 June this year that AGL provided a breakdown of the amount of pollutants that would be emitted by gas turbines. The general consensus of both communities is that AGL is not listening to their very real fears. Last Friday I received the very welcome news from the Planning Assessment Commission that it will hold a public meeting on Thursday 28 June in Gunning. I know from the feedback provided to me from many of my constituents that they are very grateful that their concerns will now be given a fair hearing at that public meeting. I commend the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW and the Chair of the Planning Assessment Commission for being so responsive to the concerns of the communities of Dalton and Gunning.

I certainly encourage all residents of those communities who have expressed concerns at meetings held in the community in relation to the AGL proposal to ensure that they register to speak at the upcoming public meeting on 28 June. They must lodge their registrations indicating their desire to speak by 25 June. It is very important to do that. If they do not register they will not be given the opportunity to voice their concerns. I thank the local community in advance for attending this very special public meeting, which will be conducted by the Planning Assessment Commission in Gunning on 28 June. I again strongly encourage everybody in the local community who wishes to have a say to ensure they register before 25 June.

ST GREGORY'S COLLEGE CAMPBELLTOWN

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.43 p.m.]: Recently I attended the opening of a new building at St Gregory's College at Campbelltown. The new building has been dedicated to Brother Clarence Cunningham, who, sadly, passed away in August 2007 at the age of 87. The new building will house the new science laboratories. Brother Clarence served as headmaster at the college in 1975 to 1980 and went on to be the founding principle of both John Therry Catholic and Mount Carmel high schools within the Macarthur area. It is opportune to mention another outstanding Catholic school in the Campbelltown area, Mater Dei, which is led by the headmaster, Tony Fitzgerald. Coincidentally, Tony is a former deputy headmaster and student of St Greg's. Mater Dei, like St Greg's, continues to offer a caring, nurturing and much-needed learning environment for its students.

The opening ceremony of the building was a great celebration of Brother Clarence's legacy and showcased the wonderful tributes at the college. Some of the highlights of the morning were the welcome by the college captain, Mitchell Dwyer, the rite of blessing by Father Jon Roberts, OFM, the very warm welcome and address by the headmaster, Mr Damien Millar, the special guest's address and opening ceremony by Brother Jeffrey Crowe, FMS, and the vote of thanks by Jack Kennedy. During the blessing of the building I met a year

10 student, Jacob Mitchell, who received the New South Wales Premier's Anzac Scholarship Award. I had discussed the award with Jacob prior to his departure on a visit to the battlegrounds of Korea and the Western Front. Jacob gave a moving and heartfelt insight into his experiences overseas. Everyone at the ceremony was extremely proud of Jacob. He is a wonderful representative of St Greg's, his family and the wider community.

St Gregory's College began in February 1926 as a result of a vision by Mr Thomas Donovan, who donated the land to the Marist Brothers. At the young age of 27 Brother Laurentius took on the position of first headmaster until 1933. The growth of the school continued with vigour and included the creation of sporting ovals, the construction of a swimming pool and, most importantly, the construction of the college chapel which was opened in 1962. The college's reputation is beyond approach and students from all areas attend. It is only fitting that the school dedicated its newest building to Brother Clarence, who spent 30 years in the Macarthur region guiding the college and dedicating himself to the students, the staff and God. Brother Clarence was a very humble, compassionate and relentless person who provided the best opportunity for students to learn and grow. How fitting it is that our fine Minister for Education was a student at St Greg's from 1986 until 1987. He has told me how he fondly remembers his days at St Greg's as a boy.

On numerous occasions the Minister has mentioned the huge value he got from his two years at St Greg's. He was incredibly well supported by Brother Geoffrey, who was then the headmaster. One of the Minister's disappointments is that Brother Geoffrey is not alive to see the Minister in his role as Minister for Education today. The leadership team do such an outstanding job of ensuring that the young men who pass through the gates of St Greg's develop and grow to become the leaders of tomorrow that they deserve to be mentioned: the headmaster, Damien Millar; the deputy headmaster, Stephen Kennaugh; the director of mission, Cathie Clarke; the director of students, Craig Bisell; the director of boarding, Matthew Brennan; the director of teaching and learning, Cathy Keegan; and the director of administration, Barry Graham. I am sure that each time students enter the building a little thought will be offered in memory of Brother Clarence and his vision for the school. St Gregory's College and its students always will be in good hands under the guidance of the Marist Bros and wonderful staff.

I thank St Greg's, the Marist Brothers, headmaster Damien Millar, staff and students for allowing me to attend such an important day to honour Brother Clarence. The dedication day will become a part of St Greg's long and rich history. I thank the Marist Brothers for their vision, specifically the Gregory Hills residential board comprising the chairman, Ian Gray, Brother Anthony Robinson, Tony Perich and Arnold Vitocco, who have just entered into an agreement with Camden Council and the State Government to build a much-needed police and community youth club in the brand-new Gregory Hills estate, which is formerly part of St Gregory's College, Campbelltown. St Gregory's College in Campbelltown continues to offer outstanding service to my local community. I commend the school and its community on a proud history of the school and involvement within our area. To be part of such a special event as the opening of the Brother Clarence wing of St Gregory's College was truly a memorable experience—one that I will cherish.

ALBATROSS MUSICAL THEATRE COMPANY

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.48 p.m.]: On Saturday 9 June I had the pleasure of attending Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre to watch *The Boy from Oz* musical production, which was performed by cast and crew from the Albatross Musical Theatre Company. The cast and crew were extremely professional and there were several captivating performances. Everyone who attended the performance said how outstanding it was and how much effort had been invested to ensure that it was a performance like none other. Peter Allen lived an extraordinary life—the breakup of his marriage, staging a Broadway flop, the death of his partner and his own battle with illness. The original producer of the musical, Ben Gannon, realised it had the potential to become a magnificent musical. With Robert Fox, he turned it into a smash hit. It was popular not just in this country but abroad.

The Boy from Oz is a class above all other jukebox musicals. The late Nick Enright skilfully weaved his plot around the life and complexities of Peter Allen. The songs and lyrics sit easily with the rhythm of the piece and with the characters as they enter and re-enter his life, dead or alive. It leaps, as does Peter himself, from past to present and back to past, all within the familiar context of one of his energy-packed concerts. Certainly the concerts were packed full of energy, and I pay tribute to all the locals involved in producing and performing in this most magnificent production. The level of homegrown young talent we have in the Shoalhaven never ceases to amaze me, and it makes me particularly proud of our region and its future. Whether it is young people who perform in the local eisteddfods, the Nowra Players or the Albatross Musical Theatre Company, the Shoalhaven in particular is teaming with young local talent and it was wonderful to see that on display during this performance.

A special moment was watching local students from Cambewarra Public School in my electorate perform the heartfelt Aussie classic ballad *I Still Call Australia Home*. It touched everybody who had the opportunity to witness it. I was extremely proud of my mother, Margaret Bowcher, who was on keys in the band and was the musical director of *My Fair Lady*. My mother has played many great roles in local musical productions with the Albatross Musical Theatre Company and I congratulate her on yet another wonderful performance. I acknowledge also my brother, Scott Bowcher, who played the role of Chris Bell in this production and commend him for an outstanding performance.

The cast included Evan Kerr as Peter Allen, Beau Cregan as the young Peter Allen, Jane McIntosh as Judy Garland, Deb Thornett as Marion Woolnough, Jacii Pavitt as Liza Minnelli, John Beazley as Dick Woolnough, Melanie Brodie as Bonnie, Judi Burton as Josie, Tony Byrne as Wally Bell, Mitchell Cable as Greg, Karen Cruikshank as Valerie, Ron Hawthorne as Dee, John West as Brian Henderson and Billie Luscombe as Trick. I congratulate all the cast and crew involved with *The Boy from Oz* musical, including the production team and director Rosemary Royter, musical director Merrin Ross, choreographer Jenelle Davis, producer and technical director Dennis Ross, assistant to the director and choreographer Ralphie Walter, assistant to the musical director Tyson Dinnie, and stage manager Jacinta Perry-Powell.

The vocal trio comprising Cassandra Anderson, Michelle Bullman-Greber and Kirstyn Dryer were amazing. The Albatross Musical Theatre Company is an extraordinary group whose members have done wonderful things in our city. On 22 May 1975 a group of Gilbert and Sullivan enthusiasts generated a great deal of interest in our local community. They held a meeting in the old band practice room at HMAS *Albatross* and agreed to form the first local Gilbert and Sullivan Society. The first general meeting was held under the chairmanship of the then Executive Officer of HMAS *Albatross*, Dick Bird, on 4 June 1975 and the committee was elected. It became known as the Albatross Musical Theatre Company in 1995. As a Shoalhaven councillor I have had the great opportunity to support this organisation. As local member I recently had the privilege of becoming its patron. I look forward to many more performances from the Albatross Musical Theatre Company and I commend all those involved in its most recent production, *A Boy From Oz*.

TOM KOWPAK MOUNT EVEREST CLIMB

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [5.52 p.m.]: It is often said when we overcome adversity that we have climbed Everest—that we have reached the top. Tonight I pay tribute to a constituent who has actually done just that. On the 26 May 2012 Tom Kowpak of Hornsby successfully climbed Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain. Tom's achievement should not be taken lightly. Of the 200 people who attempt to climb the 8,848 metre high Mount Everest each year, only 30 per cent reach the summit. Since Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay first climbed Mount Everest in 1953 only about 3,700 people have achieved this amazing feat. Achieving this goal was not a simple endeavour for Tom. There were many weeks, months and indeed years of long, tedious preparation. There were setbacks, frustrations, disappointments and of course temptations to change course—to do something easier.

Over the past three years Tom has worked three jobs to fund his climb. He also undertook a gruelling training regimen in preparation for reaching the summit, which included a daily 4.00 a.m. run through Ku-ring-gai National Park wearing a 40 kilogram vest, glacial ice training in New Zealand and climbing the 7,000 metre high Mount Aconcagua in Argentina in 2010. Tom did this all while studying for a master's degree, which he completed successfully in 2010. Tom's feats were impressive not only because of his extraordinary physical and mental endurance but because he used the climb to raise much-needed awareness and funds for the Stroke Foundation. Despite countless challenges and hardships along the way, including freezing temperatures and fatigue, Tom's determination and strong will enabled him to fulfil his dream. As a result of Tom's achievement he joins a small and exclusive club of about 70 Australians who have climbed Mount Everest. The degree of dedication, organisation, discipline and courage required to perform this remarkable feat can only be described as extraordinary.

Tom is a role model not just to those in my community of Hornsby but to all citizens of New South Wales and Australia, particularly young people. Throughout their lives young people are taught to set themselves goals and to approach life with hope and optimism. Tom is testament to the success that results from goal setting and optimism. His attitude towards life and his values—hard work, integrity, determination and compassion—are ones that all individuals should aspire to embody. Of course, none of this would have been possible for Tom without the tremendous love and support he received from his family. His parents, Margaret and Michael, his brother, Nicholas, and his girlfriend, Lauren, are justifiably proud of these wonderful achievements. The love of his late grandmother also served as a source of inspiration and constant support

throughout the journey. Tom did not climb Everest because it was easy; he did it because it was hard—because it was a goal that brought out the best in him and inspired him to greatness. He has achieved that, and we are all rightly proud of this wonderful achievement of our local hero Tom Kowpak.

GRANDPARENT CARERS

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [5.56 p.m.]: On 18 March 2010 I spoke in this House of the difficulties faced by grandparents who largely put their lives on hold to act as primary caregivers to their grandchildren. At the time I informed the House of the many challenges faced by grandparents who are confronted by a bureaucracy that they perceive as hostile and perplexing. More than two years later the challenges confronting these loving people taking on this huge task remain daunting. I am advised that since I spoke on this matter there have been a few administrative changes but these have been minor in nature and have not benefited carers.

In a positive development, new placements now include a health assessment of the child, with the results going to the new carer. However, on the downside I am advised that the Department of Family and Community Services is handing caseworker responsibility to non-government organisations and in certain cases this can leave less money available per child. I am also advised that carers of all types still express dissatisfaction with current administrative arrangements, which they see as too often leaving children at risk from the parents of the child, who were the original reason for the child being taken into care. Grandparents are often the first to see when children are in danger. However, all too frequently they appear not to be given the recognition and respect they deserve in this regard by the Department of Community Services.

There is a shortage of foster carers, and I am advised that this results, at least in part, from changes to administrative systems, lack of sufficient support, reduced allowances and the sheer enormity of the task of raising traumatised children. As a result, grandparents are increasingly becoming primary carers. In 2005 a Council on the Aged report showed that 1 per cent of families involve kinship care. However, recent figures from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare show a 45 per cent increase in kinship families over the past five years. Fortunately, the growing number of grandparents and other family carers has led to the establishment of support groups, including one named the Grandparents, Relatives and Kinship Care Alliance [GRaKCA]. I have met with representatives of this group and I am pleased to support them in the matters they brought to my attention.

I am pleased to support their advocacy on behalf of vulnerable children in the Lake Macquarie electorate and beyond, and I particularly acknowledge the effort of Joy Fowles of Morisset. The Grandparents, Relatives and Kinship Care Alliance would like to see simplification of the processes for new grandparent carers, who face a daunting number of formalities. Given the apparent complexity of such procedures, a little guidance would go a long way towards avoiding problems in their dealings with Medicare, Centrelink, schools, Family and Community Services, and so on. The alliance has illustrated this need by describing to me the case of a grandmother who spent years trying to get her grandchild a Medicare card without knowing who to ask or where to go for help. I was advised that if this grandmother had been able to obtain a letter or statement of authority confirming that she was the primary carer it would have been much simpler for her to access Medicare and other government departments.

At a practical level, the alliance reported on respite camps that have been held at the Office of Communities sport and recreation camp at Myuna Bay. There have been five such camps so far—four of which catered for 301 people while the other one hosted 15 Indigenous families. These camps were funded by the Samaritans and led by Ms Karen Lizasoain, who is employed by that organisation as a coordinator for its Grandparents as Carers support program. The camps provide respite for both grandparents and grandchildren, with the groups being separated and given a much-needed break from each other. Children can enjoy activities including kayaking, swimming and rock climbing under the supervision of Department of Sport and Recreation staff, while grandparents take a much-earned break and engage in informal learning from each other.

This year the Grandparents, Relatives and Kinship Care Alliance would like to run another such camp, at an estimated total cost of \$15,000. Of course, this event is subject to funding, and a contribution by the New South Wales Government could make all the difference in deciding whether the camp can proceed. In my view supporting grandparent carers is socially responsible and, in the long term, cost-effective. We need to be more attuned to their needs. Therefore, I bring the matters of the statement of authority and the proposed Myuna Bay camp to the attention of the Minister for Family and Community Services and request that she give serious consideration to providing support in these specific areas, as well as ensuring broader support for kinship carers.

BEACON FOUNDATION

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [6.01 p.m.]: I speak today about education and young people—I seem to find myself doing that quite a lot; it must be a passion of mine—and about the Beacon Foundation. I recently attended a Beacon Business Breakfast at one of my local high schools, Mount View High School. The business breakfast was the first step towards that school becoming another Beacon school. Three of the five high schools in my electorate are now Beacon schools. That is fantastic, because the cluster effect and the opportunity for schools to share resources and ideas is a great strength of the program. The Beacon Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation. It is quite young, having started in 1995. Since then it has worked in 180 secondary schools in every State of Australia and with more than 55,000 students.

The Beacon Foundation has a simple philosophy about what young people need to do: either earn or learn. It targets young people who might otherwise fall through the cracks, such as those of low socioeconomic status. In spite of that it has had some amazing results. The Beacon Foundation cites statistics that show the percentage of students who went on to year 11—this was when it was not compulsory to stay at school in years 11 and 12—was 90 per cent in Beacon schools when the average for all other schools was only 82 per cent. This is despite the fact that the students were of low socioeconomic status and faced challenging circumstances. That in itself is testimony to the success of the Beacon program.

The Beacon program is all about helping to inspire and motivate students to stay in school and increase their educational engagement and attainment or choose a positive pathway that enables successful transition to employment, further education and training. I was shocked and surprised to learn from listening to the speakers—particularly Dyan Thais, who heads the Central Coast and Hunter Beacon Foundation—that Australia has one of the highest rates of high school non-completion amongst OECD countries. Only 76 per cent of students who start year 7 will go on to complete year 12. Australia's stated target is 90 per cent, and we will undoubtedly progress towards it quickly now that the leaving age for students has been lifted to 17. But before my Beacon experience I was completely unaware that Australia, with all its wealth and opportunity, had such a high rate of high school non-completion. Businesses from across the local community attended the Beacon Business Breakfast to show their support for young people and for the school.

When I spoke earlier in this House I made the oft-heard comment that it takes a village to raise a child. Community business involvement in the breakfasts shows students that they are important to future business success. Young people feel the impact of a tired or heavy labour market first, and when the labour market recovers they feel the effects last. We are living in fortunate times, with unemployment at less than 5 per cent—unemployment in the Hunter is less than 4 per cent—but that does not mean we can go easy. When addressing the Beacon breakfast at Mount View High School just two weeks ago I put this challenge to business leaders. When unemployment is as low as 4 per cent or 5 per cent it is important that businesses stay engaged with the Beacon process and seize the opportunity to recruit the cream of the crop—find the young people who really want to be involved in business.

It does not matter what the business is—a mining company, real estate agency, a hairdresser, retail outlet, electrical or other trade business—young people take an interest in a range of things, regardless of their background and their intelligence. Sometimes the smartest people want to pick up the tools and become an electrician or a plumber. Sometimes people without those smarts go on to university, work hard and study law or medicine. Fortunately in Australia most young people have the opportunity to do that. Three months ago I attended the Beacon Business Breakfast at Kurri Kurri High School. I was amazed to see the hundreds of people in the room that morning—community leaders, businesses, parents and young people. Importantly, both breakfasts were fully catered for by the students. They worked the room, making sure that everybody was well fed, that drinks were topped up and that everyone had a good time. That is an important step for students in building self-confidence and self-belief. I will soon find myself at Francis Greenway High School on another important Beacon journey.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.06 p.m. until
Tuesday 19 June 2012 at 12.00 noon.**
