

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 14 August 2012

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KATOOMBA ROTARY CLUB SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

WENTWORTH FALLS BOYS BRIGADE

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [12.09 p.m.]: The Blue Mountains has many active service clubs and community organisations. Among these, the Rotary clubs are particularly strong and active. This year marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of the charter of the Katoomba Rotary Club, the oldest club in the mountains. Seventy-five years of continual service is a magnificent achievement. The club was awarded its charter on 12 January 1937 and its first president was a Mr A. M. Soper. The anniversary dinner was held at the iconic Carrington Hotel on 25 June 1937. The importance and significance of this celebration was signified by the presence of the Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir.

All guests were welcomed by President George Bubalo and our master of ceremonies for the night was Mr Bruce Ferrier, a good friend of the Rotary club. As a Rotarian myself, I was invited to give the toast to Rotary International, with District Governor David Cook giving the reply. As it happens David is a member of the Lower Mountains Rotary Club. The Governor gave the keynote speech, recalling that her father was a Rotarian. She enthralled all in attendance with stories of her association with Rotary and her ties to the Blue Mountains. As at any good Rotary function, the main object is to raise funds for worthy causes and charities. The Katoomba club has adopted as its main charity the Nepean Medical Research Foundation and all proceeds from the night were given to the foundation.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Service above service.

Mrs ROZA SAGE: It certainly is. The Nepean Medical Research Foundation was formally established by the University of Sydney in November 2001. The purpose of the foundation is to foster the growth of medical research in the knowledge that today's research is tomorrow's treatment. Prior to 2001 Nepean Hospital was the only teaching hospital affiliated with the University of Sydney that did not have its own research foundation. The night was a great success and a credit to the many members who contributed to it, including Malcolm Nicholson, Kevin Lawrence, Kerry McGill, Tom Colless and Frank Norman.

Another flourishing organisation in the Blue Mountains is the Wentworth Falls Boys Brigade. I was invited to a special evening assembly where one of the boys received a unique award—the first time it had been given in New South Wales. The Boys Brigade has a Christian background. Its founder, Sir William Smith, was a Scotsman who was in the then equivalent of the Army Reserve. He was a Sunday school teacher and became frustrated that he could not make the boys in his class pay attention to his lessons. I think teachers today have similar problems. He could see that the men he was in charge of in the reserves responded and he thought that if he applied some of the military discipline to his Sunday charges they would respond also. So the Boys Brigade began on 4 October 1883. It is the oldest such organisation in the world; the Boy Scouts organisation was formed from the Boys Brigade some time later.

Mr Colin Gabriel, the leader of Wentworth Falls Boys Brigade, assembled the boys in the presence of family and friends, and the Youth Pastor of Wentworth Fall Anglican Church, Rob Conway, then led the service. Following that was a wonderful slide show and film of the brigade's exploits, with bushwalks and camps around the Blue Mountains. The enthusiasm and evident enjoyment of the boys enhanced the evening. We heard from the boys and their leaders about their exploits and various awards were presented. The highlight of the night was the presenting of the Young Volunteer Award to William—known as "Will"—Murray. This was a great honour as it was the first time the award had been given in New South Wales and only the second time in Australia. Will had clocked up more than 200 hours of volunteer work with the Lawson Bush Fire Brigade. A very proud Lawson brigade captain, Glenn Benson, who supervised Will, was also on hand to congratulate him, as was Will's very proud family. It was a very memorable night and the spirit of camaraderie, leadership and discipline live on in the Wentworth Falls Boys Brigade. I extend hearty congratulations to Will Murray.

HIGH-VISIBILITY POLICING

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.14 p.m.]: For years beat police have played a significant role in patrolling our streets and ensuring that people feel safe. Beat police—otherwise known as high-visibility police officers—often patrol high-risk areas to make the public feel safer and to act as a deterrent to crime. By placing officers conspicuously in areas where crime occurs regularly, offenders are more likely to be caught and hence will alter their behaviour in accordance with the law. In fact, a high-visibility presence in identified areas is said usually to result in an immediate reduction in crime. Community confidence in police increases and it deters criminals from breaking the law. Local police officers have stated that having beat squads within each local area command is an effective way to fight crime. One local officer told me:

Having more police officers on the streets would definitely reduce crime in our region. Most people do behave differently once they see police walk past.

To achieve high-visibility policing Waratah police station conducts a daily hour of power when possible, depending on what resources are available at that time. Generally speaking, whoever is available will flood a particular place for an hour. It is an effective way to combat crime, although unfortunately these operations are usually difficult to organise. Police have to maintain first response and a certain number of police are required on each shift. Also, it is difficult to organise because of rosters. With more resources there could be more street blitzes but police can work only with available resources and officers so it is not always possible to conduct such blitzes. It is clear that either more general duties officers need to be situated at local stations or additional police need to be employed for specialised beat units in the lower Hunter.

Police on patrol have a proven track record in combating crime, as seen by the recent blitz involving more than 220 officers under the Police Transport Command conducted on our public trains, buses and ferries. Across the Sydney to Blue Mountains, Newcastle to Wollongong region 42 arrests were made for offences including assault, malicious damage, larceny, drug possession and offensive behaviour. Four knives were seized and a drug dog uncovered amphetamines, prescription drugs and cannabis. Detective Superintendent Bernie Ryan said that the major focus of the Police Transport Command is to conduct high-visibility policing through good old-fashioned police work, where police are actually on the network. This is an excellent result and I commend the hardworking police officers who were enforcing the law and protecting commuters who might have otherwise been in desperate need of protection. This successful outcome justifies the importance of having a consistent police presence on our streets and public transport.

The Australian Institute of Criminology identified high-visibility policing as a key initiative in policing youth—a group often viewed as a main perpetrator of crime. Youth crime is a phenomenon within the Wallsend electorate, with a prime example occurring in early May when a Chinese student was robbed by 10 youths as he was walking home from university. Beat police on the prowl would ensure the safety of international students, who are attacked consistently and are the victims of preventable crimes. These students are not eligible for travel concessions so they may consider risking their safety by walking at night rather than using public transport. Recently two international university students were pushed to the ground and robbed in an attack at Jesmond. Serious action needs to be taken as attacks will continue and students will feel safe only when they know that police are patrolling in the vicinity.

I can see how an increased police presence would improve the areas of Wallsend, Elmore Vale and Shortland by providing an essential level of safety that is sought by those living in fear. Recently many constituents have advised me of their thoughts on criminal activities within the community. Those who were unable to attend a crime forum I held in early June told me that there needs to be a larger police presence in the

area, whether that be a police station within the electorate or police on the beat patrolling the suburbs. Police on the beat play a significant role in our society. It is clear that individuals and businesses feel safer when police are visible in the community.

PARKES POLICE STATION

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.19 p.m.]: A new era of policing commenced in the Dubbo electorate with the ceremonial turning of the first sod at the site of the Parkes new multimillion-dollar police station. During the winter break I had the pleasure of joining the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, to mark this special milestone. I was delighted that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services kindly accepted the invitation to turn the first sod and in so doing demonstrate his commitment to improving regional policing infrastructure and resources. As a former police officer, I know that officers will be able to serve the local community's policing needs much more effectively from a contemporary workplace.

The O'Farrell-Stoner Government allocated \$5 million in the 2012-13 budget for the completion of this \$14 million project, which was half committed to by the Labor Government with an allocation of about \$9 million that was never delivered. I am not sure how half delivering a police station can provide any benefit to a community. Unlike the previous Government, this Government has ensured that the project will be delivered in full. Parkes should be proud of its long and rich history of police representation. In 1883 a brick police lock-up was built in Currajong Street and a police residence was built at the corner of Court and Hill streets. Parkes became the home of the Western Area Police Headquarters in 1936, with the officer in charge controlling an area stretching from Blackheath to Broken Hill.

Today Parkes is home to the headquarters of the Lachlan Local Area Command, which covers areas such as Peak Hill, Forbes and smaller towns such as Tullamore, Trundle and Bogan Gate to the west, and towns outside my electorate such as Lake Cargelligo. Generations of police officers have cut their teeth working from the historic police station in Currajong Street. However, what might have been a suitable building in which to house police operations in 1883 is certainly not suitable for that purpose today. Our community needs a purpose-built, state-of-the-art facility to take policing into the future, and that is exactly what the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is delivering to the Lachlan Local Area Command. I look forward to watching the progress of this important project and I thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.23 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Dubbo on yet another fine achievement in his electorate—the turning of the sod for the new Parkes police station. The Coalition is reforming government in New South Wales and also building new infrastructure, and this is a classic example of this Government's commitment to developing and improving infrastructure. The Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, which is operating across the State, is generating about \$430 million worth of new investment in infrastructure at a cost of about \$36 million to New South Wales taxpayers. This is yet another good example of what this Government is doing to develop infrastructure in this State. I regularly congratulate the member for Dubbo on achievements in his electorate. He is doing a great job and I commend him once again.

SOUTH COAST ROADS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [12.24 p.m.]: Recently the electorate of South Coast has been the beneficiary of significant State Government financial assistance. Coincidentally, the Minister for Local Government just alluded to something to which I am about to refer. The Government has provided resources to revamp some of the ailing roads across the Shoalhaven local government area. Of course, much of the road damage that has occurred over the past 12 months is the result of the incredibly heavy rains that the South Coast has experienced. I recently announced direct funding of \$618,000 that was included in the 2012-13 State budget for the upgrade of local roads across the Shoalhaven as part of this Government's commitment to assisting councils to upgrade local infrastructure. Part of that package will see works commence at the intersection of Worrigee and Isa roads, and \$245,000 has been allocated for the provision of sealed shoulders, appropriate super-elevation, a guardrail and associated works. Of course, Worrigee residents have welcomed the proposed upgrade of this very busy and dangerous intersection. The focus is on improving safety for motorists and pedestrians.

The State Government has also committed \$79,000 to upgrade the intersection of Osborne and Jervis streets. The give-way signs will be changed to stop signs and safety measures will be implemented on both

approaches. In addition, \$135,000 has been allocated for works on the intersection of The Wool Road and MacGivvon Parade, Old Errowal Bay, to implement safety measures for motorists and passengers with a short right-turn lane and associated pavement widening and line marking. Finally, as part of the New South Wales Government's \$618,000 package to improve local South Coast roads, \$159,000 will be provided to upgrade the intersection of Berry and Douglas streets in Nowra, with give-way signs changed to stop signs and the implementation of safety measures on both approaches. Works will be undertaken by Roads and Maritime Services in consultation with Shoalhaven City Council. Those works have already been welcomed by the local council and residents.

This Government is committed to assisting local councils to upgrade and maintain local roads and infrastructure networks to provide benefits to local communities, such as fewer accidents, reduced long-term vehicle operating costs and reduced funding required for road repairs—and those savings can be redirected to other priority projects. In addition to direct funding assistance from the State Government, Shoalhaven roads will receive a \$2 million facelift through a generous loan subsidy from the New South Wales Government Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme. I note that the Minister for Local Government is in the Chamber, and I convey to him my gratitude and that of my electorate for that scheme. This \$70 million scheme provides councils with a 4 per cent interest subsidy on loans over 10 years to allow infrastructure projects finally to proceed. Shoalhaven City Council will borrow \$2 million to fund works, including resealing roads and pavements and assisting with the local gravel and resheeting program for pavement renewal. The State Government will provide the loan subsidy to assist the council with repayments.

Shoalhaven council officers have informed me that the State Government's Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme will result in more than \$500,000 being generated in interest savings and that that will be utilised for additional road funding and infrastructure projects. Of course, these funds are in addition to the millions of dollars of funding secured in the 2012-13 State budget for local road projects, including \$28 million for the South Nowra Princes Highway duplication, which is proceeding, \$1 million for the Termeil Creek Princes Highway realignment and \$1 million for a feasibility study into locations for a new crossing of the Shoalhaven River. Local organisations, including the Shoalhaven Business Chamber and Shoalhaven City Council, have long lobbied me and the State Government to provide the funds necessary to identify suitable locations for the replacement of the southbound Shoalhaven River Bridge.

I am very pleased that following the election of the Liberal-Nationals Government \$1 million was provided to commence a study and to secure a pathway for this project, which will unlock development potential on the Shoalhaven River front and provide a way forward for general development in the area. Once completed, the plans will allow Shoalhaven City Council to commence the much-anticipated and required redevelopment of the Shoalhaven River front—a project that has long been delayed due to speculation and guesswork about the location of a new river crossing. The State Government is committed to improving the road infrastructure network on the South Coast and is working in partnership with Shoalhaven City Council to deliver significant infrastructure projects such as the upgrade of the Princes Highway at South Nowra and Termeil.

This Government has a dedicated team of Ministers such as the Hon. Duncan Gay, the Minister for Roads and Ports, who, along with me, is committed to delivering improvements to the Princes Highway. The Hon. Don Page, the Minister for Local Government, has delivered on the State Government's commitment to provide local councils with funds under the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme and unlocking shovel-ready infrastructure projects for local communities. I thank those Ministers in particular for their commitment and the State Government in general for working in partnership with local government to progress infrastructure projects.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.28 p.m.]: I thank the member for South Coast for her contribution and for outlining various road upgrade projects in her electorate that have been delivered courtesy of the Liberal-Nationals Government. I reaffirm her statement that the State Government is committed to working with local government to address the infrastructure backlog in this State. I was particularly interested to hear her comments about the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, which has been very well received. As I indicated, the first round of that scheme involved about \$36 million worth of expenditure that will generate about \$430 million in infrastructure upgrades. Of course, that is only the first stage. Our first budget included an allocation of \$70 million and another \$30 million was added to that in our last budget. That is \$100 million altogether that will unlock about \$1 billion worth of local infrastructure involving roads, parks and whatever else councils need, provided it complies with the criteria. It is a great scheme and I thank the member for her complimentary remarks.

MARRICKVILLE SEA OF BLUE MARCH

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [12.29 p.m.]: I speak today about an important event that took place on Tuesday 7 August in my electorate of Marrickville. The local area police command conducted the Marrickville Sea of Blue March to celebrate 150 years of policing in New South Wales. This year marks the 150th year anniversary of policing in New South Wales and the Marrickville march was one of many events being held across New South Wales. The NSW Police Force is one of the largest policing organisations in the English-speaking world. As the first civilian police force in Australia it was known as the Night Watch and was formed by Governor Arthur Phillip. Governor Phillip appointed the best behaved convicts to the Night Watch. The Night Watch was replaced by the Sydney Foot Police in 1790 and continued as an organised force until the amalgamation of all New South Wales colonial police forces in 1862 when all the Night Watch teams were combined under the Police Regulation Act 1862 to form the NSW Police Force.

The Marrickville Sea of Blue March was a spectacular affair and a fitting tribute to this important anniversary. It was attended by both the Hon. Michael Gallacher, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione, along with present and former local area commanders. They included Superintendent Greg Peters, Superintendent David Eardley and Superintendent Adam White. Superintendent Vicki Arender, who sadly passed away some years ago, was also remembered. Respected members of the local community attended, including Mayor Morris Hanna, Councillor Sam Iskandar, Councillor Emanuel Tsardoulis, Father John Pearce from St Brigid's Catholic Parish and Father Nicholas from the Greek Orthodox parish of Saint Nicholas. The march commenced at the former Marrickville police station premises in Gladstone Street and concluded outside Marrickville Town Hall where the official speeches took place.

The march was led by the police band and local area commander Superintendent Greg Peters. It was a great sight to see the police, staff and volunteers march proudly down Marrickville Road. The crowd that gathered along the route to cheer on the marchers included many proud family members of local police. The students of St Brigid's Primary School and Marrickville Public School lined the streets waving flags. The State Emergency Service also was present; there were orange uniforms everywhere. The crowd showed a great sense of pride in and support for the local Marrickville police who do such a good job in keeping the community safe. As part of the celebrations the local area command honoured officers who had lost their lives serving the community.

The date of the march was selected to commemorate the 80-year anniversary of the death of Constable Joseph McCunn who had been attached to the Petersham police station. Constable McCunn died in 1932 after being struck by a motor vehicle on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Constable McCunn had been performing special traffic duty on foot with another officer and was killed when a vehicle which had been signalled to stop failed to do so. Constable McCunn's death was the first death of a police officer serving in the Marrickville area; hence the significance of the date for the Sea of Blue March. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the hard work and dedication of the men and women who make up the Marrickville Local Area Command and all police across New South Wales.

Policing has changed a lot over the last 150 years with the use of technology and intelligence, but what have not changed are the challenges that police face. As we all know, policing is a tough job and it takes a great toll on individuals and their families. The police at Marrickville Local Area Command understand the importance of smart policing and community policing. In addition to the great operational work that they undertake to investigate and solve crimes, Marrickville police also are involved in a range of community activities, particularly directed at young people to engage them in positive behaviour. Events such as midnight basketball have been successful and have made a real difference for the young people in Marrickville. I thank the police and staff at Marrickville Local Area Command for their hard work and commitment to the local community. I congratulate all police in New South Wales on the 150th year anniversary of policing in New South Wales.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.34 p.m.]: On behalf of the Government I join the member for Marrickville in congratulating the Marrickville Local Area Command on its 150-year anniversary. Police have a tough job and it is pleasing to see police engaging with the community. I am a strong supporter of community policing and believe in a positive relationship between the community and police. I thank the member for Marrickville for drawing the attention of the House to this significant milestone in New South Wales policing history.

COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [12.35 p.m.]: I wish to update the House on progress in the Monaro electorate since the announcement of the Community Building Partnership program earlier this year. Over the winter break I had the opportunity to visit a number of projects and programs across the Monaro electorate that are funded by this initiative. In Queanbeyan the Government funded a number of important infrastructure facilities for the community. One such infrastructure facility was a new disability access lift at the Macedonian Orthodox community centre. The Government matched the money raised by the Macedonian Orthodox community for this project. The access lift allows an ageing population and those with disabilities access to the second level of the Macedonian centre. The improvement was much needed and is appreciated by the Macedonian community.

The Campbell Street Early Childhood Learning Centre in Queanbeyan received a grant in excess of \$30,000 for upgrades to its kitchen and other parts of the centre. It is an investment in our children and the next generation. The Jerrabomberra Touch Association will receive \$30,000 to install additional lighting on David Madew oval which will extend the area on the oval for winter night-time football training. At the moment only half the field is lit. The installation of additional lighting will extend the life of the oval surface during winter when frosts impact significantly on ovals in the Monaro electorate.

Those who live in the Monaro electorate and members of the House who have visited the electorate during the agricultural show season will know that the Dalgety Show Society organises one of the most picturesque shows in my electorate. It is a great show. The show society will receive funding in excess of \$20,000 for new fencing for team penning events. The constituents of my electorate understand the importance of such activities at shows because they draw a different crowd, increasing the number of visitors. The Dalgety Show Society organises a fantastic event on the show circuit, and it is one well worth supporting. Funds raised by the local community for improvements to Bibbenluke Hall were matched by Bombala Council. The New South Wales Government invested in upgrades to the hall's kitchen. It is a worthwhile project.

For many small communities the community hall is a refuge, the centre of the community and a place where meetings, forums, get-togethers and festivities occur. It was my pleasure to present a cheque for the upgrade to the kitchen at Bibbenluke Hall. Bombala Council has partnered the State Government on works and funding for the installation and fit-out of two cabins at Bombala Caravan Park. The new cabins will help to meet the rising demand for this type of accommodation in Bombala. Bombala is experiencing a population surge as a result of the investment by Tasco Industries of \$100 million in the softwood mill in Bombala. Many people are in town involved in building the new mill, which has placed pressure on available accommodation in the community. This commitment by the State Government will enable the council and the community to offer alternative accommodation.

Cooma council is partnering the State Government following submission of a bid to the Community Building Partnership program to upgrade Cooma swimming pool with heating, thereby extending the pool's use during the colder months and outer edges of the summer season. A \$30,000 investment by the Community Building Partnership program, matched by Cooma council, is a great investment for the people of Cooma. It has been announced that Jindabyne will receive an investment of \$100,000 towards the shared trail network. A link between the Jindabyne Dam wall and the Jindabyne town centre will allow bikes, pedestrians, joggers and mums with prams to experience the picturesque trail. The trail will run from Jindabyne Dam to Jindabyne and on to the turn-off for the mountains. Following the ski season, this will be another tourism product for recreational users during the summer period. Later this month the next round of Community Building Partnership program funding will be open for applications. I encourage my electorate to engage in the program.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.40 p.m.]: I commend the member for Monaro for his wonderful work in his electorate which is delivering projects on the ground. I take this opportunity to support the Community Building Partnership program, which I am sure all members, regardless of their politics, also strongly support. As the criteria for this great program are wide, a number of projects can be funded. The member for Monaro referred to programs in Queanbeyan and the \$100,000 for a trail in Jindabyne, which will improve tourism in the electorate. I am pleased that despite these tough economic times the Community Building Partnership program has continued.

NEW ENGLAND TOURISM

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [12.41 p.m.]: Recently I attended the launch of the \$100,000 Experience the Highs marketing campaign to promote tourism across the Armidale, Guyra, Uralla and

Walcha regions. The campaign received and welcomed significant funding from Destination NSW under its Regional Tourism Partnership Funding Program. This great campaign reflects what I have always believed to be the most profitable approach to tourism promotion, that is, a cooperative venture where resources are pooled and visitors are encouraged to experience a region as a whole. The parochial practice of the past where towns and districts competed against each other for the tourist dollar has been less effective for tourists and the communities involved.

Tourism brings in more than \$60 million to the local economy every year, so getting it right and growing visitor numbers is in the interest of each of the four local government areas. This new campaign is comprehensive and digitally aware. Its focus is a 360 degrees panoramic photography-based iPad app, a sleek printed visitor guide, a foray into social media platforms and a public relations campaign. A website page also has been launched. Consumer research has shown that 43 per cent of visitors use smartphones. The use of mobile technology within the tourism market is growing exponentially and is set to continue. Apps can provide information on driving routes and directions, trails, tours, accommodation, activities, restaurants and general tourist information. It is a system that can be accessed by visitors on their smartphones, tablets or mobile devices to enable quicker and more efficient uptake of tourism product information.

The strategy of the Armidale, Guyra, Uralla, Walcha campaign is to use this technology to showcase the natural beauty of the region and increase awareness for the New England High Country. The Minister for Local Government, who is at the table, knows this region very well. As the local member of Parliament I also know it well. I drive all over the region in the course of my duties, as do all local members in their electorates. I often wonder why the region is not better known and appreciated. The national parks, the waterfalls, the gorge country, the picturesque towns with their many attractions and the splendour of the four seasons are all very promotable assets.

Coinciding with the launch of the Experiencing the Highs campaign was the announcement of a major new acquisition for the New England Regional Art Museum: a Margaret Olley master work, *The Yellow Room Triptych*. It joins the iconic \$32 million Howard Hinton Collection, the most comprehensive collection of Australian art from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century in a regional gallery. A campaign to raise the \$400,000 to purchase the painting from the Margaret Olley Trust has already reached the halfway mark. The New England Regional Art Museum is one of the major cultural tourism drawcards of the region and an integral part of this new campaign.

Inland NSW Tourism is now the official registered tourism organisation for the region and is working with local tourist organisations to double visitation expenditure by 2020. This requires developing new markets, particularly with a younger demographic seeking outdoors experiences. I specifically mention Mr Tony Broomfield, from the Armidale Dumaresq Council who is a board member of Inland NSW Tourism, for his leadership in the marketing and development of the Experiencing the Highs campaign. Inland NSW Tourism represents an area incorporating approximately 27.5 per cent of all tourism operators and destinations and 34 per cent of local government areas in New South Wales. It covers a geographical area with a population of more than 440,000 people and is the peak member-based tourism organisation in the region.

Doubling the tourism dollar is not being left to chance. A comprehensive \$100,000 consumer research program has been designed to understand consumers and what would attract them to visit inland New South Wales. Members also are being provided with access to professional development tools through a website encompassing relevant and up-to-date information. Special workshops are being conducted to strengthen the quality of products delivered by tourism operators and to create opportunities for clusters of experiences. Using a professional development format, this is part of an education and mentoring program to establish business performance benchmarks, product and business improvement goals and to create opportunities for growth. Creating a buzz around regional tourism and greater professionalism within the sector is a very worthwhile exercise. Incorporating new information technology is an essential ingredient to grow the industry. This approach will benefit inland communities and encourage them to work together to improve the visitor experience. It will help bring higher standards and increase growth in the New South Wales regional tourism sector.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.46 p.m.]: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for sharing his comprehensive and insightful observations on the Experiencing the Highs campaign in the beautiful New England Tablelands. As the member indicated, I know this beautiful area well as I spent 12 years in the New England area at boarding school and the University of New England. I agree 100 per cent with the member for Northern Tablelands about the

cooperative approach that is being put forward by Destination NSW, particularly in relation to regional tourism. A few years ago, when I was the shadow Minister for Tourism, I visited Victoria and noted the cooperative approach that was being taken between regions. Tourists could obtain a great deal of information in one region about other regions. The idea that areas are in competition is a thing of the past. Many residents in my electorate who visit Byron Bay on the coast are also interested in visiting the New England region. We need to maximise the tourist dollar throughout regional New South Wales.

MENTAL HEALTH

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.47 p.m.]: I want to discuss an issue that is very close to my heart and one that I am sure is extremely important to everyone in this place, that is, mental health. In 2007 the National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing found that one in five Australian adults experience mental illness in any given year. One in four of those experience more than one mental disorder. One in seven Australians had an anxiety disorder, one in 20 had an affective disorder and one in 20 had a substance abuse disorder. Those figures mean, statistically speaking, that each and every one of us has been affected by mental health issues at some time in our lives, either directly through our own personal experience or through the experience of someone close to us. The problems of alcohol and substance abuse, eating disorders, gambling addiction and depression exist in every community and have the potential to destroy lives if we ignore them.

We are fortunate to have a vast range of mental health services and treatment options in this country but, tragically, research shows that just 11.9 per cent of Australians actually use those services. That means more than 8 per cent of all Australians struggle with some form of mental illness without seeking any help. It should be no surprise then to learn that intentional self-harm or suicide was the tenth leading cause of death in 2008, accounting for 10.2 per cent of deaths per 100,000 of our population. Major obstacles in convincing individuals to access the help they need are the social stigma attached to mental health issues and the lack of knowledge about the services that exist.

For that reason I recently produced a guide to mental health and, using parliamentary entitlements, distributed a copy to every home and high school in the Heathcote electorate. The purpose of the booklet is to inform my constituents about the organisations that are willing and able to help them. I also take this opportunity to mention just a few of the wonderful organisations dedicated to helping people in my electorate through every aspect of living with a mental illness. The Enough is Enough Anti Violence Movement provides counselling for the full gamut of human experience. It aims to help people avoid negative life patterns and situations that can lead to serious mental illness. Camp Kookaburra and the Kookaburra Kids Foundation are dedicated to assist young people in families affected by mental illness by helping them to maintain a full and happy childhood.

The importance of this mission cannot be overstated. Young people of these backgrounds are 50 per cent more likely to develop mental illnesses in their later lives. Finally, the Como Social and Leisure Centre aims to help people leaving mental health care to get back on their feet, get active in their communities and start socialising again. This is a crucial part of the rehabilitation process; building the confidence to approach and interact with others is fundamental to maintaining good mental health. A purpose of the mission also is to start the conversation within my electorate. To the credit of my constituents, there has been great success, with dozens contacting my office to discuss the guide in the days and weeks after its publication. Some wanted to discuss mental health, others had suggestions for future publications, but many simply wanted to express their gratitude for drawing their attention to an issue that impacts their lives and their neighbours' lives.

I thank each and every one of the constituents, especially those who struggle with mental illness but have shown the courage to speak up and ask for help. The title of the guide is "How to save a life". It refers not only to the prevention of suicide but also to saving people from the conditions that make life miserable when they remain undiagnosed and untreated. I believe that if we as a society can talk about this issue openly and without fear of prejudice, then there is no limit to the amount of unnecessary suffering that we can prevent. In the guide I urge constituents to reach out to their loved ones, friends, neighbours and others to make sure that they know there is help available if they need it. I repeat that request right now, in this place: If you know someone who you think is struggling right now, ask them, "Are you okay?" Make sure they understand that they are not alone, that there are people out there who will help them, and urge them to please ask for help.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [12.51 p.m.]: I, too, share the concerns expressed by the member for Heathcote. I commend the member for taking up the challenge. I read his booklet on mental health services in his

electorate and beyond. As the member said, it is our responsibility as a community to take on the whole mental health issue and to recognise that most people do not access services that are available in the community. This week, as we are running suicide prevention workshops in the southern part of the State, we realise that 80 per cent of people who take their lives have had no contact with the health system. So it is incumbent on all of us to have that conversation and spread the word. Again I commend the member for Heathcote for his valuable work in his area.

ALCOHOL-RELATED VIOLENCE

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [12.52 p.m.]: I bring the attention of the House to a public debate that is occurring in my electorate of Baulkham Hills and indeed the adjoining electorate of Castle Hill—alcohol abuse by minors. Members of this House would be aware that the Social Policy Committee, chaired by the member for Coogee, called for submissions and is holding an inquiry into that very important subject. My community, led by me, the member for Castle Hill, licensees and the local area command, decided to use that as an opportunity to workshop new policy and to investigate new ways in which the community can address the abhorrent abuse of alcohol by minors. One of the major issues to which our attention has been drawn is the consumption of alcohol by minors under the supervision or with the concurrence of parents and guardians. That matter has been the subject of considerable discussion. Following a number of workshops, meetings and briefings with the liquor industry and police, we have prepared a submission, which we will continue to work on.

It is my view, having been party to the submission, that communities across this State are very much concerned about the increase in alcohol-fuelled violence, particularly the violence occurring on our streets late at night. We witnessed during the winter recess the unnecessary deaths of a number of young people resulting from alcohol-related violence. Of most concern, of course, is the tragic fact that a disproportionate amount of this alcohol-related violence involves our young people, both as perpetrators and, sadly, as victims. Few things are more heartbreaking than an innocent young person being the victim of an unprovoked, alcohol-driven violent attack. As a family-friendly constituency—in fact, many people call Baulkham Hills nappy valley—we have a very large youth population, so this concern is felt very strongly in my shire. The issue of alcohol abuse and related violence has been raised with me by members of the community on countless occasions. There is a clear and strong commitment by the community to resolve the problem.

I am sure that all residents in The Hills would agree that we as a community have a very important duty to ensure that our young people are safe when they go out at night. What can be a higher priority than guaranteeing the safety of our youth? It is simply unacceptable that our streets on occasions deteriorate into alcohol-fuelled, lawless chaos in the early hours of Saturday and Sunday mornings. I am not saying that The Hills district is worse than any other area. In fact, my electorate has only two hotels. As I look around the Chamber I am reminded that the constituencies of some other members would probably boast two hotels on a corner. Though The Hills electorate has just two hotels, alcohol-fuelled lawlessness is an issue in the electorate, so I can only imagine what it is like in some of the other constituencies. But just as concerning is the apparent increase in minors being irresponsibly supplied with alcohol by their parents, or other adults, to the point of inebriation. Our communities recognise that this type of exposure of minors to alcohol is simply unacceptable, regardless of who supplies it to them. All communities in New South Wales are determined to tackle these issues to ensure that the level of alcohol abuse and related violence is drastically reduced, especially among our young people.

It was with this in mind that the member for Castle Hill and I called for public input from our communities. It is my belief that emphasis needs to be placed upon the responsible consumption of alcohol, as opposed to merely focusing on responsible service of alcohol. Our submission is the result of wide consultation within The Hills community, with particularly significant contributions from The Hills Local Area Command, licensed venues and parents. Some very interesting and promising proposals have come from these consultations. Among them were stronger penalties for public intoxication, banning supervising adults from supplying alcohol to children not in their care, and making non-licensed venue managers responsible for the consumption of alcohol on their premises. The submission also recognised the importance of individual responsibility when it comes to alcohol consumption. There are naturally a great many solutions that have been attempted in the past with mixed success. I am certainly not in agreement with all solutions that have been proposed, but I think it is important to have public consensus in favour of reform. It is only through open dialogue with the community that we stand a chance of fixing this most serious social issue.

TAMWORTH AND DURI HOSPITAL AUXILIARIES

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.57 p.m.]: Today I congratulate the Tamworth and Duri local hospital auxiliaries and update the Parliament on the year of record funding achieved by the Tamworth

Rural Referral Hospital. The Tamworth and Duri hospital auxiliaries have both had outstanding years financially and socially. I recently attended the Duri auxiliary annual general meeting and the Tamworth branch annual general meeting and was amazed by the ladies' efforts for our community—not to mention the magnificent afternoon teas. It has been an incredible year for the Tamworth ladies, who raised a record \$56,028.53 for the Tamworth hospital, clocking up an amazing 12,501 volunteer hours through a variety of events, such as fashion parades, golf days, lamington days, market days, cake stalls, the very popular soup and damper days, and curry luncheons.

The Duri branch also had a very good year supporting the Tamworth hospital, raising \$6,756 through 1,700 volunteer hours. They run a number of events throughout the year, including lamington drives and damper days, with the big one being the peas, pies and mash luncheon coming up on 26 August. I invite all my colleagues to join us for that fundraising event. I can assure you that you will have a sensational time and taste some magnificent food. Much-needed equipment, including bath chairs and theatre equipment, as well as a resuscitation trolley for the rehabilitation unit and a tilt shower chair for the intensive chair unit, were purchased from funds raised in the last financial year. A number of awards were presented at the Tamworth annual general meeting, including a certificate to Jan Robertson in recognition of her wonderful contribution of 25 years of service. That highlights the commitment of these ladies: many are in their 70s and 80s, some even in their 90s.

I implore the members of all hospital auxiliaries, who do such an incredible job, to talk to their daughters, granddaughters and other younger people about the benefits of volunteering. I suggest they invite them to attend a meeting or a luncheon in order to gain an understanding of how gratifying it can be for them to be involved in community service. These days many organisations have professional fundraisers and marketers but volunteers run our hospital auxiliaries. Given the current tough fundraising market, the amount of funding raised last financial year was outstanding. Remarkably, the Tamworth Hospital Auxiliary spent some 12,501 volunteer hours and raised in excess of \$56,000. The hospital auxiliaries of Tamworth and Duri have had another great year. I thank them for their commitment and dedication to our community and I will continue to support them wherever I can.

TRIBUTE TO CAVALIERI ROSARIO MANIACI, MBE

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [1.02 p.m.]: It is with great sadness that I report to the House the passing of Cavalieri Rosario Maniaci, MBE—better known as Ross—on 11 June 2012. He was a great person who gave so much to the Drummoyne community, his family and friends. He was born in Lipari, Isole Eolie, on 4 August 1934, the son of Vittorio and Carolina Maniaci and brother of Caterina. He arrived in Australia in 1949 at the age of 15. His first job was with a company called Fiorelli. He then studied accountancy. He worked in his parent's family business for around six years before marrying Rita, the love of his life, and they had two children, Victor and Caroline. It was a close-knit family. When grandchildren Jaxon Ross and Alanna Laurena Maniaci came along later, he loved them dearly.

In 1967 Ross established his accountancy practice in Five Dock and worked until his retirement in 2007. In the Italian community Ross was a household name and he inspired many, including me, to get involved in politics. But his community service did not end there. He served as an alderman for 12 years on Drummoyne Council, and he served as deputy mayor and mayor over a period of two years—he was the first mayor from a non-English-speaking background. Ross was awarded an MBE by Queen Elizabeth II, including the title of Cavalieri from the Italian Government. He was a foundation member and the first president of the Associazione Isole Eolie in Sydney, where he served as president for 15 years. He also became president of the Federazione Siciliane, which basically covered all the uniting Sicilian associations in Sydney. He also ran the ENASCO office in Five Dock for many years.

Ross was proud of his heritage. He was a generous man and he helped everyone. Indeed, he gave a lot and asked nothing in return. He and his family were held in the highest esteem. He was a person of the highest integrity, humility and honesty. He will be sadly missed but never forgotten. His legacy will live on in the hearts of his family and friends. I offer my sincere condolences to the Maniaci family. Although deeply saddened by his passing, we are strengthened by what he has given us—namely, the love he shared, the life experiences and the celebrations. I finish with a phrase taken from the condolence booklet of his service:

Life is not measured by the years you live but by the love you gave and the things you did.

Ross will be honoured by an art piece in the Five Dock Town Centre, part of the Community Building Partnership, in acknowledgement of the Eeolian contribution to the City of Canada Bay Council, which has a sister city arrangement with Drummoyne.

CAMPBELLTOWN ACADEMIC CHALLENGE

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [1.05 p.m.]: The Campbelltown Academic Challenge was held on 1 August 2012, during Education Week. I am pleased and honoured to be the patron of the Campbelltown Academic Challenge, which is designed to engage our children in an academic challenge that is fun, inclusive and competitive. Campbelltown, the opal of the south-west, the best place to live in Australia and the benchmark for the best we have to offer, has a community that cares and with people who are prepared to help each other. This challenge, which showcases the best talent of our youth, was hosted at Sarah Redfern High School, where I had the support of Peter Phelps, Ingleburn School Education Director, Principal Karen Endicott and teacher Ross Dummett.

The format of the challenge was to have 16 teams of our best students divided into four pools with each team facing four challenges. Students from Sarah Redfern Primary School, Glenfield Public School, Ingleburn Public School and Macquarie Fields Public School were in the red pool. Students from Campbelltown Public School, Ruse Public School, Sackville Public School and St Andrew's Public School were in the green team. Students from Minto Public School, Curran Public School, Wattle Grove Public School and Leumeah Public School were in the blue pool. Students from The Grange Public School, Glenwood Public School, Robert Townson Public School and Ingleburn North Public School were in the yellow pool. The first challenge was the Tower of Terror: students were required to construct, in a limited time, a tower from drinking straws donated by Peter Meadows from McDonald's. The teams were given points for the height of the tower, its construction and stability. The tower also had to hold a golf ball and display the McDonald's logo. Some were incredible: one was almost two metres high.

Another challenge was based on the Jeopardy show and focused on geography and history. The It's Academic section was based on mathematics, algebra and patterns. In all sections more points were awarded for the more difficult questions. It was amazing to watch the sportsmanship of these wonderful students. The situation was similar with the spelling bee competition. I know that Hansard will be very pleased to hear that spelling is still highly regarded in the community. Some of the words that these kids tackled were incredibly hard. No academic challenge is complete without award recognition, and I was very proud to sponsor the awards. The winning school received a silver trophy and the school gets to hold until next year the perpetual shield for the Campbelltown Academic Challenge. I was also pleased to present individual medallions—in Olympic style—to each of the winning team members.

The winner on the day was the team from Robert Townson Public School. The school, situated in the suburb of Raby in Campbelltown, has as its motto—most appropriately—Aim High. The pursuit of excellence in all teaching and learning programs is based on the broad opportunities available for all students and the school has high expectations of its students. The team members included Ava Lai, who wants to be a geologist or a mineralist, or perhaps an architect; Kate Woodbury, who loves to read and write; Nikhil Vishwa, who wants to be a game creator; and Cameron Bowden, who wants to be an author. I will be hosting those students and other group winners at a special reception at Parliament House on 23 August. I recommend this academic challenge format to other members of Parliament. We should celebrate the pursuit of knowledge and excellence in our students. Perhaps one day one of these fine students will go on to win a Nobel Prize for science, medicine or literature. We should encourage excellence in our children. I commend the Campbelltown Academic Challenge to the House.

OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST TOM SLINGSBY

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [1.10 p.m.]: Back in May this year I asked the House to recognise the achievement of one of my constituents in Gosford in winning the Laser world championships in Germany. I also called on the House to wish him every success in representing Australia in the upcoming Olympic Games in the United Kingdom. Tom Slingsby was born in 1984 and is within weeks of celebrating his twenty-eighth birthday. Although born in Sydney, he lives on the Central Coast of New South Wales and is a member of the Gosford Sailing Club. He attended primary school at St John the Baptist in Woy Woy and secondary school at St Edward's College in East Gosford. He started sailing when he was eight years old but was a tennis player until the age of 16, when he turned his focus to sailing.

Tom Slingsby has been world champion in the Laser class for five of the past six years. But, like other world champions before him, and despite the fact that he was ranked number one in the world at the time, he found out at the Olympics in Beijing that his previous record meant nothing when he finished a disappointing

twenty-second at those Olympics. That led Tom to question his continuation in the sport. But after some soul-searching he decided to give the next Olympics in London a go, and we are delighted that he did. In 2010 he became world champion again in the Laser class by winning the Etchells world championship and he also won the Rolex World Sailor of the Year award—the first Australian ever to do so. In 2011 he was world champion again, having won the event in Perth, Western Australia. He won three stages of the sailing world cup and he also won the Olympic test event in Weymouth, England, where the Olympic sailing events were held just recently.

I am proud and delighted to congratulate Tom Slingsby of Gosford on winning Australia's first individual gold medal when he won the Laser class at the London Olympics 2012. What started as a pipedream for a young lad from Gosford, inspired by the Sydney Olympics almost 12 years ago, became a dream come true when he achieved Olympic glory at Weymouth just a week ago. He went into the medal race with a 14-point lead over his nearest rival, Pavlos Kontides of Cyprus. To win gold he had to finish within six boats of Kontides, and he never looked to be in trouble. He finished ahead of Kontides by employing brilliant blocking tactics throughout the race. Tom is a modest man and when asked what was the best gift he had ever received he replied that it was support from his family and friends. His personal motto is that hard work pays off. I could not have put it better myself. There is a lesson in that for all of us. I heartily congratulate Tom on his wonderful achievement at the Olympics. I know that members join me in also offering their congratulations to Tom and to all of the Australian competitors who represented their communities at the Olympics and who have all done Australia proud over the past fortnight.

CASTLE HILL BUDOKAN JUDO CLUB

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [1.14 p.m.]: Whilst watching the National Basketball Association play-offs between Miami Heat and Oklahoma City Thunder recently I was struck by the passion for and the importance shown to those sporting events. The attention given to such events as the National Basketball Association play-offs can at times appear to be unnecessarily excessive with the cult-like following of the clubs around the world, the adoration showered upon the athletes and the huge expenses that go into such a spectacle. But these events represent the peak of global sporting achievement, and the concept of sport has far wider reaching benefits that are often overlooked. Sports, especially at a junior level, offer immeasurable benefits to local communities. Children involved in sports are indirectly educated in important life lessons, such as self-discipline, courage, sacrifice and being part of a team environment. I look back with great fondness to my own years of junior sport, particularly the camaraderie that it fostered in the simplest of games.

Far away from the bright lights of Miami, Castle Hill has a much smaller but no less significant sporting community. One particular club in my electorate that is a shining example of a grassroots organisation benefitting the community is the Budokan Judo Club. The club has a proud history of success, aided by the commitment of its volunteers and the dedication of its members. In 2011 the Budokan Judo Club was named New South Wales Club of the Year—a great achievement for a club that had only 110 members in 2009. The club's vision is to be recognised in the judo and general community as the premium judo training centre in Australia.

The history of the Budokan Judo Club is centred on the hard work and sacrifice of the volunteers who have built up the club from its humble beginnings. Three of those early volunteers were Dale Keogh and Ivor Endicott-Davies, now life vice-presidents, and Morgan Endicott Davies, whose commitment and energy shaped the club into what it is today. In more recent years Kerrye and Rob Katz, with the able assistance of Barbara Stratford, have helped to coordinate training activities at the club. Over time the club's numbers have grown significantly, an indication of the effort and time that have gone into the club. In September 2000 the club doubled its 1999 membership to 25. This number grew to 73 by the end of 2001 and at the end of November 2002 the club had 86 members. In 2009 the club boasted 110 members and it has continued to expand its membership.

Budokan members are able to regularly visit and host members of other clubs due to their strong international ties. These clubs include the Saitama Judo Club in Japan and two different clubs in New Caledonia. The coaches themselves have impressive judo records, with Rob Katz medalling in the nationals between 1982 and 1992 and Kerrye Katz representing Australia at five world championships and at the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul. If they had been young enough to compete in the 2012 Olympics in London we may have won a few more medals.

The 2012 National Judo Championships were held at the Wollongong Sport and Entertainment Centre over the June long weekend. The relatively small Budokan Judo Club had an impressive 25 athletes representing

New South Wales in 35 age or weight divisions and their results impressed all who attended the championships. The national championships were held in conjunction with selections for the Australian Youth Olympic Festival to be held in 2013. The club managed to win an unprecedented eight gold medals, six silver and seven bronze in the nationals and two gold medals and one bronze in the Youth Olympic Festival selections. These are wonderful achievements from some of the State's most talented athletes and their success is a testament to their coaches and their discipline, dedication and hard work.

I recently had the pleasure of visiting the Budokan Judo Club in Castle Hill to wish the members luck in their upcoming tournaments and to inspect the facilities. One thing I immediately noticed was the noise and laughter that echoed around the hall. It was heartening to see so many young people quite literally throwing themselves into such a worthy endeavour. I too had a go against Rob Katz, which, needless to say, lasted all of five seconds before I found myself pinned down and struggling to breathe. A much simpler task was making presentations to the athletes who received financial help from the club to take part in the recent national championships.

The club is based in a pavilion at the Castle Hill Showground—a pavilion which will be demolished to make way for the North West rail station at the showground. I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Transport and the North West Rail project team, who have ensured that a new home for the Budokan Judo Club will be constructed for the club during construction of the project and beyond. The Budokan Judo Club is a prime example of the type of grassroots sporting club that makes the Castle Hill community thrive. By providing our young people with an outlet for physical exercise, as well as an environment in which to develop key personal skills, the club highlights the importance of local sports initiatives. I congratulate Rob Katz and all the members of the club on their hard work and dedication to the sport.

MACARTHUR LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.19 p.m.]: On 27 June I had the pleasure of attending the Camden and Wollondilly local business awards held at the Camden Civic Centre. It was an honour to see so many local faces supporting the extended Macarthur region. I have said many times before that local business is the backbone of our community and contributes much to our local area. Without the support of local businesses we would not get the expert and specialised service that we expect, we would not get the competitive pricing that we expect from these services and we would not get the familiarity of seeking goods and services from a welcome and friendly face. Without our local businesses supporting sporting groups, local schools, charity groups, non-government organisations and others seeking the support of a local business these groups would find themselves lacking much-needed assistance and support. Local businesses are also our major employer and support many local families through that employment.

All nominees in their categories have demonstrated that they are leaders in the Camden and Wollondilly communities. The quantity and calibre of businesses in the Macarthur area are exceptionally high, and the cream of the crop were nominated for these awards. I congratulate all the nominees: Achieve Martial Arts, Amigo Bakery, Arishelle Beauty Salon, Baked Couture Cakes, Beauty's A Curse Makeup Artistry, Becca Janes Hair Creations, Belgenny Farm, Bistro Calavia, Bujutsu Martial Arts, Bushland Pool and Spa Centre, Camden Automotive Repairs, Camden Florst, Camden Fruit Barn, Camden Quality Fruit, Camden Signs, Caring Vets, Chemmart Pharmacy Narellan, Chisholm and Turner Travel Associates, Col's Clip Joint, Couture Body Beauty and Skin Spa, Currans Hill Childcare Centre, De Julius Hair, Diamond World Jewellery Narellan, Dynamic Rhythms Music Centre, Eden Flower Design, Elders Real Estate Camden, Elderslie Pharmacy, Envious Photography, Esteteca the Ultimate Hair Experience, Eyesense Optometrists, Food.Drink Camden, Genuine Canine, Gloria Jeans Camden, Hair Time, Head Over Hair, Henning's Jewellers Narellan, Hair and Beauty Temptations, Image Graphic Design and Impressionable Kids Camden.

Other nominees were Indulgence Boutique, Jeanswest Narellan, Joes Kebabs, L J Hooker Camden, Lifeline Narellan, Limelizard, Looking Class, Looks Natural Make Up and Beauty, Luigis Restaurant, Macarthur Centre for Sustainable Living, Maria A Salon, Mattress Mania, Michael Hill Jewellers Narellan, Michels Patisserie Mount Annan, Modern Conveyancing, Murrays Martial Arts Dance and Gymnastics, My Way Personal Training, Narellan Charcoal Chicken, Narellan Motor Inn, Narellan Pilates Studio, Narellan Self Storage, Novek Conveyancing, One Click Communications, Pamela's Essence of Beauty, Priceline Pharmacy Narellan, Pronto Pizza, Rays Camden Valley Meats, Razzle Dazzle Hair Design, Sassine Hair, Scallywags Kindergarten, Seagulls on Argyle, Self Indulgence Boutique, Shoe Talk Camden, Simply Serene, Specsavers Narellan, the Arthouse, the Beauty Base, the Chocolate Room, the Clean Bean Laundromat and Café, the Crystal Shop, the Pit Martial Arts, Tidleys Butchery, Twinkle Toes Baby Hand and Feet Sculptures Macarthur, Utopia Hair Design and Ziafat Restaurant.

I congratulate all the winners: Benjamin Ryan Jewellery, Advanced AV and Electrical Solutions, Barenz, Bunch it with Country Florist, Coulches Personal Accounting and Taxation Services, Coutts Conveyancing, Cut it Out Hair Design, Eden Day Spa, Enzo Italian Restaurant, Harrington Park Physiotherapy, HQ Homequarters Camden, Macarthur Country Meats, Macarthur Veterinary Group, Marions Photographics, McGrath Real Estate Agents, Michels Patisserie Camden, Mount Annan Pharmacy Express, Noni B. Narellan, Pizza Spot, Scrapbook Sensations, Splendour Interiors—the overall business of the year—United Taekwondo, TSR Mechanical Repairs, Little Elves Childcare Centre, The Oaks Fruit Shop, Under Thirty Dollars, Camden Valley Inn and Sarah Cochrane of AMM Accounting and Associates. I commend and thank the *Camden & Wollondilly Advertiser* for its support of these important awards, and acknowledge the wonderful businesses in the Wollondilly and Camden area. I congratulate the businesses that were nominated for these outstanding awards and all businesses on the wonderful service they provide to the Macarthur community.

ST ANN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, MERRYLANDS, AND REVEREND RODNEY KERR

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [1.24 p.m.]: It was an honour and a privilege to be invited last year, on 13 October 2011, to the installation of the new rector of St Ann's Anglican Church, Merrylands. I had the pleasure of witnessing the hard work and commitment of the parishioners within the church. Bishop Lee was there to install Reverend Rodney Kerr as the new Senior Pastor. Reverend Kerr came from the Blue Mountains to be the shepherd of the people of God in Merrylands. My electorate of Granville enjoys the combination of many faiths and beliefs. It is a large, diverse community, all living in harmony. St Ann's Anglican Church encourages people from all backgrounds to its place of worship and provides English classes, which began 12 years ago. There are now more people than ever. The aim is to learn together and make friends in small groups.

The good work they do among the community, supporting children, families and the elderly, fosters and helps the most important foundation of our community—the family. On the night Reverend Kerr was installed as the parish priest I shared the evening with more than 400 parishioners. It was an evening of celebration that united everyone. The glory of God and the love of the people to each other made the evening very special. When God called upon Reverend Kerr he was ready to answer the call. He is willing to serve the people. His good understanding and commitment to life were appreciated by all the parishioners. On 31 March 2012 Reverend Kerr wrote to me for support on the definition of marriage being between man and woman. He requested that I comment on the current definition of "marriage" as it has become an extremely personal issue.

As I told Reverend Kerr, in my personal view marriage was formed from the *Bible*. In so many beliefs this is not relevant. However, God has a lot to say about marriage and he held it in very high esteem because the marriage relationship reflects the image of God. The unity between man and woman is the same as the unity between God and his church. Marriage demonstrates the high value that God has given to humanity. I highly respect Reverend Kerr for his commitment to preaching the word of God in helping to keep the family relationship together. I look forward to working with Reverend Kerr. Together we can build harmony in the community. Together we will lead people in the right direction to make Merrylands a special place to live, work, enjoy and participate.

Private members' statements concluded.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr John Barilaro) left the chair at 1.28 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 public gallery of a delegation from the Lao National Assembly, led by Her Excellency Madam Pany Yathortou, President of the Lao National Assembly. I welcome them to the New South Wales Parliament and trust that they are enjoying their day.

CLERK ASSISTANT, COMMITTEES AND CORPORATE

The SPEAKER: It is with great pleasure that I announce that Ms Helen Minnican has been appointed Clerk Assistant, Committees and Corporate, effective from 25 May 2012.

PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIAN

The SPEAKER: It is with great pleasure that I announce that Ms Annette McNicol has been appointed Parliamentary Librarian, Department of Parliamentary Services, effective from 9 July 2012.

DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL SERVICES BRANCH

The SPEAKER: It is with great pleasure that I announce that Mr John Gregor has been appointed Director, Financial Services Branch, Department of Parliamentary Services, effective from 18 July 2012.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

MARIE BASHIR
Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 21 June 2012

Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that she re-assumed the administration of the government of the State at 6.05 a.m. on Thursday, 21 June 2012.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

National Energy Retail Law (Adoption) Bill 2012
Energy Legislation Amendment (National Energy Retail Law) Bill 2012
Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2012
Judicial Officers Amendment Bill 2012
Crimes Amendment (Reckless Infliction of Harm) Bill 2012
Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2012
Public Sector Employment and Management Amendment (Procurement of Goods and Services) Bill 2012
Appropriation Bill 2012
Appropriation (Parliament) Bill 2012
State Revenue and Other Legislation Amendment (Budget Measures) Bill 2012
City of Sydney Amendment (Central Sydney Traffic and Transport Committee) Bill 2012
Motor Accidents and Lifetime Care and Support Schemes Legislation Amendment Bill 2012
Security Industry Amendment Bill 2012
Appropriation (Budget Variations) Bill 2012
Child Protection (Working with Children) Bill 2012
Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment Bill 2012
Workers Compensation Legislation Amendment Bill 2012
Safety, Return to Work and Support Board Bill 2012

ELECTORAL DISTRICT OF HEFFRON**Resignation of Kristina Kerscher Keneally**

The SPEAKER: I advise the House that on 29 June 2012 I received a letter from Kristina Kerscher Keneally resigning her seat as the member for the electoral district of Heffron.

Issue of Writ

The SPEAKER: I advise the House further that, pursuant to section 70 of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, on 23 July 2012 I issued a writ for the election of a member to serve in place of Kristina Kerscher Keneally, resigned, with the following particulars: nomination day 9 August 2012; polling day 25 August 2012; and return of writ 7 September 2012.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.23 p.m.]

CAMPSIE LOCAL AREA COMMAND

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Last night Campsie police responded to a shooting and, two hours later, to a stabbing involving a 19-year-old man who sustained critical wounds. In light of this horror night on the streets of Campsie when will the Premier reinstate the 24 officers cut from the Campsie Local Area Command?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Leader of the Opposition should start this session by trying to get his facts right because what we see, time and time again, is Labor trying to pretend that the world commenced on 26 March 2011. For the 7.3 million people across New South Wales I know that on that date hope had been restored to New South Wales after, regrettably, we had endured 16 years of darkness under those opposite.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Nothing could have been darker under those opposite than the deceit used by them with respect to police numbers. Anyone who sat in this Chamber for even one term under those opposite knows the tricks used by them regarding authorised strengths and actual strengths.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: For instance, they know that under those opposite police who were assigned to transit duties were listed under local area commands. They know that police were transferred away from operational duties to other duties when it suited them.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: One of the reforms that have been put in place is for the Government to be up-front and open about police numbers because irrespective of whether police officers are operating as transit police officers or as highway patrol officers, they are, first and foremost, sworn police officers dedicated to cleaning up crime in New South Wales. Those opposite would have us believe that there is no crime in and around our stations and bus interchanges and on our public transport. Is that what those opposite are saying? Is that what the member for Liverpool is saying? Is that what the member for Cabramatta is saying? Are they saying that there is no crime around their railway stations? Are they saying that their commuters do not deserve to have the safest possible transport services in this city?

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Equally, is the member for Cessnock saying that we should not have highway patrol on highways in country areas?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I have to search deeply to find a country member on that side of the House. Certainly on this side of the House those members who represent country electorates welcome highway patrol officers and understand that highway patrol officers are not just policing the road rules; they are also engaged in crime operations.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah is on her final warning. Members will come to order. The Leader of the House will come to order.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: The Premier is now going into a broad-ranging debate about the police force. The question related to police numbers in Campsie. I think it is about time, with only two minutes remaining to him, that the Premier made an attempt to answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question asked. As the member knows, I cannot direct the Premier to answer a question in a specific way.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I could not help but hear interjections by the member for Kogarah.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We know that the member for Kogarah hates highway patrol police. We know that she is joined by the member for Lakemba—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: The member for Hawkesbury does not like highway patrol officers parked on the Cahill expressway either.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Hawkesbury has never had a problem with highway patrol parked on the Cahill expressway.

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

[Interruption]

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am so pleased that the member for Kogarah is interjecting.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I welcome the interjections by the member for Kogarah. I welcome the point of order by the Leader of the Opposition. The difference between the member for Kogarah and members on this side of the House is that she would not do what police asked her to do.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Ain't it great to be back! The authorised strength of the New South Wales police in May of this year was 15,956, as it was in June. This month there will be a second attestation—or graduation, in our language—from the police academy that will produce another 60 officers, bringing the number of police officers across the State to 16,016. The difference between this Government and the previous Government is that we do not hide actual strengths: we publish the strengths. The difference between this Government and the previous Government is that we recognise that places outside of Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong are affected by crime. Ask the member for Tamworth. Ask the member for Armidale. Ask country members about what we are doing not just to get additional police in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong but also to ensure that police numbers are shared across New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will come to order. Before I call for the next question I draw the attention of members to the level of noise during the Premier's answer. Regardless of whether members like the answers to questions asked by them, they should remain silent. Only one question has been asked in this question time and already the member for Kogarah is on three calls to order, and the member for Wollongong is on two calls to order.

Mr Andrew Stoner: Throw them out.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier will cease interjecting whilst I am speaking.

Mr Clayton Barr: Throw him out.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Cessnock to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Cessnock left the Chamber at 2.29 p.m.]

RIGHT TO SILENCE LAWS

Dr GEOFF LEE: My question is directed to the Premier. What is the Government doing to crack the code of silence of criminals?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Parramatta for his question and for his concern about this issue. Before I address the substance of his question I advise that this is just another area of reform being tackled by this Government, which is determined to deliver better outcomes for the people of this State, whether that be in the way in which we operate our education system or deliver transport services through ferries, buses and trains—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —or indeed through the significant reforms that have been outlined by the Minister for Planning. We are determined to tackle the hard issues to deliver better outcomes for this State because we know that the people who live here can do so much better. Today I can announce further reforms. We are going to tilt the scales of justice towards common sense because the Government is toughening the law that deals with the right to silence.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We propose bringing forward legislation to amend the State's Evidence Act to allow juries and the judiciary to draw an adverse inference against an alleged criminal who refuses to speak to investigating police but goes on to produce so-called evidence at trial in a bid to be found not guilty. The current law sees juries explicitly instructed by trial judges not to draw an adverse inference from such behaviour. That will change for those charged with a serious indictable offence. After our amendment is passed juries will be able to use their common sense and will be quite entitled to draw a negative inference in such a circumstance. It will bring New South Wales into line with similar reforms that have operated in England and Wales for almost two decades.

It has been too easy for criminals and those who protect criminals to keep quiet. It has been too easy for them to say, "I have nothing to say." The legal principle governing the right to silence is important but it has been exploited. Time and again we have heard frustrated police complain that their investigations are stymied by suspects and witnesses obviously withholding crucial information. There are many occasions when it would be sensible to conclude there is something suspicious about an accused person who fails to cooperate with police during an investigation only to later reveal something that they claim proves their innocence. The current law, which compels jurors to ignore such shenanigans, is not common sense, and our amendment will free jurors from these legal shackles. As a result of our proposed changes the caution given by police will be amended. Currently an accused person is required to be given the following caution:

You are not obliged to say or do anything unless you wish to do so, but whatever you say or do may be used in evidence. Do you understand?

Under our proposed change that caution will become:

You are not obliged to say or do anything unless you wish to do so. But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something you later rely on in court. Anything you do say and do may be given in evidence. Do you understand?

If that caution is familiar to people in the public gallery it is because they will have heard it watching episodes on television of *The Bill*. That is precisely the caution that has been used by English and Welsh police in those jurisdictions since 1994.

[*Interruption*]

The member for Kogarah knows all about *The Bill*. Has the member for Kogarah ever done what the police have asked her to do once in her life? I have made it abundantly clear that the Government will give police the power and the resources they need to tackle crime across our State. Amending the right-to-silence law is another example of our support for our hardworking police. It is another example of this Government getting on with the reforms needed to ensure better outcomes for people across the State. This announcement was welcomed by the Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione, who joined me for a press conference earlier and who said it is a "common sense approach which should see a decrease in the use of silence by suspects during police questioning". It is our intention to release draft legislation at the end of this month and it is our intention that this legislation be dealt with by the Parliament this session. The question for the Leader of the Opposition is: Are you finally going to back police or are you simply going to continue to carp and criticise and refuse to do anything practical to support police across our State?

POLICE NUMBERS

Mr NATHAN REES: My question is directed to the Premier. Did his Government undertake any risk assessment process prior to cutting 298 police officers from local area commands?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I stand behind the answer I gave in response to the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition. However, I will say this to the member for Toongabbie—and this does not and

probably never will apply to the Leader of the Opposition—you were once Premier and presided over the deceit practised by the former Government when it refused to reveal to communities across the State what the actual strengths in local area commands were.

Mr Nathan Rees: Rubbish.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is true. Time and again.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease arguing across the table. The member for Kogarah will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I think the member for Kogarah has a conflict of interest in participating in this debate.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Time and again those of us who sat in this place from 1995 would ask questions, initially about police patrols and then about the actual and authorised strengths of our local area commands. Answers would come back from the wonderful collection of police Ministers we had over those 16 years—and I use the word "wonderful" in the same way as people, in the great Australian tradition, call someone who is tall "Shorty" or someone who is short "Lofty"—and each time we were told that the use of public resources could not be justified to reveal such facts. It was not public resources those opposite were concerned about; it was the shonky way in which they were treating authorised strengths across the State whereby too often up to a third of police were not available on some occasions. That is why, in part, when the Coalition was elected the Minister for Police ensured that there was a review of policing across New South Wales—not just in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong but across country areas.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That is why we are proud that police in graduating classes this year have been placed across the whole State and not kept away from country areas in which crime issues are just as significant as they are for other communities in New South Wales. More than 16,000 police will be on the police books by the end of this month. That is, 16,000 police will be available, in whatever role, to fight crime and deal with crime to ensure that we have safe communities. What is at the nub of this question and of the question asked by the Leader of the Opposition is the insulting implication that a police officer who is either a member of the Highway Patrol or of the Transit Police and who comes across a crime or detects a crime is going to ignore it.

Mr Michael Daley: That is not the point.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That is the point: that is exactly the point.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: There are 16,000 police across this State who are sworn to uphold the laws of this State. They cannot, even in their private time, ignore issues of illegality. They are required to take action and they do so. The insulting questions from those opposite suggest that this Government, by ensuring that we have effective highway patrols and effective policing on our commuter systems, is somehow or other downgrading community safety across the State. That is a nonsense. Every member in this place, including myself—there are eight railway stations in my electorate—has talked in the place time and again about antisocial behaviour and crime in and around railway stations. There would not be a single member in this place who has not done that, been told about the antisocial behaviour or made representations about it. That is one of the reasons they are ensuring that transit police are available to patrol not just on our public transport but in and around those interchanges where people congregate.

What those opposite cannot cope with is a government that is up-front with the people of this State, a government that publishes monthly the strength of the NSW Police Force, a government that ensures that police resources are shared across the whole of the State on the basis of where crime occurs, and a government that supports police with the resources, the powers and the numbers that they deserve. Today that includes strengthening provisions on the right to silence, which is something that those opposite are practising in relation

to our commitment to reform the law, something that those opposite still have not committed to. At the end of the day, that reveals their contempt for police because they prefer to handcuff the hands of police behind their backs and make it harder for them to catch the villains across the State.

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

ELECTRICITY PRICES

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: My question is directed to the Treasurer. How is the government putting downward pressure on electricity prices?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question, for his work on the parliamentary committee and for ensuring that New South Wales has an efficient government. It is a great opportunity to stand here today to again confirm that the O'Farrell Government has met its election commitments. That is what we do. On Sunday I had the opportunity to see the Leader of the Opposition. I will not tell him how to do his job—he can do it however he wants—but I do have a simple tip for him: Whenever you are talking, why not start with facts?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Leader of the Opposition spent Sunday telling porkies. We know why. He does not like reading documents and budgets, and he does not like reading policy documents. If he had bothered to read the Liberal and Nationals policy document on energy before the election he would have seen this particular point.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Kogarah to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Kogarah left the Chamber at 2.42 p.m.]

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Put simply, our commitment and policy was no increase in electricity dividends above the cut. We have come well within that commitment. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, we gave them the facts. We all remember the last approach of those opposite to put a budget forecast together. When they did, they forecast dividends in 2011-12 of \$903 million. What has the O'Farrell Government delivered? It has delivered a dividend of \$820 million, a decrease of 19 per cent. We have kept our commitment. What was the forecast for 2012-13? It was for \$1.144 billion. We forecasted, \$999 million, a decrease of 13 per cent. Our dividends are lower every year than those forecast by Labor and the Leader of the Opposition has not only got it wrong; he has told porkies from one corner of the State to the other.

It gets more incredible when you look at their record on prices. What happened under the past five years of Labor? We remember five years with increases of more than 60 per cent in electricity prices. What did those opposite do? They took dividends, but they did not invest in the infrastructure of this State or the electricity networks and that is why we are playing catch-up today. That is why we are proud that this Government is delivering for New South Wales and putting downward pressure on electricity prices. We have commenced the merger of the State's distribution businesses and we will see more than \$400 million in constant efficiency savings over four years. We have reduced capital expenditure by more than \$2 billion, which is 9 per cent lower in this year's budget, and we have ended the handiwork of Captain Solar: the Solar Bonus Scheme. We have ended its impact.

When the next electricity distribution and price determination is made these actions will start to put downward pressure on prices. The O'Farrell Government is very proud to do that. In the meantime, we continue to provide rebates for low income earners. The Family Energy Rebate is available to 700,000 families. The Low Income Household Rebate is available to 540,000 families. Labor's credibility on energy is in tatters. On Friday Martin Ferguson told this State that we should be selling absolutely everything. The Leader of the Opposition said we should be selling nothing. He spent four years under a government trying to sell everything it had. The member for Maroubra, the middle manager, is here. He is the next leader of the Party. Where has he gone?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: When he comes back members should make sure they note his new suit. He is looking pretty flash. He spent his time supporting privatisation when he was in government. Let us not forget the words of Morris Iemma:

The tragedy for electricity consumers in NSW is that had it not been for the recklessness of a few pig-headed public sector union officials, they would have been banking the savings on energy bills a long time ago.

I do not know who Mr Piggy is, but we have an idea who it is. The O'Farrell Government continues to live up to its election commitments. It continues to put downward pressure on electricity prices and it will continue to look after the people of this State.

PARRAMATTA LOCAL AREA COMMAND

Mr GUY ZANGARI: My question is to the Premier. I refer to the recent spate of stabbings in Parramatta. In the Premier's pre-election speeches he promised to deliver more police to local communities. When will he reinstate the 49 officers cut from the Parramatta Local Area Command?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We are on track to deliver the 550 additional police that we committed to at the last election. For the benefit of the member for Fairfield, as I said in response to questions one and three today, police numbers in New South Wales will be 16,016 by the end of this month. I am also able to say that a quarter of those who graduate from the academy this month will be going to western Sydney commands. That is consistent with what we have done since we came to office. Other regions of the State, including commands across this city, have received additional police to support that greater focus we have on police numbers. It is important to have sufficient police numbers, but it is more important to give police the powers they need to do their job.

Those on this side of the House have been doing that since we came to office. We started the year by strengthening the State's consorting laws. We brought them into the twenty-first century to ensure that police have the powers they need to deal with those villains who congregate to plot nefarious deeds. At the start of the year we also cleaned up the legislation that the member for Toongabbie rushed through this place. He was warned by speaker and speaker, but we had to trust him on his word that it was legal, only to have it struck out in the High Court. I repaired that. We also reformed the State's laws dealing with ammunition because that is certainly something that police—

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question related to reinstating 49 police officers in the local area command. When will the Premier address that issue?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This Government has reformed the consorting legislation and legislation relating to ammunition, and addressed the High Court decision striking out legislation relating to outlaw motorcycle gangs. We have also tackled the control of tattoo parlours by criminal elements—largely outlaw motorcycle gangs. Today we have announced reforms to the legislation relating to the right to silence to ensure that those who are accused of serious indictable offences cannot use legal precepts to avoid conviction. They are demonstrations of this Government's getting on with the job. That is in stark contrast with the behaviour of members opposite, who for the third time have refused to indicate whether they will support reform that the Police Association and the NSW Police Force have been seeking for years.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: They want the right to silence legislation reformed to bring it into line with the practice that has been in place in England and Wales since 1984. Members opposite are interested only in politics and the Leader of the Opposition is interested only in hanging on to his job. Madam Speaker, at the commencement of the sitting today you mentioned the by-election to be held in the electorate of Heffron. That brought back warm memories of a by-election held in Ryde in 2008 and a by-election held in Penrith in 2010. The Coalition began a rebuilding process in those by-elections that paid dividends in 2011. We choose young, up-and-coming, vibrant candidates, including the then 41-year-old candidate who is now the member for Ryde and the not-yet 30-year-old candidate who is now the member for Penrith. Who has the Leader of the Opposition handpicked for the electorate of Heffron? Did he pick a young gun?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129. The question was about policing in Fairfield. Madam Speaker, I think you would agree that the Premier has moved well and truly away from the topic.

The SPEAKER: Order! I agree with the member for Macquarie Fields. I uphold the point of order. The Premier will return to the leave of the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Policing is important in the electorate of Heffron, but the only demonstration of real policing happening opposite is the Leader of the Opposition ensuring that no-one who could threaten his leadership is elected to this place. The future opposite is members the same age as former Ministers Obeid and Macdonald. In contrast, the Coalition has young guns in this place.

TEACHERS

Mr ANDREW FRASER: I direct my question to the Minister for Education. What is the Government doing to get great teachers in every classroom and excellent educational leaders in every school?

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question and his great interest in education.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I had the pleasure of visiting his electorate a couple of weeks ago to speak at a conference at Southern Cross University—a great local campus and facility. It was also a pleasure to visit a couple of the great schools in East Hills during the parliamentary recess. They had great things to say about the new member for East Hills. As Minister for Education I have already visited their schools and seen the great work they are doing. I also had the opportunity to visit a couple of schools in the great city of Wagga Wagga during the recess and saw the great work happening in regional New South Wales. It is fantastic to be a member of a reforming government. It is hard to keep pace with the improvements in education. This Government has reformed the early childhood sector and the School Certificate, introduced the Local Schools, Local Decisions initiative—the most comprehensive reform undertaken in 100 years—and ensured that students with disabilities get the support that they deserve.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We have also introduced the Connected Communities program involving 15 schools in rural, regional and remote New South Wales. Schools are being supported in doing their great work. Today I joined the member for Vaucluse, the Parliamentary Secretary for Tertiary Education and Skills, in launching the pathways university governance initiative, which is the result of a review that she undertook. These are only some of the education reforms being undertaken by this Government. About a week ago I launched another major initiative, that is, the "Great Teaching Inspired Learning" discussion paper. On 20 June I announced that the Government would release a discussion paper and we have done precisely that. The discussion paper deals with the most significant issue in education, that is, supporting our great teachers.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We have a world-class education system by any measure—in fact, according to the OECD, our education system is in the top 10 in the world. We cannot have a world-class education system without a world-class teaching profession. Of course, more can be done to support the teaching profession in New South Wales. I asked the Director General of the Department of Education and Communities, Dr Michele Bruniges, the Chief Executive Officer of the New South Wales Institute of Teachers, Patrick Lee, and the President of the New South Wales Board of Studies, Tom Alegounarias, to write a discussion paper. They are the three key education policy advisers to me as the Minister for Education and to the Government. The discussion paper is not restricted to public education; it deals with the Catholic, independent and government education sectors. It addresses the teaching profession and asks some very tough questions about things the Government may need to do to support it in New South Wales. Is it fair to ask schools to host practicums for about 18,000 university students each year when we know that only a tiny fraction of that number will take up teaching positions?

Should we look at what high-performing systems in Asia and Europe are doing and ask ourselves how we can attract and train only the best and brightest potential teachers? How do we create collaborative workplaces for our teachers in which professional development and pursuit of excellence define the workplace

culture? How do we ensure that truly great teachers who achieve at the highest level of professional accreditation and demonstrate best practice have a career path that does not lead them away from the classroom and teaching? How do we reward and retain the best teachers so that they stay in schools and build professional capacity? The discussion paper has been received positively. This Government has not done what the former Government did; that is, make a few notes on the back of an envelope, make an announcement and respond to the resulting outcry by changing its mind. A great deal of consultation has been conducted on this issue. Even Maralyn Parker—a hard columnist to please—said that the discussion paper may be the best thing this Government ever does. I acknowledge that it was not received well by everyone. Ms Parker stated:

As far as clever ideas go I think the people who put this discussion paper together win. It is a blueprint of all the teacher workforce problems facing the NSW Government.

[Time expired.]

CAMPBELLTOWN LOCAL AREA COMMAND

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I direct my question to the Premier. Given that indecent assaults increased by 34 per cent in Campbelltown last year, how can the Premier justify cutting 30 officers from the Campbelltown Local Area Command?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The only officer we cut from the Campbelltown Local Area Command was the new member for Campbelltown. This Government is particularly pleased to include in its ranks the member for Campbelltown, the member for Dubbo and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services—all former police officers. They understand not only what it is like to be on the beat but also the importance of having the appropriate powers to do the job that communities across this city and this State want them to do. They understand that those powers are not provided simply by Bob Carr, Morris Iemma, Nathan Rees and Kristina Keneally-style, made-for-media announcements.

They sounded great and got them through the immediate crisis, but proved at best to be ineffective and at worst to hamper police officers with unnecessary red tape. That is why, as I have said to Commissioner of Police Andrew Scipione many times, this Government's legislative amendments are designed to give him the powers he needs to deliver safer communities across the State. I do not intend to apologise any more than I have in the past for being open and honest with the people of this State. We publish figures that are truthful, which is in stark contrast with what those opposite do. Their figures are about as truthful as the claimed speed at which the member for Lakemba was driving when he had an accident in his Ferrari.

Mr John Barilaro: It was a Lamborghini.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am reminded by the member for Monaro that it was a Lamborghini. The fact is that at the end of this month 16,016 police will be part of the NSW Police Force, which will bring policing numbers up to levels that ensure that if people across communities in New South Wales respect and cooperate with police, as most of them do, we will have safer communities. We will have 16,016 police by the end of this month, but across New South Wales we have 7.3 million people. This city has 4.5 million people. Any police force, but in particular the NSW Police Force, is reliant upon the goodwill and cooperation of its citizens. I am pleased that the member for Kogarah was thrown out of the House because she set an example that should not be followed by any student in the public gallery or any other citizen across this State in refusing to do what she was told by—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, as one would expect. The question was about a 34 per cent increase in indecent assaults in Campbelltown in the past year and the cutting of 30 officers from Campbelltown Local Area Command. I ask you to bring the Premier back to the question. I also refer to Standing Order 73. If the Minister wishes—

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the Premier to return to the leave of the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Another 60 graduating police this month means that we are on track to deliver the 550 police officers that we—

Mr Michael Daley: Only 60?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The only person on the Labor side who is hoping for a loss in the electorate of Heffron says "Only 60?" The only person on the other side who has suggested that Labor would lose Heffron is the member for Maroubra.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Maroubra that this not the time for debate.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Why does the member for Maroubra hope that the Labor Party loses the electorate of Heffron? The Leader of the Opposition may not want to import talent into the party, but certainly the member for Maroubra and the member for Toongabbie have a couple of lean and hungry Cassiuses on their side. As the member for Maroubra should remember, the smallest attestation class of the year is always the winter class because even our tough police officers do not look forward to spending a winter in Goulburn. The bigger classes are the summer classes and the classes that begin at the start of the year. This Government continues to deliver the police that it promised and they are being shared across this city and across this State on the basis of need. We refuse to do what, for 16 years, those opposite did—put out bodgie figures that provided the community with no real information about the actual strengths of their commands.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In addition, we want to ensure that highway users and our commuters get the protection, and police presence and visibility that they deserve.

NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: My question is addressed to the Minister for Transport. What is the latest information of the North West Rail Link?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I acknowledge the strong advocacy of the member for Baulkham Hills for the people of his electorate.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased to provide an update on this important question. If Opposition members continue to interject I will have to refer to their failed record again. I do not want to do that because it is too early in the session.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: It is too early in the session to remind those opposite of their failures. I would rather focus on all the positive things we are doing. I am pleased to inform the House of a very strong local and international interest from companies that want to build the North West Rail Link. I report that six consortiums, including more than 60 companies from Australia and around the world, have signalled their intention to bid for the contract to build the twin 15.5-kilometre tunnels between Bella Vista and Epping, which will be the longest and deepest rail tunnels in Australia. I am pleased that the companies that intend to bid are from across Australia and around the world, including Spain, the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom, South Africa, China, Italy and Japan.

Now that organisations have indicated their interest, the next step will be the official calling for tenders in October this year to build the twin tunnels. This is an outstanding result and a strong sign of the high level of interest in this project and the confidence of those organisations in the New South Wales Government. It also sends a strong signal that global companies are keen to be involved in doing business with the New South Wales Government, something they could not be with the former Government. This very strong interest also reflects the unwavering commitment of this Government towards this project. That is a big change. For too long major companies have avoided New South Wales because they had no faith in the promises of the former Labor Government. This Government has earned their faith, and it has done that by sheer hard work. I know that those opposite are embarrassed by the amount of work this Government has done on this project, given they did nothing.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I am pleased that, in addition to the update I provided last session, we have already awarded more than 17 major tenders and 37 key contracts in relation to the North West Rail Link. What has the Opposition done? It has done nothing. In order to demonstrate the level of interest, at a major industry briefing in June more than 340 people representing 190 national and international firms attended a forum at Castle Hill. On that occasion I was pleased to have been joined by the Premier and a number of my parliamentary colleagues and community leaders who participated in that very important briefing. That level of corporate interest, I am happy to say, is matched by strong community support. The Community Information Centre that we established has been keeping the local community fully informed about the project. More than 4,000 people have either walked in off the street or phoned the information centre, and more than 51,000 people have visited the North West Rail Link project website.

The tender process that I have outlined today is a significant milestone. There will also be a tender process for the two remaining contracts for surface construction works and the rail systems, trains and operations that is expected to start later this year. Following the call for tenders to build the tunnels, a contract is expected to be awarded in the second half of next year, and we will continue to consult closely with the community as it progresses. We are keen to make sure residents have a say during the planning process. I have listened to our colleagues who have raised issues regarding tweaking plans, and we have addressed those issues. More than 350 submissions were made as part of the first environmental impact statement process. We expect there to be more feedback during the second environmental impact statement process. This will allow everybody to have a say. I encourage the community to keep in touch with us. Let there be no doubt: this is a Government getting on with the job of building this important project. *[Time expired.]*

POLICE NUMBERS

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: My question is directed to the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murray-Darling will come to order. Government members will come to order so that I can hear the question. The member for Lakemba will wait until Government members come before he asks his question.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: Given that theft from motor vehicles has increased by 29 per cent in Hurstville, how can the Premier justify cutting 13 officers from the Hurstville Local Area Command?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Was that car thefts or thefts from cars? I thought the member for Lakemba was only speeding when he crashed that Lamborghini. Someone once said that the definition of stupidity was asking the same question over and over again and expecting a different result. The Minister for Resources and Energy, the member for Terrigal, has corrected me: It was the definition of insanity, and it was Einstein who said it. They are mad, bad and stupid over there. No better person could ask that question than the man who crashed the Lamborghini—the speed he was going at the time is still unknown. He claims that he was doing the speed limit but in fast cars it is hard to adhere to the suburban speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour and sustain the damage that was done.

Mr Robert Furolo: Point of order: As entertaining as the Premier thinks he is being, his answer is not relevant to my question. I ask that the Premier return to the leave of the question.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The figure of 16,016 police officers by the end of this month is impressive. The adjective "impressive" is not original nor is it one that I have used before. Indeed, I first saw it in a 2009 press release issued by the then Minister for Police, the member for Maroubra. He described the strength of the NSW Police Force at the time, which was 15,306 police officers, as "impressive". What will it be at the end of this month? It will be 16,016 police officers. Under the O'Farrell Government more police officers are graduating—namely, 315 graduated last May and 60 more are due to graduate this month. Police are being deployed across western Sydney but, importantly, they are being deployed also to the regions where they are most needed. The member's question referred to police resourcing in a particular area but there are other questions about police resourcing—for example, resourcing of police in Cessnock, Keira, Wollongong and Wallsend. Does the Leader of the Opposition support additional police in those areas? The Leader of the Opposition is once again exercising his right to silence but earlier this year on radio 2WS he said:

We need police back in Sydney, not located in regional New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kiama, the member for Monaro, the member for Tamworth and the member for Oxley will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: For the past 16 years under Labor that was the disgraceful way in which police resources were allocated. Those opposite never looked beyond Newcastle, Sydney and Wollongong. Now they are saying not even Newcastle or Wollongong should get a look in because the Leader of the Opposition wants to drag police officers from those regions. By the end of this month 16,016 police officers will be on the books and the new graduates will be allocated in a way similar to the May attestation class—namely, on the basis of need. In May police officers were deployed in western Sydney and they were deployed also in the Tamworth electorate where crime exists.

Crime also exists in places such as Cessnock, Keira, Wollongong and Wallsend where under the policy put forward by the Leader of the Opposition—who is again exercising his right to silence—police numbers would be denuded as he continues to try to score points while playing politics with crime in Sydney. The O'Farrell Government will continue to support police and give them the powers they deserve. I am still waiting—as I have waited from question one—for an indication from the Leader of the Opposition as to whether he will back the reforms to the right to silence that the Police Association and the Commissioner of Police have been waiting for.

SPORTS BETTING

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN: I address my question to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. What is the Government doing to protect the integrity of sport?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Are you throwing Manly out again?

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY: The Government is doing the same as it is doing to protect the integrity of this Parliament.

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

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY: I thank the member for Gosford for his question and for his interest in sport because the Central Coast has a great sporting culture. Last year in my inaugural speech I flagged my concern about the potential impact on the integrity of sport by the huge growth in sports betting, particularly the more exotic forms of betting that can be easily corrupted by those with unscrupulous objectives and that may even lead to the involvement of organised crime. Whilst most of the serious incidents of match fixing have occurred overseas, it would be naive to think that we in Australia are immune to that threat. These days professional sport is big business and the temptation can be significant. Our laws need to reflect the seriousness of the offence and they need to send the strongest possible message that this type of corrupt behaviour will have serious consequences.

Last year agreement was reached on a national policy on match fixing at a meeting of all Australian sports Ministers. Proudly, the New South Wales Government is leading the way as the first State prepared to introduce legislation to ensure that the integrity of sports betting is protected. With the cooperation and support of my colleagues the Attorney General and the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, new legislation will be introduced with penalties of up to 10 years imprisonment for any person found to have engaged in conduct that corrupts or attempts to corrupt the outcome of an event. This will be the first time that a specific offence of cheating has been included in the Crimes Act. Whilst 10 years imprisonment will be the maximum penalty for the most serious cases, the message it will send to all involved in sport will be loud and clear.

The consultation process in arriving at this point was extensive and involved stakeholders from the major sporting codes, betting agencies and legal fraternity as well as government agencies. The new laws will apply to any person who intentionally fixes or influences the outcome of a sporting event. Examples include deliberate underperformance, any match officials who deliberately misapply the rules, tampering with a playing surface, using insider information to place a bet on an event known to be fixed, offering or accepting benefits for the purpose of fixing or influencing the outcome of an event, and any betting agency or bookmaker who accepts a bet when they know the outcome of the sporting event has been fixed. These reforms are essential to ensure a safe, transparent and lawful market in sports betting and should be supported by everyone who values the unpredictability and integrity of sport.

Question time concluded at 3.17 p.m.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN TRELOAR, AM

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY (Miranda—Minister for Sport and Recreation) [3.17 p.m.]: Today it is my sad duty to pay my respects to a former Olympic hero who left us with little fanfare literally days before the opening ceremony of the London Olympic Games. John Treloar is a name that may not be as well known today as it was the last time the Olympics were staged in London in 1948, but he was just as much a champion and a legend as any of our current Olympians. Sadly, only five days before the Olympics returned to London, and some 64 years after John represented Australia in the same city in 1948, he passed away quietly aged 84.

John was a very special person who encapsulated the Olympic spirit. His journey through life was filled with golden moments highlighted by his selection as a sprinter on the Australian Olympic track and field team in London in 1948 and again in Helsinki in 1952. In a sport dominated by Europe and the Americas, John was ranked as one of the world's fastest men between 1947 and 1952. Putting his athletic ability into perspective, John was barely out of his teens when he represented Australia in the 110 yard and 220 yard races in the 1948 London Olympics. He also won six Australian athletics championships in his career, as well as three gold medals at the 1950 British Empire Games—now the Commonwealth Games—in Auckland.

I attended John's service earlier this month at his old school, North Sydney Boys High School. The eulogies were delivered by his four children, along with his good friend and fellow Helsinki Olympian, retired Supreme Court judge Mervyn Finlay. Each speaker highlighted the contribution that John had made to people's lives and the diverse skills that set him apart from others. In 2000 John was awarded the Australian Sports Medal for outstanding service as an Olympic athlete, and in the following year he was awarded a member of the Order of Australia. After completing his Olympic duties in 1952, John returned to a career in engineering, working for his father primarily in the area of design. But sport was always his passion. When he stopped competing he turned his attention to administration and served a term as President of Athletics New South Wales, an organisation that later made him a life member.

As recently as 13 July this year John organised the annual reunion of the 1952 Helsinki team, having organised the same event for 59 consecutive years. Last year North Sydney Boys High School named its newly refurbished gymnasium in his honour, again highlighting the indelible impression John left throughout his life. Perhaps the most poignant reference to John was his favourite saying, which not surprisingly involved the Olympics: "The most important thing about the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part." In a touching tribute to John's athletic ability and attitude to life, his son commented at the service, "Dad passed away exactly as he ran—quickly." John is survived by his wife, Jan, his children, John, Phillip, Geoffrey and Patricia, two stepsons, 18 grandchildren and his brother, Hugh. John Treloar will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him and who knew of him. May he rest in peace.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [3.21 p.m.]: On behalf of the Labor Opposition I endorse the Minister's comments about John Treloar. I join the Government in paying our respects and extending our deepest condolences to his wife, Jan, his four children, John, Phillip, Geoffrey and Patricia, his two stepsons, 18 grandchildren and his brother, Hugh. In organising this statement today, two things struck me as I was learning about John Treloar. The first is that he went to London 64 years ago, in 1948, to represent Australia. His comments about that experience are worth repeating. He got there only a few years after the Blitz and could still see its effects on London. London in 1948 was a very different place from what we have seen on our television screens over the past two weeks. The second point he made about the 1948 Olympics was the different way athletes looked after themselves and their accommodation. Indeed, he said he remembered eating kippered herrings three times a day. I am sure that is different from what the athletes at the London Olympic village experienced over the past two weeks.

John Treloar was a great man. He was described as a great athlete and a gentleman. I am sure that he would have been a little disappointed at the way the coverage of the Olympics focused on why we did not get more gold medals and did not focus more on the spirit of the Games and the sorts of things this man, a real Olympian, would have focused on. John was 84 years old. In his younger days at North Sydney Boys High School he was not only a great athlete but also a great rugby player and a fast bowler. A piece on John Treloar in the *Australian* had an amazing photograph of the race finish at the Olympics. John came sixth but there was only about a tenth of a second between his sixth place and first place. Lindy Remigino of the United States of America finished first in 10.79 seconds and John Treloar, who came sixth, got there in 10.91 seconds, so clearly it was a very close race.

John participated in the 1952 Helsinki Games—the finish I described was at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics—and, as the Minister said, at the Empire Games in Auckland, where he won three gold medals. When John Treloar was an athlete it was a very different time. Perhaps we need to remind ourselves of that time, the

true spirit of the Olympics and what they represent. Of all the accolades paid to John Treloar, perhaps the greatest sporting tribute was paid by his son, John, as the Minister said. One can feel the admiration and respect for, and good humour of, this man in the message that his son sent to the athletic community on John's passing. It simply read: "Dad passed away exactly as he ran—quickly." That is a good representation of John Treloar. In conclusion, it is poignant that John Treloar passed away only five days before the Olympics in London, which is where John did so well for our country. Once again, I join the Government in paying our deepest respect and extending condolences to the Treloar family. We remind ourselves that John Treloar leaves an enormous legacy not only for athletics and sport in Australia but also for Australia in general.

OMBUDSMAN

Reports

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, of the following reports of the NSW Ombudsman, dated July 2012 and received 26 July 2012:

Managing use of force in prisons: the need for better policy and practice.
Safe as houses? Management of asbestos in Police buildings.

Ordered to be printed.

PARLIAMENTARY ETHICS ADVISER

Report

The Speaker tabled the report of the Parliamentary Ethics Adviser for the year ended 30 June 2012.

Ordered to be printed.

JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICE

Government Response to Report

The Clerk announced the receipt of the Government's response to report No. 1/55, entitled "Inquiry into the Parliamentary Budget Office", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 25 June 2012.

OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS

Reports

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 74 of the Rail Safety Act, of the report entitled "Rail Safety Investigation Report, Derailment of Pacific National Service MC92, Clifton, 23 November 2011", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 26 June 2012.

The Clerk also announced the receipt, pursuant to section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, of the report entitled "Bus Safety Investigation Report, Fire Involving STA Bus MO4878, Hillsdale, NSW, 29 July 2011", received out of session and authorised to be printed 3 July 2012.

INDEPENDENT TRANSPORT SAFETY REGULATOR

Report

The Clerk announced the receipt of the report entitled "Implementation of the NSW Government's response to the Final Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Waterfall Rail Accident Reporting period: April-June 2012", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 1 August 2012.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of a performance audit report of the Auditor-General entitled "Improving the literacy of Aboriginal students in NSW public schools: Department of Education and Communities", dated August 2012, received out of session and authorised to be printed on 8 August 2012.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report**

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 21/55", dated 14 August 2012, together with minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 20/55, dated 19 June 2012.

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

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**Membership**

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to the resolution of 21 June 2012, of correspondence nominating Paul Gerard Lynch as a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

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

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**Chair**

The SPEAKER: I inform the House, pursuant to Standing Order 282 (2), that Jai Travers Rowell was elected Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on 29 June 2012.

STANDING ORDERS**Offensive Words, Imputations or Reflections Upon Another Member**

The SPEAKER: During recent sittings I have become increasingly concerned about the practice that has developed of members not being inclined, upon request from the Chair, to withdraw offensive words, imputations or personal reflections upon another member. The use of offensive words against another member is a breach of order and is prohibited under Standing Order 72. Similarly, Standing Order 73 specifies that imputations of improper motives and personal reflections on members are disorderly other than by substantive motion. These standing orders come into play if a member takes a point of order that the words used, or imputations or reflections made, are objectionable to the member and should be withdrawn. The Chair may intervene and take action if offensive or disorderly words are used by a member. The Chair would not usually intervene unless the words used are particularly distasteful and have been clearly heard by the Chair. The Chair also has an overriding duty to preserve the dignity of the House and, in that regard, would not usually contemplate withdrawal where the objection raised is frivolous or the result of a misunderstanding.

In view of the confusion that has occurred over the interpretation of those standing orders, I can provide the following advice to the House by way of clarification. If objection is taken against words used, or imputations or reflections made, on the ground that the member finds them personally offensive, the Chair will ascertain what words were spoken. If the Chair finds the words used were capable of giving offence, the member will be ordered to withdraw them and, if it is a particularly serious case, the Chair has discretion to direct that an apology be given. An apology is not sought purely at the request of the member taking offence. If the member refuses to withdraw or only offers a qualified withdrawal, the Chair has discretion to name the member under Standing Order 250 (3) or remove the member from the House under Sessional Order 249A.

PETITIONS

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

Central Coast Palliative Care Services

Petition requesting the implementation of specific steps in the 2012-13 State budget and forward estimates to substantially increase funding, staffing and infrastructure for palliative care services on the Central Coast, received from **Mr Richard Amery**.

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**.

Cooks River Sewage Flows

Petition requesting the limitation of sewage flows into Cooks River such that levels of E.coli and other human pathogens are reduced below safe levels for swimming and boating activities, received from **Ms Linda Burney**.

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 petitions signed by more than 500 persons were lodged for presentation:

Waverly Traffic Signals

Petition requesting the urgent installation of traffic signals at the intersection of Wellington Street and Bondi Road, Waverley, received from **Ms Gabrielle Upton**.

Miranda Traffic Signals

Petition requesting the modification of traffic lights at the intersection of Box Road and Port Hacking Road, Miranda, to stop traffic flow from Box Road East to Box Road West and vice versa, received from **Mr Mark Speakman**.

Rose Bay Promenade Heritage Listing

Petition requesting the listing of Rose Bay Promenade and seawall on the State Heritage Register, received from **Ms Gabrielle Upton**.

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

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Water Fluoridation—lodged 31 May 2012 (Mr Andrew Stoner)

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli—Teacher Qualifications—lodged 29 May 2012 (Mr Richard Torbay)

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli—Bobin Public School—lodged 20 June 2012 (Mr Andrew Stoner)

The Hon. Duncan Gay—Highway Vehicle Breakdown Safety—lodged 22 May 2012 (Mr Andrew Stoner)

The Hon. Duncan Gay—Newcastle Inner City Bypass—lodged 30 May 2012 (Ms Sonia Hornery)

The Hon. Chris Hartcher—Twofold Bay Wind Farm—lodged 21 June 2012 (Mr Andrew Constance)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Bickham Coalmine Project—lodged 20 June 2012 (Mr George Souris)

The Hon. Chris Hartcher—Bickham Coalmine Project—lodged 20 June 2012 (Mr George Souris)

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Redfern Railway Station Lift Access—lodged 24 May 2012 (Ms Clover Moore)

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Unanderra Railway Easy Access Upgrade—lodged 20 May 2012 (Ms Noreen Hay)

The Hon. Greg Pearce—Public Holiday Retail Trading—lodged 31 May 2012 (Mr John Robertson)

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

By leave and pursuant to resolution the Speaker identified that General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 294 had been reclassified as a General Business (Community Recognition Notice).

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

ILLAWARRA TOURISM

Mr RYAN PARK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the contribution tourism makes to the economy across the Illawarra.
- (2) Recognises the efforts of those tourist operators who recently won awards in the South Coast Tourism Awards.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.

Community recognition notice agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Business Lapsed

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 135, 150, 185, 241, 256 and 258 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Right to Silence Laws

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.35 p.m.]: My motion states:

That this House supports the Government's commitment to toughen right to silence laws.

Everyone in this House knows that the role of Government is to improve the capacity of those it represents, by way of sound economic management, as is being done by our Treasurer; to ensure service delivery, which is being done by many members of our Cabinet; and to make sure that the laws of our land reflect the current needs of our community. For some time the scales of justice have had to be tipped towards common sense to restore credibility in our criminal justice system with regard to the issue of the right to silence. This motion deserves priority because the police and the community welcome the changes.

The motion deserves priority because, as in Britain and Wales, our legal system has evolved since police introduced far improved electronically recorded interrogation methods. The motion deserves priority because it tightens the loopholes for criminals who take the opportunity to abuse or exploit the legal system and to utilise ambush defences. The legal system allows the exploitation of the right to silence and often leaves victims of crime or the community not satisfied, with no clear opportunity to get to the truth of a matter before the courts or for the truth to be known or revealed, sometimes hidden by way of a judge's direction to a jury. I understand there are those who will object to this change, but their objections are philosophical or based on ideological grounds. These objections do not go to the pragmatic need to toughen these laws.

We live in a society where the pursuits of rights and equality have far outstripped the pursuit of maintaining respect and responsibility. That is why the motion deserves to be accorded priority. I do not argue that many rights and equalities pursued are unjustified, but they cannot be at the expense of the respect and responsibility required in our communities. By extension, it is our police who are on the front line protecting and upholding the laws of this State in order to achieve community safety for all. They will continue to have the

burden of proving beyond a reasonable doubt any matters they bring before a court. The issue of the right to silence and the need to toughen the laws will give the police who are asking for this legislation the power they need to make sure that they have the capacity to bring justice to our communities on matters that are currently being exploited.

Police Numbers

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [3.38 p.m.]: My motion states:

That this House condemns the O'Farrell Government for cutting 298 police officers from the authorised strength of local area commands across metropolitan New South Wales.

Despite a plethora of private members' statements, a number of notices of motions, a quiver of questions, lots of lobbying of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for the Hunter on behalf of the people of Wallsend, and despite community concern over alarmingly increasing crime rates and growing local angst over increasing reports of violent crimes on our streets, this afternoon I am saddened to reveal that the Premier has secretly slashed 298 police officers from local area commands in Sydney, the Hunter and Illawarra, thus breaking his pre-election promise to boost front-line police numbers. The Government's own figures reveal that it has permanently reduced the number of police officers that will be allocated to 12 local area commands, including Sydney, Parramatta, Campbelltown and Newcastle.

I can reveal another alarming statistic. In the Hunter alone this year there have been 93 armed robberies. Just yesterday a violent robbery occurred at the Hexham Hungry Jack's. Trains were stopped along the line and commuters were delayed because it was believed the suspect had boarded a train at Beresfield. On 16 August young workers were held up with a gun and a machete at the 7-Eleven at Lambton. On 31 July an armed robbery occurred at Domino's at Glendale and on 21 July young workers at Jesmond Hungry Jack's were held up for the second time this year by a masked man. In fact, Newcastle is being spoken of as a crime hotspot in New South Wales. I invite the Government to do this simple sum: 93 armed robberies this year in the Hunter alone plus a broken promise to build the much-needed Glendale police station plus 21 fewer rank and file police on the beat in the Newcastle Local Area Command equals more crime in New South Wales.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 66

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

Noes, 22

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

RIGHT TO SILENCE LAWS**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.49 p.m.]: I move:

That this House supports the Government's commitment to toughen right to silence laws.

It is prudent to begin with the words of the Premier, who said it was time that we delivered better outcomes and that we no longer left our law simply to reflect ideology. The right to silence is important, there is no doubt about that, and we are not moving away from that fact. However, the amendments the Government proposes are very much required because the legislation is being exploited far too often. Jurors are entitled to draw a negative inference if evidence exists that the accused has failed to provide pertinent information or knowledge that he subsequently attempts to use in a last-ditch effort to create an alibi to ambush the prosecution. As I said, the police and the community will welcome these changes. Our legal system has evolved, as it has in Britain and Wales, since far improved interrogation methods have been introduced by police. The changes will reduce the opportunity to exploit the legal system by using ambush defences. I repeat that the scales of justice for some time have needed to be tipped towards common sense, so that we can restore credibility within our criminal justice system.

As a constituent and friend of mine has said to me time and again—he lost his son Brendan in a senseless crime that resulted in legislative change which became known as Brendan's law—we no longer have a criminal justice system; we simply have a legal system. This amendment is required. The NSW Police Force has asked for legislative change to toughen right to silence laws. This is not the first time that this discussion has taken place. Police have attempted to have this legislation looked at for many years. The present Minister for Police, Michael Gallacher, asked the then Attorney General on 2 December 2010 what the Government of the day was doing in relation to this issue. Moves were made to improve rules in relation to alibi ambushes with a 42-day notice period but that was not and is not enough. The veil of silence that exists between warring criminals is one small example of an area in which the police, armed with improved powers, may be able to eradicate that blight on our community and in turn make our community safer.

It is simply not an argument anymore that the legislative reform is against common law principles on which our legal system was established; the proposed reforms reflect those made in Britain and Wales in 1994. The change was accompanied by an introduction of a right to free legal advice—something that I support. I understand the difficulty this area has caused police firsthand. I have experienced myself too many times—and it continues for police currently—having one hand tied behind my back in attempting to serve the community and enforce the law. This Government is committed to supporting police with key legislative reform to untie their hands and allow them to serve us and protect us commensurate with the challenges of the time. That is what this amendment of right to silence laws will achieve.

These are words that I uttered many thousands of times over a 22-year policing career, "You are not obliged to say or do anything unless you wish to do so but whatever you say or do may be used in evidence. Do you understand that?" If only I could have said in addition to that caution, "But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something you later rely on in court." I reflect on the many cases I investigated and brought before the courts in which there would have been a better outcome for the community if the amended procedure had applied. All members should support the motion. Police and our communities will welcome section 89 of the Evidence Act being amended in relation to serious indictable offences.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [3.54 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in this debate. I move the following amendment:

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

"this House notes the Government's announcement about so called 'toughening' of right to silence laws and awaits a copy of the legislation."

In a sense this debate is a corruption of the process of this place. The motion calls for the House to agree to a commitment that the Government has given that is contained in a piece of legislation. I have been known on occasion to be critical of the Government for introducing legislation without proper time for consideration of the bill, without allowing proper time to debate the ins and outs of it. I have not yet had to get up here and talk in a debate on legislation that has not even been introduced. We have not actually seen the bill that we are asked to commit to. As I said, it is a corruption of the usual process. I also note that much of the rhetoric surrounding the amendment refers to the importance of it to the Police Association and complying with police requests. I find that to be an interesting argument.

The police have been calling for this for some considerable time and the Government has been in power for almost two years. It is finally getting around to it. It may be a good thing, it may be a bad thing, but the Government should not pretend that it is so incredibly urgent if it has delayed this long before introducing it. Bear in mind that what we know about this is simply what a couple of Government members have been saying. As I understand it, it is in fact a very small step: it applies to serious indictable offences only. That is an incredibly small proportion of the number of criminal charges that will ever come before the court.

If this is so important to the Government, why is it restricting it in this way? Why will it not apply to all offences? I also note that the amendment would apply only to those who are facing criminal charges and not, as the Police Association demanded, to a whole range of witnesses. Despite what the member for Dubbo said, it will not extend police powers. It will not affect police powers at all. As I understand what has been put, if one exercises a right to silence an inference may or may not be drawn. Whatever that is, that is not an increase in police powers. It is also not the removal of the right to silence.

Mr Troy Grant: It is the power to ask someone for something that they have not got.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: I note the interjection, as usual, in breach of standing orders from the member for Dubbo. The police already had that power. It will not change police powers; it will simply change whether an inference can arise from what a defendant does. That is not an increase in police powers. I also note in passing, because I do not have the time—I would like to expand on this—the irony of the Government's announcement when the Attorney General told us he was going to end the law-and-order auction and that he was going to be the most left-wing Attorney General in the history of the State. It sounds to me like the Attorney has been comprehensively rolled in the Cabinet discussion on this.

We would like to consider a number of issues when we finally get a copy of the legislation. It seems to me that one of the real risks of the proposal would be the duration of trials. If this inference does arise from the exercise of the right to silence presumably the defendant or the accused is going to spend a whole lot of time explaining why it is they chose not to give the answer. That will significantly delay the process of justice. That is something I would like to think about a little more when we finally get the bill. Depending upon precisely what is in the bill, the issue will then become whether the onus of proof is reversed. That is certainly one of the traditional criticisms made of these sorts of proposals. Whether it does in this case will depend upon what is in the bill, which we do not have.

Mr Troy Grant: I did not say we had one.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: The member for Dubbo has conceded that he does not have a copy of the bill either. So it is bizarre for him to be endorsing it in this debate. The principle of the right to silence has been there since about 1640. The one point I agree with the member for Dubbo is that systems do evolve. The electronic recording of interviews of suspected persons [ERISP] was in fact a very significant change: it changed a lot of things. Despite the opposition from the police at the time, I think it has probably helped them in the long run, as I and others argued at the time. Systems do change.

We need considered thought about whether to move away from longstanding principles. This will occur when we have had a look at the bill. I also would like some explanation, and I guess we will get this in the

debate over the legislation, about what the change will do to alibi notices and the current rules about alibis. Do you actually need to get rid of those now if you are introducing this change? I am not necessarily advocating that, but it is one of the things to be raised in a proper and considered discussion of a topic such as this—when and if we get a bill.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [3.59 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Dubbo calling on this House to support the Government's commitment to toughening right to silence legislation. As the member stated, we are both long-serving police officers: I served 27 years in the NSW Police Force. I am proud to be a member of a reforming government that is at the forefront of improving public safety. The amendments to the legislation will mean that people will be safer on the streets, on public transport, in the suburbs, in the country and in the city. In the mid-1990s I worked on a detailed submission proposing the same amendments that this Government has foreshadowed. I was lucky enough to work with a fine officer, Chief Inspector Norm Webber, commander of Legal Services, South West. The member for Hawkesbury recognised the name Webber, and well he should: he is the uncle of the member for Wyong.

We were considering these reforms when the member for Wyong was still a young lad, so it has taken a long time to get to this point. If the member for Liverpool were not a member of Parliament he could be a gardener, because he carefully hedged around the issue without committing himself either way. The proposed legislation is about improving justice. An accused person can choose to remain silent. However, consequences will flow if he or she attempts later to raise evidence that could have been raised previously. The legislation will improve the justice system not only for the police and the public but also for victims—and after 16 years of Labor administration there are far too many victims. It will improve the ability of police to work with the community to reduce the incidence of crime, violence and fear. As the member for Dubbo noted, alleged offenders will be cautioned, but it may well harm their defence if they do not mention when questioned—

Pursuant to sessional orders business interrupted and motion lapsed.

COURTS AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Smith, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.02 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Courts and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The purpose of the bill is to make miscellaneous amendments to legislation affecting the operation of the courts of New South Wales and other legislation administered by the Attorney General and Minister for Justice. The bill is part of the Government's regular legislative review and monitoring program and will amend a number of Acts to improve the efficiency and operation of our courts and the operation of agencies within the Department of Attorney General and Justice.

I will now outline each of the amendments in turn. Schedule 1 to the bill amends the Bail Act 1978 to enable New South Wales court registries to electronically transfer bail forfeiture orders to the State Debt Recovery Office for enforcement. In New South Wales bail may be granted on condition that an accused person, or in some cases a third party, agrees to forfeit money if the accused fails to appear in court. If the accused does not appear the court may make an order forfeiting the money. Where that money remains unpaid the order is transferred to the State Debt Recovery Office so that it can be enforced. Changes that are currently being made to the New South Wales courts electronic case management system, JusticeLink, will soon enable these forfeited bail orders to be transferred to the State Debt Recovery Office electronically. However, the current wording of section 531 of the Bail Act 1978 states that court registries must send a number of documents relating to bail forfeiture orders to the State Debt Recovery Office manually.

Once JusticeLink is capable of transferring the order to the State Debt Recovery Office electronically there will be no need for the office to receive copies of those documents. Accordingly, this amendment would remove the requirement for the documents to be sent manually. Instead, copies of the documents would only need to be sent to the office when requested. This will make the process more efficient for both court registries

and for the State Debt Recovery Office. The bill contains a minor amendment to the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act 1997 which is designed to ensure consistency across New South Wales legislation. That Act aims to reduce juvenile crime and to assist young persons who may be at risk.

However, at the moment the definition of "carer" in the Act does not align with the equivalent definition in a related Act, the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. The definition of "carer" in section 3 of the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act provides that a carer is "any person who has the daily care and control of a child under out-of-home care arrangements made under the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998". However, section 135 of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act defines "out-of-home care" as "residential care and control", not "daily care and control". To avoid any possible confusion the Government would prefer these definitions to be the same. The bill therefore amends the definition of "carer" in section 3 of the Children (Protection and Parental Responsibility) Act so that it matched the definition in the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act.

The Chief Justice of New South Wales has drawn my attention to a gap in section 13 (1) (a) of the Civil Procedure Act 2005. This section enables the senior judicial officer of a court—for example, the Chief Justice—to delegate certain powers of a court to a registrar by instrument in writing. In the Supreme Court the powers of a registrar are conferred by section 121 of the Supreme Court Act 1970, which provides that an officer—meaning a registrar, taxing officer or other officer of the court—may exercise such powers as are conferred upon them by the Act, or by any other Act. Justice Pembroke considered this issue in *Peter James Spencer v Wayne Dennis Bamber*, where His Honour noted that section 13 (1) (a) of the Civil Procedure Act does not include some functions of the court that the current delegation purports to delegate to registrars. Justice Pembroke raised doubt regarding whether the delegation of functions under other Acts are authorised.

Fortunately, any lack of authority is cured through section 121 (4) of the Supreme Court Act 1970, which preserves the effectiveness of an order or direction of an officer of the court, whether or not that order or direction is within the power of the officer. However, for the sake of certainty, this bill will amend section 13 (1) (a) of the Civil Procedure Act to make clear that a registrar may exercise any function of the court under any other Act or law in respect of which the court has jurisdiction, including any rules of court. Registrars in the Supreme Court make various orders and exercise such powers many times per week under the Chief Justice's delegation and no objections have been raised. It was always the intention that the delegation power referred to in section 13 of the Civil Procedure Act should enable the senior judicial officer to delegate a broad range of functions to officers of the court.

Section 11 of the Court Security Act 2005 states that court security officers may require a person to surrender anything that the security officer believes on reasonable grounds is a restricted item or offensive implement. A "restricted item" is defined as any prohibited weapon within the meaning of the Weapons Prohibition Act 1998, a firearm or imitation firearm within the meaning of the Firearms Act 1996, or any other type of knife. An "offensive implement" is defined as anything made or adapted for use for causing injury or intended by the person to injure or menace a person or damage property. Recent security incidents at the Supreme Court have highlighted the fact that this section does not allow security officers to prevent other potentially dangerous items entering the court.

This amendment inserts a regulation-making power into the Act that would permit regulations to be made allowing court security officers to require the temporary surrender of certain items. This amendment will ensure that members of the public, the judiciary and the legal community are adequately protected from harm while attending court. At the same time, the use of a regulation will ensure that court security officers can only require the surrender of a specific list of items that might pose a danger to safety. This will preserve the principle that the courts should be open and accessible to the public.

Schedule 4 to the bill contains an amendment to the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 to allow the Government to clarify in the regulations which Government agencies are required to pay filing fees. The practice of the courts has long been to collect fees from certain Government agencies that are not budget dependent. For example, WorkCover has always paid filing fees in the Industrial Relations Commission in respect of work health and safety prosecutions. However, the Parliamentary Counsel's Office recently advised the Department of Attorney General and Justice that the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 could be interpreted to exempt some agencies from paying fees, contrary to this longstanding policy. This amendment will allow regulations to be made clarifying the Government's well-established policy. Such agencies have historically paid filing fees, meaning that the amendment clarifying the practice will have no financial impact on them.

The Courts Legislation Amendment Act 2010 amended, amongst other things, the District Court Act 1973 and the Local Court Act 2007 to allow a chief magistrate to also hold a commission as a District Court judge. The amendments provided that a chief magistrate, if also holding office as a judge, must preserve any benefits held under the existing State public sector superannuation scheme and no longer contribute to it. Instead, under Section 13 of the District Court Act 1973 a chief magistrate, if also holding office as a judge, is entitled to a pension under the Judges Pension Act 1953. There has been a suggestion that section 13 could be interpreted to mean that a chief magistrate, if also appointed as a District Court judge, would be entitled to count the entire period of service as chief magistrate towards a judicial pension.

The 2010 legislative amendments were never intended to backdate the chief magistrates' entitlements to a judicial pension. If backdating were to be permitted, a chief magistrate could theoretically receive a pension without needing to serve the same qualifying periods of service required of District Court judges. A chief magistrate should only be allowed to claim the benefits of one superannuation scheme at a time in relation to particular periods of service. This amendment will clarify that a chief magistrate cannot count time served as chief magistrate towards the requirements for a judicial pension. The current Chief Magistrate agrees with this position.

Under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009, when an agency decides to refuse a person access to information, the Information Commissioner can review this decision. Some of the bases for refusing access are related to privacy, such as the fact that information is someone's personal information. In such cases, the Information Commissioner must consult with the Privacy Commissioner when conducting its review. At present, restrictions in the Act prevent the Information Commissioner from consulting effectively with the Privacy Commissioner because of limits to the Information Commissioner's ability to disclose information. This bill amends the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 to make clear that the Information Commissioner can disclose the necessary information to the Privacy Commissioner when consulting with the Privacy Commissioner for this purpose.

The Jury Amendment Act 2010 provides for jurors to be excluded from jury service on the basis of certain types of criminal history. It also provides for a new system of criminal record checks whereby the Sheriff can obtain from the Commissioner of Police information about the criminal records of potential jurors. This bill amends the Jury Amendment Act 2010 to clarify that the Sheriff can obtain from Roads and Maritime Services certain information that is necessary to determine who should be excluded from jury service. The bill amends the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 to provide that parties must seek the leave of the court to be represented by a lay advocate or agent. The amendments provide in determining whether to grant leave that the court is to consider whether the agent has provided information to clients as may be required by the court rules. The court is also to consider whether granting leave is in the best interests of the party.

The amendments provide that leave may be granted subject to conditions and revoked at any time. Lay advocates and agents play an important role in the Land and Environment Court. The use of agents is an important vehicle for access to justice, as they often have expertise relevant to the determination of the issues in dispute. They provide a cost-effective way for parties to access the justice system. However, there are currently no protections for consumers represented by agents in the Land and Environment Court. In contrast, when a solicitor represents a party protections are in place. For instance, lawyers must comply with the legal obligations contained in the Legal Profession Act 2004 and the Legal Profession Regulation 2005, as well as the professional obligations under the Revised Professional Conduct and Practice Rules 1995.

The proposal will enable a court to assess, from the outset of a case, whether an agent has complied with the court rules by providing necessary information to clients. That information might include whether the agent has advised the client of his or her fees, or that costs could be ordered against the client. The court can refuse leave at the outset of the case, impose conditions on the leave granted, or revoke leave that has been granted at a later stage. The benefits of allowing representation by agents must be balanced with both the need to protect litigants against inadequate representation or undue costs, as well as the need to ensure effective administration of justice. The Government believes that requiring leave for representation by agents strikes this balance.

The bill also amends the Land and Environment Court Act to provide that acting commissioners whose term of appointment has expired can complete or otherwise continue to deal with any matters relating to proceedings that have been heard, or partly heard, by the person before the expiration of that period. The Land and Environment Court Act currently has a similar provision in relation to an acting judge whose period of appointment has expired. This bill will bring the provisions in relation to acting commissioners in line with

those for acting judges. There are similar provisions in relation to acting commissioners in the Industrial Relations Commission, acting judges in the Supreme Court and the District Court, and acting magistrates in the Local Court.

The bill also contains an amendment to the Mining Act 1992 that is intended to clarify the jurisdiction of the Land and Environment Court in respect of questions or disputes arising from certain decisions made under the Mining Act. In April 2009 the jurisdiction of the Mining Warden was transferred to the Land and Environment Court. To this end, section 21C of the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 provides the court with jurisdiction to hear and dispose of civil proceedings arising under the Mining Act 1992 or the Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 in class 8 of its jurisdiction. The court also has jurisdiction in relation to proceedings for certain offences under the Mining Act. However, some doubt has arisen as to the precise scope of the Land and Environment Court's jurisdiction in mining matters. A particular issue is whether on a technical reading of the legislation the court in fact has jurisdiction to hear and determine proceedings relating to a decision of the director general of the department determining an objection to the grant of a mining lease under clause 22 of schedule 1 of the Mining Act.

The practical effect of this uncertainty is that parties may be unable to commence certain mining matters in the Land and Environment Court, although the court otherwise has jurisdiction to hear and determine like proceedings. The alternative is that parties wishing for the Land and Environment Court to determine this type of proceeding would need to commence proceedings in the Supreme Court and then apply for the proceedings to be transferred to the Land and Environment Court under section 149B of the Civil Procedure Act 2005. This process would involve additional costs and delay resolution of the relevant dispute. The bill will amend the Mining Act to clarify the Land and Environment Court's jurisdiction in respect of such matters.

The Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 includes a regulation-making power to permit certain agencies to be declared part of other agencies. This allows the legislation to apply in a more practical manner. For example, it may be appropriate for closely related entities to share complaints handling and internal review functions. This bill includes an amendment to make clear that the declaration is to be made in respect of specified agency functions. Schedule 16 to the bill amends the Probate and Administration Act 1898 to provide that notice of an application for the grant or resealing of probate or letters of administration must be published in the manner prescribed by the court rules.

Currently, the Act requires that notices of intended application for a grant of probate or letters of administration must be published in a newspaper or newspapers as prescribed in the rules. The Supreme Court of New South Wales is currently managing a project to develop an online publication facility for these notices. When the facility is ready the court rules will be revised to provide for mandatory online publication. The bill also deals with applications made by way of cross-claims by providing that notice of such applications must be published within the period prescribed by the court rules. Schedule 16 also clarifies that court rules for probate matters may be made under the Uniform Civil Procedure rules as well as the Supreme Court rules. I commend the bill to the House.

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

COMMUNITY HOUSING PROVIDERS (ADOPTION OF NATIONAL LAW) BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 13 June 2012.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [4.23 p.m.]: The New South Wales Labor Opposition supports the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 and welcomes a national approach to governance for community housing providers across the country. It also recognises the growing importance of community housing providers to the families, couples and individuals who are currently residing in social housing and those seeking housing assistance. As outlined in the Minister's second reading speech, the non-government housing sector in New South Wales manages approximately 26,000 dwellings, which represents 17 per cent of all social housing in the State. This number and the proportion of social housing dwellings managed by community housing providers are growing and proper governance arrangements on a national level are logical and necessary.

The certainty of national uniform laws is required for a number of reasons. For governments, particularly the national government which is responsible for Federal social housing funding and management, uniform laws will ensure that all community housing operators have the same accountabilities, obligations and protections. For investors and financiers, nationally consistent laws will provide confidence and certainty when establishing funding agreements and financing arrangements. I represent an electorate with one of the highest concentrations of public and social housing in this State, and I also see the importance of protections for tenants and prospective tenants. Ensuring that community housing operators comply with funding conditions as well as the national regulatory code is a critical protection for tenants.

While community housing providers do a great job in supporting tenants and applicants, from time to time tenants need the protections of an enforceable regulatory code. As part of the New South Wales Labor Opposition's engagement with the community and stakeholders on bills before this House, the shadow Minister in the other place consulted the NSW Federation of Housing Associations. We acknowledge the substantial input of the association in the national consultative forum and the role it played on the technical reference group to develop guidelines for the Act. The New South Wales Labor Opposition welcomes the bill and the role it will play in providing certainty for the community housing sector, for banking and finance providers and, most importantly, for tenants who will have the protections of a national regulatory code covering all providers.

The Opposition calls on the O'Farrell Government and the Minister responsible for housing to stop attacking tenants and using their meagre pensions and carbon price compensation payments for their own heartless reasons. It is a callous act to decide to take a slice of compensation payments for pensioners designed to offset the cost of their household bills and to pour it into the Government's budget. When in opposition Minister Goward promised not to increase rents following the Federal Government's generous pension increases, yet it was one of the first decisions she made. Shame! The Opposition supports the bill.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [4.26 p.m.]: Before speaking to the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 I note that the outrageous closing remarks of the shadow Minister amount to a slur on the Minister for Family and Community Services. I can assure him that the spirit of bipartisanship in relation to this law is one thing, but it is unacceptable to take cheap shots at the Minister. I support the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 and I commend Minister Goward for the work done by New South Wales in leading the development of the national regulatory system for community housing providers.

The community housing sector provides much-needed affordable and social housing for people in greatest need, including people with disabilities. As at June 2011, 36 per cent of all community housing households included a person with a disability. In 2010-11, 37 per cent of all allocated community housing dwellings included a person with a disability. Community housing providers often have strong local partnerships to assist clients with disabilities to receive the support they need to live independently in their homes. This is done through a range of formal agreements with local support providers and through a range of formal partnerships. Approximately 15 per cent of the community housing tenancies are supported tenancies for people with a disability.

Community housing providers participate formally in partnership programs with service agencies to support people with a disability, including the Disability Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative [DHASI], the young people with a disability Leaving Care Program, the Port Jackson Supported Housing Project, and A Place to Call Home. It is vital that the community housing sector grows to ensure that people with housing and support needs can continue to be catered for. Growth enables diversification and a unique capacity for innovation in meeting individual needs. National regulation is an important building block for this to occur and New South Wales is leading the initiative. It provides a strong environment for growth, protects the interests of tenants and gives assurances to government funding bodies and private lenders.

In New South Wales more than 17 per cent of all social housing is currently managed by community housing providers. The largest 21 providers manage between 200 to 4,000 properties, some across broad geographical areas. We currently have a number of not-for-profit providers that are entrepreneurial in increasing their supply of social and affordable housing; others are likely to follow. This growth brings with it organisational and prudential risk as it requires new financial and commercial expertise, increased organisational capacity and scale and the management of private debt obligations. Bank lenders and investors have indicated they are more likely to lend to community housing providers on better terms if the sector is well regulated against standardised performance measures.

I am very supportive of the national regulatory system. It will introduce many advantages and benefits for the sector including: providing assurance to often vulnerable tenants about standards of service delivery; providing assurance about good governance and viability; enhancing the confidence of institutional bankers provide private finance for community housing by demonstrating that governments across Australia are serious and committed to the growth of the community housing sector; providing nationally consistent standards that the finance industry can utilise to assess the credit worthiness of community housing providers; and potentially improving the cost of borrowing through scale, creating a potential national market for lenders and allowing new entrants into the sector.

I understand that the New South Wales regulatory arrangements have proven to be robust and an excellent foundation on which to build the national framework. Thus there are only minor changes that build in extra enforcement powers to further protect the Government around its investment in community housing. A national system also supports the growth of the sector across jurisdictions and simplifies the operations of providers that work across State boundaries. This provides new opportunities for providers to achieve efficiencies through scale and, in turn, access larger investment markets. This legislation is an exciting move to support the community housing sector to grow and to assist more people in need of social and affordable housing, particularly people with disabilities. I am pleased to support the Minister introducing this bill into the House.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [4.30 p.m.]: I support the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. Housing is by far the main reason people come into my electorate office each day. Approximately 90 per cent of the people coming into my office are looking for either public housing or rent-assisted housing. That is why I support any legislation that will provide a modernised framework in which public housing can operate. The main purpose of this bill is to create uniform legislation—the Community Housing Providers National Law—for a national system of registration, monitoring and regulation of community housing providers. The adoption bill applies the national law to New South Wales. I take this opportunity to give some background information on how this legislation has developed. In June last year housing Ministers from around Australia agreed to a national regulatory system for community housing providers. They met so that a system could be introduced to provide nationally consistent regulatory arrangements to promote the growth of the community housing sector on a national basis.

The major objective of the legislation is to improve tenant outcomes and to protect tenants. It also aims to protect Government funding and equity in the sector and to further enhance investor and partner confidence. As I said in my opening remarks, the bill will deliver a uniform national system of registration, monitoring and regulation of community housing providers. When it is enacted, the legislation will mirror the national law, hence the name of the bill. The national regulatory system for community housing is a national initiative being led by the New South Wales Government. It will improve services by providing a regulatory framework that will give confidence to community housing providers, their clients and investors. I take this opportunity also to congratulate the Minister on her quick response to the many issues confronting housing providers and, indeed, those on the public sector waiting list around the State.

The new system aims to provide a fairer and more uniform system for providing housing Australia-wide. The legislation will also better protect tenants through consistency and uphold national standards for providers in these services. We are talking about an industry Australia-wide that accounts for a total of \$18 billion in mainstream community housing assets. Let us have a look at the state and size of the market in New South Wales. As at the end of June 2011, the community housing sector managed more than 26,000 properties, or 17 per cent of all social housing. Currently, there are 233 registered community housing providers in New South Wales. The 21 largest providers manage between 200 and 4,000 properties. This is a large portfolio and many people depend on it to function efficiently. Housing is of major importance to my electorate and that is why I chose to speak on this bill.

Under this legislation, nationally consistent regulatory arrangements will be introduced to promote the growth of the not-for-profit housing sector across Australia. The current arrangements are complicated and over-regulated. They create gaps and barriers, and problems have arisen as a result of each State and Territory Government regulating the industry in a different way. The proposed national affordable regulatory system builds on key elements of the New South Wales regulation, with heightened enforcement powers to ensure compliance. It also provides specific benefits for multi-jurisdictional providers—those already operating across jurisdictions and those who may wish to do so in the future. It will minimise the regulatory burden for multi-jurisdictional providers through a common approach to regulation across boundaries.

A national workshop was held in November 2011 with representatives of the institutional arms of the major Australian banks. That workshop highlighted strong support for the establishment of a national regulatory system. They supported its establishment unanimously to do away with the existing system to enhance the confidence of institutional bankers to provide private finance for community housing, with the add-on benefit of improving the cost of borrowing by creating a national market for lenders. It will also provide consistent standards for registered providers. The national regulation will create a system that avoids unnecessary restrictions on new entrants, as well as provide intervention provisions for the regulator that will help protect tenant, Government and finance partner interests. As far as New South Wales is concerned, the move into a national system will improve the existing powers through compliance with the national law.

As a result tenants will be better protected, and Government investments will be better protected. Registrars will work cooperatively with community housing providers to restore non-compliance issues. Under the new regulatory system, registered providers will be placed on a single national register. They will not be compelled to register under the national system. Registration will be open to any housing provider that meets the requirements of the national system. The National Regulatory Code will set out performance requirements to which registered housing providers must adhere. The code will not specifically order them on a set of guidelines on how to run their business. Rather, it will focus on the achievement of outcomes in the following areas: tenant and housing services, housing assets, community engagement, governance, probity, management and financial viability.

The code will also establish separate evidence guidelines to help providers meet the requirements. Apart from applying the national law in New South Wales, this bill also contains provisions that replace many of the community housing provisions of the New South Wales Housing Act 2001. This has the ability to protect Government investment in the community housing sector in New South Wales. As I said, I have had a lot of experience in dealing with the many people in my electorate who rely on public housing to put a roof over their heads and that of their families. These people are among the most vulnerable members of the Granville community. It was most gratifying to see that in last month's State budget the Government allocated more than \$9 million for the construction of new public housing in the Granville electorate alone.

I am happy to see that the Government is looking after these disadvantaged members of the community. This bill will go a long way to improving the delivery of public housing in this State. It will benefit both tenants and providers, and it will cut down on red tape. It is long overdue and yet another example of how this Government is working to reduce duplication and unnecessary waste in the delivery of services. By making New South Wales run more efficiently and productively, this Government is delivering and working to provide a more responsible government for the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [4.39 p.m.]: It gives me pleasure to speak to the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. I acknowledge and commend Minister Goward for bringing forth this bill to improve the delivery of housing in our State, and especially in my electorate of Parramatta, to people at the fringes of the socioeconomic divide. I share the views of Minister Constance on the need for social housing, especially for the elderly or for those who may suffer mental health problems. Community housing is essential for those people. I also share the views of the member for Granville, who went into some detail about the bill's legislative impact. The object of the bill is to enact legislation in relation to the registration of community housing providers in this State as part of a proposed substantively uniform scheme of legislation applying the Community Housing Providers National Law in the States and Territories. A national regulation system for community housing is essential for different reasons.

I touched briefly on socioeconomic factors. Parramatta is not immune from those—in fact, it has a significant number of community housing providers and community housing residents. They could be single-parent families or families with two parents who are doing it tough, perhaps unemployed or employed in jobs involving infrequent attendance. They could be part-time workers with several children or people new to Australia who come from difficult situations abroad and are looking for accessible housing. They could be elderly people, people with disabilities, people suffering from mental health issues or even addicted to substances, or those who have a comorbidity of conditions, whether from mental health or addiction problems. The list goes on. In the Parramatta electorate there are something like 7,000 public housing properties so access is essential. There are also approximately 7,000 people on the community housing waiting list in Parramatta. The area is particularly desirable because it is the capital of western Sydney and home to the Eels, and more recently the football team—

Mr Troy Grant: The Western Sydney Wanderers.

Dr GEOFF LEE: The Western Sydney Wanderers—I thank the member for Dubbo. It is particularly important that people have access to professional services, whether it is the Westmead Hospital clinics, psychiatric and counselling services or not-for-profit agencies such as Parramatta Mission, for a well-rounded, person-centred approach to their care. People require not just housing but a whole list of services that I will outline in a moment. The bill addresses some of these issues. If we do not do something now the system will remain unchanged. That is untenable because when the Coalition came to government it estimated that there was a \$300 million backlog in public housing maintenance. Driving around some of the public housing precincts, one can see that that appears valid.

We need to change current practice to offer better value for money. Public housing is a State asset that is funded by the Government. I support utilising community housing providers in the not-for-profit sector to manage and deliver housing services to targeted groups. That will assist the New South Wales Government in managing the large number of houses and housing providers, and assist the not-for-profit providers who qualify under the new regulations by offering certainty and a level of authenticity and confidence. It will deliver what is most important and benefit those people who require community housing. We should always care for such people.

There are some 7,000 people in community housing in my electorate. We have major projects, such as the Albert Street redevelopment in North Parramatta, the Wentworthville redevelopment and the Telopea redevelopment. Stage one of Telopea, which is a very controversial proposal, has been completed. I note that Minister Goward and Minister Pearce have been active in ensuring that that development is as it should be—that is, a 70:30 mix of integrated community housing, affordable housing and private housing to revitalise the area. Some 150 units have been built in the Telopea development. The other day I had afternoon tea with local residents. The units could have come straight from the inner city, where they would be worth \$600,000 to \$800,000.

The units were well finished, well furnished and particularly nice, and I commend Housing NSW for managing their building and design. The Hume Community Housing Association considers need and decides on the right mix of people. It interviews prospective tenants and moves in a range of people who will contribute to the area. I have every confidence that we will work closely with Hume to ensure the proper management and facilitation of that housing in accordance with local need. Housing is essential for homeless people, and I take this opportunity to mention the Parramatta Region Homelessness Interagency, which involves government, non-government, not-for-profit and community groups working together.

Interestingly, 10 days ago I attended a bike rally from Penrith to Parramatta, which was a drive for blankets for the homeless. The latest census reported a fall in the number of homeless people from 90 to 45, which is a 50 per cent reduction in homelessness. That can be attributed to the not-for-profit groups working in partnership. They believe in taking a person-centred approach, providing not just housing but counselling, education and retraining. It is about getting people a job and getting them connected with the community. Parramatta Mission, under the excellent stewardship of Reverend Keith Hamilton, is at the forefront of this work. His organisation is doing a fantastic job in the area.

Affordable housing is important. Sydney does not really have affordable housing; it has accessible housing. Sydney prices have spun so far out of control that private housing is not affordable for most people. We need to target accessible housing, which is what this bill does. It seeks to increase value for money and maximise the return on investment for the Government and the people of New South Wales. It provides security for the not-for-profit sector and targets those people who need help most—the residents.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.49 p.m.]: I support the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. What an insightful and passionate speech that was from the member for Parramatta. He represents a great area. Some of the greatest citizens that this country has produced have come from Parramatta. I note also that the member for Orange is in the Chamber and I look forward to an equally insightful and passionate speech from him; he is a great local champion and local member. I commend the Hon. Pru Goward, the Minister responsible for this legislation. This is another example of the work of a great reformist government after 16 years of the previous shameful Government. "Shameful" is not my word; it is the word of the former President of the Australian Labor Party, Senator Steve Hutchins, who referred to "those shameful years".

In the electorate of Myall Lakes there are a number of community housing projects and Housing Commission estates that were built under the previous Labor Government. When we talk about the 16 shameful years—the 16 years of incompetence, the 16 years of mismanagement and the 16 years of scandals and corruption—I refer to the housing estates built in the past few years by the previous Government under the former Minister. I think his name was Borger; was there a Minister Borger? Nobody hears of him now; they have forgotten about him. He was Minister when housing projects were developed in the Taree area in particular and at

Forster. The local government was not consulted and it had no input. The housing units were totally out of character with the rest of the area. The whole area had one-storey buildings and the new units were three-storey buildings. They did not comply with Australian standards. One of the projects had 28 units and only five car parking spaces, two of which were for disabled parking. Normally one would expect at least one car space per unit. The Minister's response to that, in writing, was to undertake that only senior citizens would be placed in these units. Of course, senior citizens do not drive cars and therefore the complex did not need parking spaces.

What did we get? It was anything but senior citizens. We got alcoholics, drug addicts and other people with behavioural problems and problems with the law. To put those people into well-established Housing Commission areas where most of the population were senior citizens was an act of incompetence. It also went against the Minister's undertaking, which goes to show that the DNA of the Labor Party leads its members to tell lies. As Graham Richardson's great Labor handbook says, "Whatever it takes." Say whatever it takes and do whatever it takes. That is what happened. Those poor people in Myall Lakes and other areas have had to put up with the constant bad behaviour of many residents of these units who are not senior citizens. There have been public meetings and residents are constantly talking to the police about what can be done. Cars are parked all over the streets because there are not enough spaces. It is an absolute disgrace, but what else could people expect from the previous State Labor Government, and from the Federal Labor Gillard-Green-Independent coalition that is ruining Australia? The quicker we have a Federal election, the better.

Dr Geoff Lee: When do you think it will be?

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: One would hope that it is as soon as possible. The latest development is the backflip on boat people. After years of not adopting the Howard Government's solution—the Pacific solution—the Federal Government has backflipped. If it was an Olympic event it would probably get 11 out of 10 because it was a double backflip with pike. Now the Federal Government is going to adopt the humane solution to stop the boats and in so doing stop the drownings. Hundreds of people have been killed in the past few years but that is just a result of the Labor Party's DNA. I feel sorry for the member for Macquarie Fields because he was part of the shameful previous Government and he is part of what is happening federally. The Australian Government has deteriorated to the depths of a South American Third World government.

Turning to the bill, its object is to enact legislation in relation to the registration of community housing providers in this State as part of a proposed substantively uniform scheme of legislation applying the Community Housing Providers National Law in the States and Territories that are the participating jurisdictions. The Community Housing Providers National Law is set out in the appendix to the bill, which operates as a template for all participating jurisdictions. In addition to applying the Community Housing Providers National Law, the bill and the application legislation of other participating jurisdictions will specify local administration details such as the appointment of a Registrar of Community Housing, the persons to whom functions may be delegated and the appeal tribunal in relation to various matters. The bill also contains provisions for New South Wales purposes only that have been transferred from the Housing Act 2001 relating to the provision of assistance and the transfer of land to registered community housing providers, and makes consequential amendments to various Acts.

The bill provides uniform template legislation—the Community Housing Providers National Law—for a national system of registration, monitoring and regulation of community housing providers. The community housing sector has increased its role in the provision of social and affordable housing, with community housing stock increasing from 7 per cent of all social housing stock to 17 per cent in the past 10 years. In New South Wales there are currently 233 registered community housing providers, managing 26,000 properties. The provision of community housing, typically by not-for-profit organisations, is consistent with the Government's commitment to partnerships with non-government organisations in the delivery of social services.

Clause 5 applies the Community Housing Providers National Law as a law of this jurisdiction called the Community Housing Providers National Law (NSW). Clause 6 declares the Administrative Decisions Tribunal to be the appeal tribunal for New South Wales for the purposes of the applied national law. Clause 7 declares parts 3 and 4 and schedule 1 to the proposed Act, which substantially re-enacts the provisions of the Housing Act 2001, to be community housing legislation of this jurisdiction. Clause 8 declares the Director General of the Department of Family and Community Services and the NSW Land and Housing Corporation constituted by the Housing Act 2001 to be housing agencies for the purposes of certain provisions of the applied national law. Clause 9 declares who is the relevant New South Wales Minister in relation to the applied national law. Clause 10 provides for the appointment of a person as the New South Wales Registrar for the purposes of the applied national law. Clause 11—

Dr Geoff Lee: Is there a lot of housing in your area?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Parramatta has made his contribution.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: Clause 11 specifies the persons to whom functions under the applied provisions may be delegated by the registrar. Clause 12 enables regulations to be made by the Governor prescribing fees for the purposes of the applied provisions. My electorate has significant social housing schemes and a number of community housing providers. This legislation will go towards assisting those organisations in providing that much-needed community housing. Of course this Minister will never make the ghastly, dreadful mistakes the Labor Government made during its 16 shameful years in office. I am sure that those mistakes will not be repeated. The member for Mount Druitt is in the Chamber; it is good to see him back, fit and well. *[Time expired.]*

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I call the member for Mount Druitt.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.59 p.m.]: Thank you, Mr Deputy-Speaker.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Have you still got that notebook?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I have a caution in it, too. The member for Coffs Harbour should take the option of remaining silent. The shadow Minister has said much about the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. I recognise that all State governments will pass similar legislation to complement the arrangement between them and the national Government to introduce a consistent set of laws governing the non-government community housing sector in this country. This process is not new; national laws to do with credit, finance and other areas come to this place regularly. They are generally worked up over many years, often driven by Federal governments, by the industries concerned and, in some cases, by various State governments. This is not an innovative policy advancement, as the previous speaker suggested. The bill is administrative in nature and certainly will not put New South Wales ahead of any other State. As the bill states, it introduces complementary legislation with which all States will comply.

Why is this legislation necessary? Public housing is changing dramatically, not only here but overseas. The Housing Commission established by the McKell Labor Government first provided public housing—which is now known as social housing—to many residents around the State. Throughout the 1980s a number of Federal-State agreements introduced rental arrangements, conditions of tenancy and so on. In more recent years there have been a number of changes to tenancy laws in the public housing sector—for example, leasing arrangements such as set lease periods. This bill recognises another aspect of public housing. Until recently, public housing was in the State jurisdiction and controlled by each government's department of housing. Housing NSW was known previously as the Housing Commission—each State body had a different name. In more recent years there has been a trend to have more community housing managed by the non-government sector.

Whilst it is relatively early days, in my electorate of Mount Druitt—which has the second- or third-highest number of public housing dwellings of all New South Wales electorates—a number of establishments are run by affordable housing organisations such as Mission Australia. I hope there will be more to come. Obviously many community housing providers are not State based; many are national organisations. Such organisations operate in different States and are looking for consistency if they are going to be involved not only with managing public housing but also in attracting investment. Whilst the bill is not a great policy innovation by any individual State Government, it is administratively important in that it provides certainty and makes consistent rulings for all organisations that are prepared to manage public housing not only in New South Wales but in every State around Australia. It is an important and an interesting time.

I will respond to one comment by the member for Myall Lakes, who implied that change has occurred only since March last year. I point out that the growth in community housing in this State has occurred over some 10 years, increasing from less than 10 per cent to more than 17 per cent public or social housing stock. Some 26,000 to 27,000 properties are managed by various community housing providers. That has not occurred in the past 15 to 18 months; it has been a trend for the past decade. This legislation will not only offer certainty but encourage more non-government agencies to manage, not necessarily own, public housing. That is very important. There have been many complaints from public housing residents. The Department of Housing manages many dwellings—each housing officer may manage 200, 300 or 400 properties.

Anyone involved in a real estate business knows that having a single person managing 300 or 400 properties can cause a lot of discontent among tenants and landlords. However, that is the task given to the Department of Housing. When a single housing officer manages many hundreds of homes responding to complaints, settling contracts, repairing dwellings and so on it can lead to discontent with the operation of the department—on many occasions, most unfairly. Community housing providers have a different ratio of the number of dwellings managed to the number of employees. That is no doubt the reason they receive fewer complaints from tenants. The Department of Housing faces the difficult and monumental task of managing a large number of dwellings in any one area. My electorate of Mount Druitt is a classic example. The Opposition has no particular objections to the bill. It would not matter who was in government in any State of Australia; similar legislation will go before the various State parliaments and be debated in the same fashion as is occurring today.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.07 p.m.]: I also support Minister Goward's introduction of the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. I first pass comment on the rather ungracious and sad contribution by the member for Mount Druitt. He clearly knows that this is good legislation but he just cannot give credit where it is due. It is very sad when we consider that under the Government of which he was a member for—how many years?

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Sixteen shameful years.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Sixteen shameful years, as the member for Myall Lakes points out. At the end of that time, it was a husk of a government—a dried and withered husk, bereft of ideas and of the dynamism that this Government clearly possesses in getting this legislation rolling through Parliament. We will get this legislation passed. While commenting on past contributions, I pay tribute to the two Government members who spoke previously in the debate, the member for Myall Lakes and the member for Parramatta. Their passion and commitment for great legislation knows no bounds. A lot of people think the dream team is an Olympic basketball team. But for mine, the dream team sits on the benches behind me, and I thank the members for their contributions. The national law referred to in the bill will assist in building a strong national community housing sector by providing assurance about the ongoing viability of community housing providers and the way in which they manage properties and tenancies. I once again thank the members of the dream team as they depart the House.

The need for a strong community housing sector was clearly evident in my electorate of Orange over the Christmas period when our housing stocks were stretched to the limit. We had well over 1,000 construction personnel working at the Cadia mine, which is not far from Orange, and that stretched our housing resources to the limit. There was not one spare bed in any of the hotels, motels, caravan parks or serviced apartments in the area. The not-for-profit housing sector had to work very hard to ensure that no-one was left without a roof over their head. On any given day six to ten people approached my office seeking assistance to obtain community housing and everyone who approached us was provided with a bed for the night. That demonstrates how important it is to have a strong community housing sector. The situation has eased because those workers have left Orange, but it was a challenging time. The community and public housing situation in Orange will be eased once the 42 new units are completed.

While I am handing out bouquets I commend the Minister for Finance for ensuring that those housing units were completed. Once St Hilliers went into administration he acted with authority and expeditiously to get the Government involved and to ensure that those housing units were completed. I am full of praise for the swift way in which the Minister acted. That is yet another example of this Government's cleaning up the mess that resulted from the mismanagement of members opposite. It is important that we pay tribute to the Minister for Finance, the Hon. Greg Pearce, for the invaluable work that he has done not only in the electorate of Orange but across New South Wales, including the Tweed. The national registry system referred to in this legislation has a number of benefits. It will improve social housing services through facilitating a stronger national market for the not-for-profit housing sector by enabling interstate providers to enter the market. That will ensure a greater variety of providers and more participants in the market, which will increase competition among community housing providers.

Importantly, this legislation will also reduce red tape. I know that no-one hates red tape more than the hard-working member for Tweed. He hates it with a passion and that is why he supports this legislation. I know that you, Mr Assistant-Speaker, are a sworn enemy of red tape, and I commend you for your crusade against that blight. The reforms contained in this legislation will give confidence to the banking and finance sector in lending to the community housing providers. It will also promote transparency and accountability through the

establishment of a national public register of housing providers that will indicate their registration status. It will provide for regulatory assessment against a single national regulatory code and common evidence guidelines. It will also ensure a consistent approach for regulatory intervention across jurisdictions. This legislation has not emerged overnight. As the member for Mount Druitt pointed out, the process commenced at the beginning of this Government's term in office. Public consultation was conducted in late 2011 and early 2012 and involved two national and 15 State and Territory consultation forums, and a request for written submissions was advertised nationally.

Submissions were received from a variety of stakeholders, including community housing providers and national, State and Territory peak organisations such as community housing, tenant and disability groups. The two consultancy forums held in November 2011 were attended by a range of community housing providers, including indigenous providers and potential new entrants into the sector. It is worthwhile reflecting on the importance of providing social and affordable housing across New South Wales. The community housing sector in this State has doubled since 2007 and it now manages more than 26,000 properties. The 32 largest providers manage 98 per cent of the long-term general social housing stock and the remainder is managed by 201 smaller providers. That is a great range of participants. The large number of smaller providers includes specialist homelessness services, faith-based organisations, crisis accommodation and medium and long-term accommodation providers.

As at June 2010 the top 10 large providers managed annual incomes of between \$6.5 million and \$26.3 million and assets valued between \$101 million and \$423 million. These are very significant social housing enterprises and those statistics highlight the importance of introducing a national regulatory system. It is hoped that this measure will encourage the development, viability and quality of community housing and promote confidence in the good governance of registered community housing providers to facilitate more investment in the sector. It will also make it easier for them to operate in more than one jurisdiction. I commend Minister Goward for her hard work in producing this legislation. She is a visionary Minister. I am sure the member for Cabramatta will agree that this is important legislation that will make a valuable contribution and difference to the community housing sector. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.17 p.m.]: The Opposition has no real objection to the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012: it is simply an extension of what the Labor Government was doing before it left government after 16 wonderful years in power, having been elected at four successive elections. From what Government members have said one would think that the Labor Government was elected only once in 16 years. I remind the member for Myall Lakes that the Labor Government was elected four times.

Mr Geoff Provest: But it is over.

Mr NICK LALICH: All good things come to an end and that is what happened to us. My electorate of Cabramatta in the local government area of Fairfield experiences serious public housing stress. Individuals and families are on the waiting list for many years before they get public housing. That is the result of the general shortage of residential accommodation. That lack of accommodation causes enormous stress and anguish for parents, children and families in general. Many of the inquiries fielded by my electorate office are from concerned families that require assistance in applying for or following up on public housing applications. That is where community housing groups do a great job and step in. They use their resources to ease the pressure on the public housing system and, most importantly, assist those waiting to get into public housing.

Be it the Hume Community Housing Association, St George Community Housing or any of the other community housing providers in my electorate—for example, the Vietnamese Women's Association—they all do a fantastic job in helping our most vulnerable in time of need. Being left without a home is nothing short of scary. Unfortunately, families sometimes find themselves in that situation through no fault of their own. Many factors, including financial and family pressures and health problems, contribute to an individual or family requiring housing assistance. Community housing providers in Cabramatta and the surrounding areas do a fantastic job in helping to take care of people in need. I cannot speak highly enough of their dedication, goodwill and duty of care. I know a lot of other members whose offices, like mine, have a huge proportion of their electorate inquiries relating to housing. I think that applies to almost every electorate in this State. Some stories are very sad while others are harrowing and distressing. It is hard to imagine the fear that is present in a family when the parents are evicted from their home and they have nowhere to find shelter at night. Community housing picks up the slack and has done a marvellous job.

The New Leaf housing development is on Bonnyrigg Housing Estate, about 80 hectares of land with approximately 830 of the old Radburn-style fibro homes built in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s. Governments of all political persuasions did not call for public consultation at that time and just built what they wanted. I once asked why they had built such awful housing developments: I was in local government and had a great interest in the area. The answer was always that so many people needed housing the housing department could not afford to muck around, it just had to build the best it could and sort it all out later. The Bonnyrigg estate did not even last 30 years. Radburn estate developments had houses with their backyards to the road with a laneway separating the front of the houses. People had to park their car at the back and walk right around the street to get to the laneway to enter the front door.

When I worked for Prospect electricity I had to go to those homes and my safety was at risk when I walked in the backyards. I made sure I rattled the back gate very loudly to ensure that a dog did not attack me when I walked in. The estates were built like rabbit warrens. This led to many people being dissatisfied with where they lived. There was a lot of crime in the Bonnyrigg area at the time. The New Leaf development has increased accommodation from 830 houses to 2,500 units and houses. The developers have indicated that some unit buildings will be three storeys high with a lift, so the elderly do not have to walk two or three storeys to get to their front door. Public consultation was held over a long period and this development was designed by the people of Bonnyrigg and the surrounding areas.

The member for Myall Lakes, who is not in the Chamber, said that the former Government was terrible. But it was the Hon. Carl Scully who decided to replace the housing commission homes with the New Leaf development. Tenders were called for and New Leaf was awarded the contract, and it is doing a wonderful job. The project is almost one-quarter completed but it will take 15 years to be completed on these 80 hectares. The homes are built by Masterton, not a spec builder, which builds beautiful double-storey brick homes that any member of this House would be happy to live in. This development is proceeding to the credit of Carl Scully, the Labor Government and this present Government for continuing it without any great change to the original development design.

Home providers, whether public or private, are doing a wonderful job. I am advised that across New South Wales currently 233 registered housing providers manage more than 26,000 properties. The number of individuals and families helped by community housing every year is huge. I pay tribute to the community housing providers, both in my electorate and across New South Wales, for providing a very important service. They are there to help families when they are most in need and they provide a roof and shelter to our most vulnerable.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.25 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. I concur with some of the comments of the member for Cabramatta. Community and public housing takes a considerable amount of the time of the 93 members of the lower House. There is never enough housing available and the waiting lists are long and involved. I pay tribute to the 32 large and 201 small community housing providers that operate in the electorates of all members. I am fortunate to have two good providers in my area: On Track Community Housing and North Coast Community Housing. On Track is led by a very good general manager, Leone Crayden. Not only do both organisations do a fabulous job in maintaining a high standard in their properties; they also offer a range of other services to their clients, for example, financial, drug and substance abuse counselling.

The Tweed Heads community would be far less well off without their great efforts. Many people volunteer their time. My electorate office is like all others: unfortunately, conflicts arise between tenants within some of the complexes and I have visits to my office. Often mental illness is involved in those conflicts and both On Track and North Coast Community Housing are great to deal with—I applaud them. Community housing plays a vital role in providing housing to people most in need, particularly people with complex needs. I compliment the foresight and initiative of the Minister for Family and Community Services, who is a woman of deep passion. I also pay tribute to her fine, hardworking staff and the departmental staff I have had to call in. They have been very responsive and understanding of the needs of the wider community, which was very refreshing.

The national system will provide social housing services through facilitating a stronger national market from the non-profit sector by enabling interstate providers to enter the market. That is important to me, because the Tweed electorate sits on the border of Queensland. It is often said in this place that our front door is in Queensland and our back door is in New South Wales. We could say we are joined at the hip with Queensland, except at State of Origin football times. Another initiative of this Government was to appoint a Cross-Border

Commissioner, Steve Toms, who is doing an excellent job with transport, et cetera. In the past, without a national adoption law, community housing providers could only operate in New South Wales and not in Queensland. It must be borne in mind that our client base often moves across the border.

Recently the member for Cabramatta was in town for the great rock and roll festival and apparently cut the rug fairly significantly and was praised by many. It is important for community housing providers to be able to cross the street: I often call it the Great Wall of China. Unfortunately, in other government organisations coverage stops at the border, which is a major problem. For example, recently the Queensland Government awarded \$67 million for the provision of community housing on the Gold Coast and the Gold Coast City Council gave approximately \$25 million. I note that the Minister wants to increase competition amongst community housing providers and funding such as that is sure to promote such competition in my electorate.

This bill will also give confidence to the banking and financial sector to lend to community housing providers. I am advised that in the past a number of providers have tried to obtain government and financial funding for community housing but were refused because of market uncertainty. Importantly, transparency and accountability will also be improved by the establishment of a national public register of housing providers. Their registration status and regulatory assessment will be against a single national regulatory code and common evidence guidelines. I also note that New South Wales will be the host State, which is an indication of the Federal Government's confidence in the O'Farrell-Stoner Government in this regard. It is a great pat on the back for this Government.

In the past the industry has had different standards of service but now there will be a code of standard of service through regulation. There will also be regulatory code and common evidence guidelines and a consistent approach by regulation across jurisdictions. This bill will improve the provision of services by government and non-government services to those in the community who are doing it tough. In my electorate the average waiting time for community housing is currently around 17 to 19 years. Across the border in places such as Kirra the average waiting time is 15 years. The Tweed is recognised as one of the fastest growing regions in this State outside of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong—it is growing at around 2.9 per cent per annum.

Any type of reform, particularly national reform, that allows providers of community services to operate on both sides of the border will bring untold benefit and will support the large number of people in the region who need assistance. When I am in Sydney I often do voluntary work at the Matthew Talbot men's home at Woolloomooloo. It is very telling to see the anguished look on the faces of those men, both young and old, who have no homes and virtually no hope. Whilst at that centre I hear stories of mental illness and addiction. I applaud Matthew Talbot for the excellent work it does. It is my great honour to help out when I can. I commend the Minister and her staff for their hard work and I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.34 p.m.]: I speak to the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 and note at the outset that the Opposition will not oppose this legislation. I will make a brief contribution to this debate. The bill was initiated through the Council of Australian Governments and is a key reform under the National Affordable Housing Agreement for community housing providers. The object of the bill is to provide consistency among the States and Territories in the regulation of community housing providers and to provide a national standard system. Many barriers need to be overcome and it is pleasing that the Council of Australian Governments has formed model legislation for all States and Territories to adopt.

Community housing provides a low-cost alternative for government in providing public housing in New South Wales and, given the increasing costs of rent and mortgages, the demand for social housing will only increase in coming years. This is particularly prominent in areas of high population growth such as south-west and western Sydney. I refer members to the projected waiting times listed on the Housing NSW website. According to those lists some areas, including my electorate, have waiting times of more than 10 years. In recent years the nature of social housing has changed and we now have an increasing proportion of community housing. Under the Housing Pathways system presently in place by Housing NSW candidates are considered equally by a single system and the assessment is decided by a number of factors aimed at determining the level of need of the individual family in question.

The national law will include a single register of community housing providers. The register will ensure the financial viability of providers and assist in the development of a national lending market. It will also aim to reduce regulatory burdens for interstate operators by introducing a common approach to regulation in all

Australian States, with a single lead registrar responsible for community housing. The bill also contains a proposal for a single national regulatory code, which will provide enforcement powers to the registrar. The primary registrar will be able to address non-compliance with the lead regulatory code and take action to require providers to become compliant. This will be done through the appointment of a statutory manager who will be responsible for supervising the completion of community housing projects.

I acknowledge the earlier comments made by the members representing the electorates of Mount Druitt and Cabramatta. It is pleasing that the O'Farrell Government is finally paying attention to social housing in New South Wales. Given that the O'Farrell Government is the first government in living memory not to have appointed a stand-alone Minister for Housing, this bill may be indicative of much-needed change in this direction. Perhaps the Premier will now appoint a dedicated Minister for Housing to ensure that there is a direct voice in Cabinet for social housing. I am sure the Minister for Family and Community Services would be happy to have an official change in her title to include Minister for Housing. As I said, the Opposition does not oppose the bill. It is clear that a national registry framework system is necessary. It will promote growth in the not-for-profit housing sector across Australia and reduce the current inconsistencies in regulating the industry and provide a national standard, which is necessary. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [5.39 p.m.]: In 2010 in New South Wales more than 150,000 dwellings were under social housing management—85 per cent of these dwellings were public housing, 11 per cent were community housing, 3 per cent were Aboriginal housing office dwellings and 1 per cent was crisis accommodation. In 2010 more than 83,000 people were on the New South Wales social housing waiting list. While the provision of social housing is a responsibility borne by the New South Wales Government as part of its obligation towards those who are less able to provide for themselves, given the current need for social housing, there is no way that the State Government alone can meet these demands. The community housing sector must play a key role because this Government knows that future demand for overall public housing is estimated to increase by 28 per cent by the year 2023. In today's dollars that would cost about \$25 billion.

In 2009 the former New South Wales Labor Government announced the transfer of public housing properties to community housing organisations to help the sector grow and gain more independence. Since 2009 the community housing sector has become an increasingly important player in the provision of social and affordable housing. In fact, at the end of June 2011 the community housing sector managed more than 26,000 properties, or 17 per cent of all social housing. Currently there are 233 registered community housing providers in New South Wales. Within the East Hills electorate, Mission Australia [MA] Housing has been providing an invaluable service to low and moderate income households since 2009. Last week MA Housing celebrated the 1,000th home under management. I congratulate MA Housing on this significant achievement and point out that it is one of the 21 largest community housing providers in New South Wales.

The main purpose of the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 is to provide a uniform national regulatory framework that will give confidence to community housing providers, their clients and investors. The bill will ensure the ongoing viability, good governance and continued growth of the sector now and into the future. The bill will assist the New South Wales Government to pursue reforms aimed at expanding the provision of social and affordable housing through the community housing sector to meet increasing demand. This bill is necessary if a cash-strapped Government, such as the New South Wales Government, is to expand the supply of social housing. This bill is necessary to ensure that the provision of social housing by community housing providers meets strict community standards and allows for enforcement and intervention powers in cases of non-compliance with the national law, the standards to protect tenants and in particular the Government's investment in the community housing sector.

While the New South Wales Government has committed millions of dollars to social housing within the 2012-2013 budget—in fact, \$4.2 million for social housing within the East Hills electorate—the simple fact is that it is not enough. Community housing providers are able to fill the gap and the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 presents a regulatory system that attracts further non-government investment by current community housing providers; enhances the confidence of institutional bankers to provide private finance for community housing; encourages new entrants into the sector; protects existing and any future Government investment in the community housing sector in New South Wales; and, importantly, provides assurance, stability and affordability for the many tenants who rely on the community housing sector for housing. The benefits of the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 are many and I have outlined several. The Government supports the community housing sector in its role of providing social and affordable housing to people in the greatest need in both this State and across Australia. I support the Government in its endeavours and I commend this bill to the House.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.45 p.m.]: I support the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. I particularly acknowledge the hardworking Minister for Family and Community Services for her ongoing dedication to the families of New South Wales, especially to those who are in most need. The Minister understands that sometimes families require assistance with their housing and this Minister is fully supportive of the community housing sector. The bill provides a national system of registration, monitoring and regulation of community housing providers—the Community Housing Providers National Law. Jurisdictions across Australia are supportive of this national regulatory framework, and New South Wales is leading the way in its development. New South Wales has been chosen as the host State of the national law, following a public commitment by housing Ministers around Australia to introduce national legislation by the end of July this year.

The objects of the bill are to apply as a law of this State a national law for the registration and regulation of community housing providers under a national system of registration; to facilitate government investment in the community housing sector and ensure the protection of that investment; to ensure that registered community housing is developed as a viable and diversified component of the New South Wales social housing sector; and to support the provision of registered community housing for people on a very low, low or moderate income. In addition to applying the Community Housing Providers National Law, this bill and the application of legislation of other participating jurisdictions would specify local administration details such as the appointment of a Registrar of Community Housing, the person to whom functions may be delegated and the appeal tribunal in relation to various matters.

To demonstrate the magnitude and the significance of the housing sector—currently 26,000 properties are managed by 233 registered community housing providers in New South Wales alone—in the past 10 years community housing stock has increased from 7 per cent of all social housing stock to 17 per cent. As members would be well aware, community housing is central to the lives and wellbeing of thousands of residents across New South Wales. Within the Rockdale electorate a large number of social housing properties provide housing to clients in need. Specifically, there are more than 800 social housing properties. These include about 700 public housing properties and a small number of properties owned by the Aboriginal Housing Office; a further 100 properties approximately are managed by community housing providers that are either owned by the New South Wales Land and Housing Corporation or leased from the private rental market using funds provided by Housing NSW.

St George Community Housing is the largest community housing provider in New South Wales and operates in my electorate. St George Community Housing manages about 4,000 properties across the Sydney metropolitan area. St George manages the majority of the community housing properties—90 or so—in my electorate, together with a range of smaller providers that service particular client groups. St George Community Housing is one example of the strength of the not-for-profit housing sector and of a sector that at the larger end has been able to adapt to rapid growth and rise to the challenge of borrowing money to fund affordable housing developments. At the smaller end, a range of dedicated often specialist services are focused on helping some of the most needy in our society.

The national regulatory system will assist community housing providers, including those in Rockdale, by providing different and appropriate levels of regulatory oversight. The intensity of the regulatory scrutiny will be based on the size of the organisation, as well as the scale and inherent risks of the community housing activities they are undertaking. For large providers such as St George Community Housing, the national regulatory system will provide opportunities for expansion as it will assist with the development of a national market for lending and improved costs of borrowing. This will see more affordable housing become available for low to moderate income households that are experiencing housing stress.

For smaller community housing providers, the national regulatory system gives them national recognition, provides a level of regulation appropriate for their size and activities, and gives partners and clients confidence in their governance and ongoing financial viability. One of the key priorities of the national regulatory system is to support and facilitate the growth in affordable housing by securing investor confidence in lending to community housing providers for affordable housing developments. It also seeks to provide confidence for tenants, housing providers, investors and the Government, with all providers being required to comply with a national regulatory code that sets the performance standards for these not-for-profit housing providers. The proposed national regulatory system differs from the current regulatory system operating in New South Wales primarily by way of the new powers that are to be introduced, which increase the intervention and enforcement powers of registrars in cases of non-compliance.

Further, these extra powers provide further protection for the Government in relation to its investment in community housing. The national system will further increase the scope for innovation as a consequence of enhanced competition. A national regulatory system is a stronger and more responsible system. It will greatly benefit community housing providers and residents of community housing. As mentioned, it facilitates investment and promotes confidence, it cuts through regulatory barriers and it ensures that providers comply with the regulatory code. Again I thank the Minister and her staff for her dedication to families across New South Wales and particularly those in the Rockdale electorate who need social and affordable housing and who have the greatest need. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.55 p.m.]: I support the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. As members are aware, this bill was introduced by the Minister for Family and Community Services, who is a great friend of the Camden electorate. The Minister was in my electorate on Sunday, meeting people and listening to their views on our Government. People gave her advice on things they thought the Government could be doing better. It was great to have the Minister in my electorate, and I thank her for being there. As I said, the Minister is a great friend of Camden and I am happy to speak in support of her bill.

It has been recognised that reform to the community housing sector in Australia would be beneficial to the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments. This bill will see New South Wales lead other States and Territories in implementing template legislation that will register, monitor and regulate community housing providers. This is part of the inter-governmental agreement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories to apply a national system in relation to the regulation of the community housing sector. Also contained in the inter-governmental agreement is the framework for the establishment and ongoing maintenance arrangements for the national system. All State governments are required to introduce this framework into their legislation so as to ensure that the national law is applied or the State or Territory legislation corresponds identically with the national law.

This is not the first time this Government has been part of implementing and becoming part of a national framework for the betterment of the people of New South Wales. I refer to the introduction of the Children (Education and Care Services) Supplementary Provisions Bill 2011. I bring to the attention of members the fact that New South Wales reputation for its regulatory system within Australia is a great one. New South Wales has led the way in developing this national regulatory system at the request of the Commonwealth, and the States and Territories. This bill makes New South Wales the first State to introduce this national law; with the other States and Territories following, consistency will exist across Australia for all community housing providers. These providers will then meet outcomes of the national regulatory code.

Between December 2011 and January 2012 a public national consultation process was undertaken on the proposed national regulatory system nationwide. This consultation gathered extremely important input from many stakeholders, including housing providers, tenant representatives, support groups and organisations, banks, both community and institutional, Indigenous community housing and other peak bodies. As can be seen from that list, this has been an extremely inclusive and consultative process. That is something that the O'Farrell-led Government prides itself on: consultation involving the community, stakeholders, interested parties and people who have the expertise to help in the decision-making process. That is what government is all about. These stakeholders wholeheartedly support this national system, and that is a very important point. It is recognised that community housing providers and the non-government sector can provide services that cash-strapped State governments cannot match.

A national approach to regulatory systems has been supported unanimously by major Australian banks and will match the banks' approach to institutional banking. It has been indicated by these banks too that confidence in provision of private finance for community housing and its services could create a national market for lenders and therefore create better costs for the finance. This means that community housing providers will be able to provide affordable housing at a much faster rate than State governments. This is very promising. This is promising for the State and Territory governments of Australia that have been subjected to Labor's waste over the years and are now cashless. It is also extremely promising for the people of Australia who cannot meet the costs of a roof over their head. This bill is all about being compassionate and providing for those within this country who cannot meet the costs of putting a roof over their heads. This national system, and therefore this bill, introduces extra powers for enforcement and intervention powers for registrars if there are cases of non-compliance with the national law.

This Government's investment in the sector and the tenant will continue to be protected. It is expected that there will be no additional regulatory impact on New South Wales business and the community, and that is

a critical point. Although we are introducing much-needed reforms, we will not see an additional regulatory impact on New South Wales business and the community. The national regulatory system will give confidence to community housing providers, tenants, investors and Government. It is an important step in ensuring the community housing sector's ongoing financial viability and continued growth across the nation. It is all about confidence. It is also important to remember that governments across Australia have committed to supporting this growth so the sector can play a greater role in providing social and affordable housing. Bringing all aspects of the sector together will ensure the end goal, which is the provision of social and affordable housing for those Australians who cannot afford it on their own or without support of these people banding together.

The other benefit of this bill is that the system will minimise the regulatory burden for multi-jurisdictional providers and provide them with opportunities to achieve scale and greater access to private capital on more favourable terms. I think that should not be lost. As I have said, the Minister is an extremely hardworking Minister who is a friend of my electorate. I also pay tribute to her extremely hardworking staff: her chief of staff, Anthony Benscher; senior housing adviser, Kristin Pryce; senior media adviser, Simon Fontana; community services adviser, Anne King; community services adviser, Keri Amet; adviser William Crook; and the Minister's private secretary, Gabrielle Bietola. The Minister's staff do an outstanding job and should be commended for their efforts. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [6.05 p.m.]: I also support Minister Goward's introduction of the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. The national law contained in the bill will assist in building a robust national community housing sector by providing assurance about the ongoing viability of community housing providers and assurance about how they manage properties and tenancies, thereby giving investors confidence in the sector. That is what we are looking for, particularly in the Tamworth electorate—confidence in that sector. We have a number of areas where community housing plays a very important role. One area that we are working on at the moment is the community of Coledale.

A great deal of money is being spent on the redevelopment of Coledale to try to change the perception of this community from low socioeconomic social housing to affordable housing. That is what the community has been calling for for quite some time and that project is about to begin. We are starting to see some projects around the suburb of Coledale being rolled out, including opening up cul-de-sacs. Anecdotal evidence supports that to drive down crime, antisocial behaviour, alcohol-related violence and those misdemeanours associated with youth not having a great deal to do, and giving them some meaningful programs and social interaction that gets them on the right side of the tracks is providing the opportunity for them to grow, live, work and train in an area that they know well. That is why so much effort is being put into the Coledale precinct in the Tamworth electorate.

The development of the national regulatory system will support existing regional and rural community housing providers as it does not differentiate between participants on the basis of geography or size. It may assist in the growth of community housing providers in these communities. It may also result in increased competition and the efficiency of community housing providers in regional and rural communities. I know that in the Tamworth electorate there are a number of community housing providers, and Homes North is just one of them that does a magnificent job looking after its tenants, looking after the properties that they live in and ensuring that they have a place they can virtually call their own. It is very important that they feel like they belong. Homes North manages quite a number of properties on behalf of Housing NSW and the partnership that they share is critical to ensure that this bill—the introduction of community housing providers—fits.

Part of this bill is about consultation, about engaging those community housing providers to ensure that they are providing that level of expertise right across the board. Community housing plays a vital role in providing accommodation to people most in need, particularly to people who need complex support. We see that quite often in rural and regional communities with those who are most vulnerable and who need support. The bill will certainly assist community housing providers to ensure that a level of competency and support is available to the most vulnerable in our community. Demand for social and affordable housing continues to grow; there is no doubt about that. We are starting to see the rising cost of living forcing people to rethink their budgets. It is forcing them to rethink how they will get through each week and how they can make ends meet.

The carbon tax is playing a major role by hitting those people in the hip pocket. Shame on the Federal Government for bringing in the carbon tax. It is increasing the cost of living and increasing demand for social and affordable housing. It creates a flow-on effect. Community housing plays an essential part in meeting the community's needs and wants by providing a roof over people's heads. I receive many calls in my electorate of Tamworth from people who are having difficulties obtaining a house, because there is a shortage of housing

stock, and finding a house that is appropriate to the needs of their family as it grows—they may need one, two or three bedrooms. We must ensure that families receive appropriate housing so that they can continue to live comfortably in the manner they would expect from social housing.

Providers that currently operate close to State or Territory borders may be in a better position to expand into those neighbouring areas once there is a single regulatory system with which they must comply. I mention that in relation to some of the community housing providers in the Tamworth electorate whose operations border on Barwon and coastal electorates that extend to the Queensland border. Once the national regulatory system is in place there may be an opportunity for them to achieve harmonisation across borders. That opens up opportunities for families to move around in the region with confidence in the knowledge that there is one regulatory system and a plan in place that provides security of tenure. When they move they will know what they are going to get. That is a very important aspect of social housing. There will be improved transparency and accountability as a result of the establishment of a national public register of housing providers and their registration status.

There also will be regulatory assessment against a single national regulatory code and common evidence guidelines and a consistent approach to regulatory intervention across jurisdictions. That touches on the fact that there may be some cross-border harmonisation. This bill contains commonsense provisions. It reflects the commonsense approach that we spoke about in the lead-up to the election. The reform agenda that this Government has put in place aims to achieve a level playing field so that a person cannot be discriminated against just because they live in a particular suburb in a regional centre. We need a level playing field and we are starting to see that apply across many sectors. I refer to workers compensation, death and disability cover, the right to remain silent and many other issues that we have reformed in the 18 months this Government has been in power to make sure we get this great State back on track.

This bill is part of the commonsense reform agenda we are putting in place. Minister Goward has shown great courage indeed in putting forward this proposal at a national level and working with the national law in New South Wales to ensure a level playing field. It will allow for the single registration of multi-jurisdictional providers. The national law provides for a primary jurisdiction and a primary register for a community housing provider and outlines the processes by which these are determined. I highlight the main difference between the national regulatory system and the current New South Wales regulatory system. The national law provides registrars with extra enforcement powers to ensure compliance with the law, which is appropriate to protect the level of government investment in the sector.

We need to make sure that our taxpayers' dollars are being spent efficiently and are not being wasted. We need to make sure our taxpayers' dollars are being spent in areas where they are needed. Community and social housing is a growing sector, so when the Government invests in that sector it needs to get bang for its buck. It needs to make sure it has a level playing field. It also needs to ensure that community housing providers have security of tenure and that they know they are operating on a level playing field that allows them to grow and expand into areas that they may have been thinking about for quite some time. I applaud Minister Goward and her team for introducing the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [6.15 p.m.]: I support the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012, which was introduced by my colleague the member for Goulburn and Minister for Community Services, and Minister for Women, the Hon. Pru Goward. Hers is not an easy portfolio but the State is thankful for her progressive, reforming and competent stewardship. The purpose of the bill is to provide uniform template legislation for a national system of registration, monitoring and regulation of community housing providers. This is about applying the national law in New South Wales and replacing certain community housing provisions of the Housing Act 2001.

The bill will give confidence to community housing providers, their clients and investors and will enhance the good governance, viability and continued growth of the sector now and, more importantly, into the future. New South Wales has an excellent reputation for its regulatory system and has led the development of the new national regulatory system. The community housing sector will be increasingly important in the future provision of social and affordable housing, mainly by not-for-profit organisations. This is consistent with the Government's commitment to forging partnerships with non-government organisations in the delivery of social services to improve people's lives. These providers are usually flexible, very much client focused and local, and have a far greater capacity to provide services and care that governments cannot hope to match.

In New South Wales and nationally there is a commitment to initiate and introduce reforms that are aimed at expanding the provision of social and affordable housing through the community housing sector to meet increased demand. It has been estimated that in the decade ending 2010, mainstream community housing stocks doubled from 7 per cent to 14 per cent of all social housing stock. This equated in 2010 to about 950 mainstream community housing providers who managed about 60,000 social housing properties nationally, with a value of about \$18 billion. In New South Wales alone in 2011 the community housing sector managed more than 26,000 properties through 233 registered providers. I know my local providers on the Central Coast but before I talk about some of those groups I point out that housing is a basic requirement. On the Central Coast our homeless population has been alarming.

I refer to my good colleague the chief executive officer of Coast Shelter, which provides something like 35,000 overnight beds to the people of the Central Coast. Admittedly, many of these individuals have suffered problems with alcohol, drugs, domestic violence and gambling issues, but increasingly families are having financial difficulties. Their ability to find housing has been affected. Coast Shelter provides programs to meet specific needs and gives guidance and support in obtaining accommodation. Australia has 105,000 homeless people and more than half of them are children. Housing is a basic requirement and that is why this bill is so important.

On Monday I joined the Bishop of Broken Bay at the opening of the new office of Catholic Community Services in Albany Street, Gosford. Catholic Community Services is very active in helping the people of the Central Coast. Compass Housing is also well known locally for its provision of services. I am more familiar with Pacific Link, which has been a social housing provider on the Central Coast for more than 20 years. It has hundreds of leased and capital properties stretching from the Central Coast to Port Stephens. It does a commendable job in the community. Those organisations are the future for those in need in our community.

The Government wants to make the community housing sector stronger and more viable. New South Wales is the first State to introduce legislation to adopt the national law. Cash-strapped State governments will rely more on this sector in the future. Given that, it must be well managed so that it can deliver the expansion in housing that we so desperately need. Providers will be required to comply with the new national regulatory code enshrined in the proposed national system. The system will instil and promote confidence in the governance of the sector, provide assurance about the financial viability of participants and, above all, improve borrowing capacity through the development of a national lending market. The same system will operate throughout Australia and that will encourage multi-jurisdictional providers.

It must be remembered that the Government conducted an extensive consultation process prior to the drafting of this legislation. Governments are often criticised for not undertaking appropriate consultation. That cannot be said about this legislation. There have been two national consultation forums, 15 State and Territory consultation forums and a national call for written submissions. Submissions were received from bodies such as community housing providers, tenant representatives, peak bodies, support organisations, Indigenous community housing providers, and institutional and community banks. This bill will establish national standards for registered providers through the national regulatory code and the new powers it introduces will enhance the enforcement and intervention powers of registrars in cases of noncompliance with the national law.

As I said, housing is a basic requirement. Governments constantly strapped for cash need to look at different ways and opportunities to provide housing. The community housing sector offers a great opportunity for us to address the housing shortage in this country. It is good to see that this issue is being addressed nationally in an attempt to make better housing availability a reality. This legislation is good and it is good for the people of New South Wales. All members should support it and I know that they will. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [6.24 p.m.]: As members on both sides of the House have said, the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 is designed to ensure that New South Wales plays a role in the move towards community housing across the country. It is good to see strong cooperation between State governments and the Federal Government. In Penrith we hear many stories about the importance of housing. I have attended numerous meetings in my role as the local member about the importance of supported accommodation and housing for people in need—that is, transitional housing, crisis housing and housing for low-income earners. I represented Minister Goward at the presentation of findings about homelessness in my region and community housing could play a strong role in alleviating that problem.

The movement towards community housing is supported by both sides of politics and that is to be commended. The strength in and growth of the sector is positive because it will allow us to provide more

accommodation to those who most need it. It will allow us to reinvest based on the value of those housing assets. By adopting the national law, community housing bodies will also be able to operate across State boundaries and across regions. One of the real challenges in my electorate of Penrith is rapid growth in the rental market. The shortage of housing pushes up the rental yield and as a result accommodation becomes more and more unaffordable. The State plays a role in that situation and steps in to support people by providing them with assistance to buy their own home or with rental support. Luckily I have an excellent Housing NSW office not far from my electorate office. We have a strong working relationship with that office and with Wentworth Community Housing, which is the primary community housing supplier in the region.

Wentworth Community Housing is more than a strong community organisation; it makes a solid contribution to the local community and is a strong advocate for social change. It is a class 2 registered community housing provider and has been recognised for a number of achievements. Stephanie Brennan, the manager of community services, was recognised at the ZEST Awards as an outstanding community leader, and Phyllis Meadows, the acting manager of housing services, was recognised at the NSW/ACT Australasian Housing Institute Professional Excellence in Housing Awards as an inspirational colleague.

They are only two people working in the community housing sector in my electorate who have gone above and beyond. I first met Stephanie as a result of her involvement in Project 40, which is an interesting project tackling homelessness in the Penrith region involving various groups, including church groups, government departments, other support agencies and local councils. Much of the effort in this area has been driven by Stephanie's work with Wentworth Community Housing. That once again demonstrates that rather than always looking to the State Government for the answer we can work collaboratively with community organisations to find ways to support those most in need. Project 40 is a very good example of that approach.

Wentworth Community Housing has also strongly advocated for its Housing First project, which deals with the value of housing. We often talk about issues in dollar terms in this place. One of the fundamental things we recognise is that providing people with a house in the first instance will save a great deal of money in the long term. Research undertaken in other jurisdictions indicates that providing someone with a house costs about \$55 a night. Putting that person in a refuge includes rent, support staff and so on, which all increase the cost. Of course, if that person is admitted to hospital the cost is even greater. Homelessness also often involves mental health issues. The cost of looking after someone in a mental health ward is even higher. If we are able to invest our money in housing first then we can get a very strong return on that investment.

That is a fundamental view of Wentworth Community Housing. I encourage all members to visit its website to find out what is taking place and to take some information back to their constituencies. Wentworth Community Housing has an extremely strong board. Once again, it is a community-oriented board comprising Chair Graham Smith, Vice Chair Joseph Litwin, Treasurer Shirlene Bennett and Secretary and member of the Finance Committee—who is a strong advocate for our community organisations across Penrith—David Currie. Also on the board are Michael Eade, Estelle Ehmann, Susan Palmer, Dale Sadler and Pat Smith. Community housing is embraced by many people who work in the Department of Housing, which provides a strong collaborative approach. Derek Jobson, the local regional manager at Penrith and I have done lots of work recently with many students of social work from Nirimba TAFE. We put together a family and community activity day at Kingswood Park in the Penrith region where families from low socioeconomic backgrounds live—a somewhat forgotten area of the electorate.

Once again, we see the value of having strong community organisations and a strong housing department that is prepared to work with the community. The laws that we are moving toward support the establishment and the strengthening of community housing organisations. This bill is a positive move for housing that allows us to tackle some real challenges. They will not be solved overnight but we can work on them, diversify our housing stock and leverage our assets to achieve better housing stock and better maintenance. Community housing will take some pressure off the Department of Housing by bringing more players into the market. I strongly support the work of the Minister for Family and Community Services and her continued efforts with other State jurisdictions and with our Federal colleagues. I am a strong advocate for community housing, and I commend the bill to the House.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I call the member for Wollondilly and congratulate him on his recent ascension to Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.32 p.m.]: I thank Mr Acting-Speaker for his kind words. In speaking to the Community Housing Providers (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 I praise the Minister for Family and Community Services, who is not only a fantastic Minister but is doing amazing things in her

electorate that borders my own. The Minister has led by introducing this bill that applies the Community Housing Providers National Law within New South Wales. Being chosen as the State to lead the development of the national regulatory system demonstrates that the work of this Government since coming to office is increasing the reputation of New South Wales as the number one State in this nation.

By introducing this bill the Government will strengthen the regulatory framework for the community housing sector—a sector that already plays an important role in the delivery of affordable housing to some of the most vulnerable people in communities across New South Wales. Strengthening the system will ensure better outcomes for service providers and better outcomes for their tenants. The need to support the continued development of this sector is evident in both the great work currently exhibited by the sector, as well as the continued pressures that will be placed upon it in the future. The significant role the sector currently plays across the State has already been detailed by the Minister and I will not go over those points again. My personal experiences within the electorate of Wollondilly reflect the situation the Minister has described.

The Wollondilly electorate experiences a high demand for social housing—a problem that is replicated across much of the State. This places pressure on existing services and available resources. Unfortunately, after years of poor governance by those opposite, the supply-demand ratio is significantly disproportionate, which creates a challenge for the future. The people of Wollondilly are fortunate that community housing provider Argyle Community Housing is in my electorate. It is committed to the delivery of sustainable housing for local people on low and moderate incomes. Argyle Community Housing is a registered provider in New South Wales and has been working with the Government to achieve positive outcomes by housing vulnerable people within the community.

Argyle Community Housing currently maintains approximately 260 properties within the Wollondilly electorate. This means that more than 400 people rely upon Argyle for protection and a sense of certainty in their lives. This number accounts for a significant proportion of families within the electorate's overall social housing framework. The flourishing not-for-profit organisation has recently been registered as a class one growth provider, which allows it to build for the future and to play an important role in generating additional affordable housing that is much needed in the community. Its extensive work has taken a financial burden off the government department, allowing other services to be provided and resulting in an overall higher number of people being housed within the community—people who without this support would almost certainly suffer great financial adversity or be vulnerable to the risk of homelessness.

Without the dedication of community housing providers such as Argyle housing across the State, our communities would suffer from the broad-reaching effects of the hardship faced by many individuals and families. The provision that requires community housing providers to meet the national regulatory code is one way in which this bill can create better outcomes and stronger resources for individuals and families who rely on community housing providers across the State. Those community members require housing stability in order to prosper in all aspects of their lives. Currently I see too many people within my community, and in the surrounding regions, who struggle to secure both stable and affordable housing—residents who have felt the full brunt of a critical shortage of services due to years of mismanagement by those opposite and by the current Federal Labor Government.

The difficulty in meeting this basic need has had flow-on effects that can impact negatively on relationships, employment and ultimately on people's happiness and the community's health. These people have worked hard and often contributed greatly to their community, yet they have not been able to cope with the demands of rising costs of living that are felt well beyond the boundaries of this State. Those individuals and families have often inspired my passion for ensuring that those most in need within our community are supported and provided with the basic securities in life. The member for Penrith said that he values people who live in Department of Housing accommodation and community housing. I too know of great people living in those circumstances who are pillars of our community. In times of need they are often the first to lend a hand. They usually have not much in their pocket but have great heart and a willingness to help their community, for which I commend them.

I lived in Department of Housing accommodation for a significant period and saw firsthand what happens when government policies do not help people in need and instead put pressure on the cost of living, which forces them out of their accommodation. That was certainly the case in my circumstances. In fact, my parents still live in Department of Housing accommodation to this day. They live in a wonderful community in which a lot of good people do many good things. Such people should be supported. This bill will deliver more

community housing providers and allow the Department of Housing to accommodate a greater number of the less fortunate. That is an absolutely fantastic outcome not only for this State but also for our local communities. It will stop people living on the streets.

We have all heard about the increasing number of people across our electorates who are living in cars. I found it hard to believe it was happening in my electorate until last Christmas when I was confronted by a number of ordinary families—mums, dads and kids—who had lost their house, could not get into rental accommodation and who for months and years, not days and weeks, lived in their cars. Those families still functioned: the children attended school and parents went to work. Governments, both State and Federal, must work together to resolve that problem. Unfortunately, it is happening today. I commend the Minister for her work in tackling this issue. Those people will benefit from this bill. I thank the Minister and the Government for showing the residents of New South Wales and the people of Wollondilly that it is committed to delivering for this State. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Dr Andrew McDonald and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

REGIONAL TOURISM

Matter of Public Importance

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.40 p.m.]: The importance of tourism to regional communities and their economies has long been recognised but only recently rewarded. The O'Farrell Government's commitment to regional New South Wales tourism and events is unquestionable. The visitor economy is a key plank of its commitment to revive our economy and make New South Wales number one again. Tourism in regional New South Wales is worth a total of \$12.6 billion to the State's economy, and jobs in this sector account for one in every twenty-one jobs in New South Wales. However, the industry has struggled due to the tough economic environment and the high Australian dollar. But most importantly we understand that the industry wants a government that supports it after 16 years of neglect. The member for Myall Lakes is looking for an example of that neglect. One has only to look into the dying embers of the Keneally Government when things were getting so desperate that it rolled out its tourism big gun and game changer—namely, a rock commissioner. That was a very bold play by Premier Keneally. The *Daily Telegraph* described it as:

... possibly the most unusual election promise in Australian political history.

It also stated:

This unique role would require the rock commissioner to report directly to the Premier, who ordinarily might be expected to be busying herself with more important matters such as the State's ruinous public transport system and crippling power costs.

That was the former Government's big tourist idea.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Sixteen years of neglect.

Mr ANDREW GEE: Sixteen years of neglect. Let us ponder who that rock commissioner would have been.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Elvis.

Mr ANDREW GEE: No, it was not Elvis. One has only to consult the *Illawarra Mercury* to find the answer. It is apparent from that publication that the rock commissioner was going to be none other than the member for Keira. In April this year it was reported in the *Illawarra Mercury* that the member for Keira:

... was astonished that One Direction's fans were being asked to hand over their 'hard earned cash' for a concert that won't take place for almost a year and a half.

Oh, the humanity. The good folk of the Illawarra responded accordingly. If one refers to the comments made about that article—

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Tell us about them.

Mr ANDREW GEE: A comment posted by *Big Issue* was:

Please give me a break. WHAT A JOKE! Wollongong voted him in. Please, oh I can't stop laughing.

Another one from Scotty:

Ryan Park ... I am so glad that you were elected to stand for such issues ... I guess this shows your actual ability ...

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: I am loath to take a point of order but the member for Orange should be talking about regional tourism. I ask the member for Orange to return to the leave of the matter of public importance.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Orange is focusing more on the member for Keira than on regional tourism.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: He is a tourism icon.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): The member for Keira is not a tourism icon. The member for Orange will return to the leave of the matter of public importance.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The member for Keira is certainly something but I am not sure he is a tourism icon. Almost 250 people attended the 2012 CountryLink Inland Tourism Awards held in Mudgee on 28 July. Those awards are held annually to acknowledge excellence in four regional areas, including the central, inland, Murray and Riverina areas of New South Wales. The Mudgee Brewing Company won the award for tourism, wineries, distilleries and breweries. Other finalists in the category included Lowe Wines, Burnbrae Wines and Gooree Park Wines. Trelawney Farm Guesthouse received the award for deluxe accommodation at Mudgee. *[Time expired.]*

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [6.45 p.m.]: It was my great privilege to remind the member for Orange that the time allowed for his contribution to this debate had expired. Given that the Hunter is the second most popular tourist destination in New South Wales, it is fitting that I should speak to this matter of public importance. Sydney is the most popular tourist destination in this State but I argue that is only because it has an international airport.

Mr Craig Baumann: That is in Port Stephens.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Indeed, Port Stephens is one of the jewels of the Hunter. Other jewels include the vineyards, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, the Great Lakes, Dungog, Gloucester and the upper Hunter. That is why approximately eight million visitors come to the area each year to see those wonderful places. As a country member I speak on the importance of regional tourism and State government funded programs that help encourage and fund programs in tourism in regional New South Wales. Recently the member for Orange opened a skate park. I appreciate that the media has focused on the fall of the Minister but I suggest that the member for Orange may also have had a fall following his contribution to this debate tonight.

Domestic and international visitors and their economic contribution to regional New South Wales are a major driver for jobs and help to stimulate local economies. For example, in the year ending March 2012 domestic visitors to regional New South Wales had spent more than \$3.4 billion, or an average of \$100 per trip. Labor has a strong record in delivering for tourism in regional New South Wales. It is estimated that in Labor's last year in government tourists injected more than \$28.2 billion into the New South Wales economy, and \$1.8 billion of that was directly invested into the Hunter. Further, it is estimated that 12,000 jobs have been created in the Hunter through tourism, and approximately 6,000 are in the electorate of Cessnock.

In 2008 the Labor Government demonstrated its commitment to the tourism industry with the investment of an additional \$40 million over 3½ years on top of the recurrent budget of Tourism NSW, the former entity, to implement a new tourism strategy. One of the initiatives identified was the legislation of the National Parks and Wildlife Amendment (Visitors and Tourists) Bill 2010, which was designed to bring New South Wales into line with other major ecotourism destinations such as Africa and Tasmania and to allow New South Wales to promote our iconic national parks with low-key sustainable activities and attractions while protecting them for generations to come. Indeed, they might now become shooting ranges and attract more visitors to our national parks but we cannot say no to any tourism operation that might have some potential.

Another key accomplishment under Labor was the decision to invest \$5.133 million per annum, up from \$1.6 million per annum, for the three-year Regional Tourism Partnership Funding Program from 2009 to 2011. That program was designed to provide a significant increase in funding for regional tourism marketing development. The O'Farrell Government has continued that program, admittedly with a slightly lower

contribution, until the end of the current financial year. I hope the Government sees fit to continue funding regional tourism in much the same vein and quantity as was the case in the last three years of the former Labor Government and the first two years of the O'Farrell Government.

The high Australian dollar is certainly having its effect on regional communities and their tourism initiatives. I can tell members with some knowledge that the tourism community of the Hunter Valley is certainly feeling the effects as people tend to travel more overseas or spend their dollars overseas rather than spending them locally. Indeed, our beds in the Hunter Valley and the vineyards are still full and the cellar doors and the restaurants are still full, but the trouble is that each person is spending a little bit less, buying less wine, staying not as many nights and spending a little bit less in the restaurants. It is understandable that it is appealing for New South Wales residents to prefer to travel overseas rather than travel to regional centres at the moment. However, I must stress that there is no experience like that of driving from one part of New South Wales to another in a car to visit all these regions, to give yourself a drive yourself experience and visit the many wonderful regional communities of New South Wales.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.50 p.m.]: I shall talk about the importance of regional tourism to the Tweed. I just have to comment on the previous contribution by the member for Cessnock. I will have him know that three years ago the Labor Government here forgot that the Tweed is part of New South Wales and gladly announced on maps that we did not exist, that in fact we were part of Queensland. That is how much it knew about regional tourism. As my colleague the member for Orange has outlined, the importance of tourism to our State cannot be underestimated. It delivers jobs and revenue and can often be the lifeblood of our regional community, such as my electorate in the Tweed. In 2011 the Tweed local government area welcomed almost 1.4 million visitors, who spent over two million nights in our local area and added \$321 million to the State's economy. That is just in the Tweed.

Products such as the national award winning BIG4 North Star Holiday Resort and Caravan Park are integral to this contribution. It is therefore timely to announce that recently for the second year in a row it won a gold award in the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards. It is run by Ian and Diana Beadle and their manager Andrew. They make a great contribution to our local tourism. Ian was the inaugural chairman of the Tweed and Coolangatta Tourism Association and I followed him for many years. So tourism is certainly a very important element in the Tweed. These awards highlight the rural communities such as the Tweed that offer both domestic and international visitors alike a quality tourism experience. I note that I am from the only regional area that has half of an international airport. Currently the Gold Coast airport straddles the border and this year it is expected to peak with over six million visitor numbers. Yesterday saw Alan Joyce, the chief executive officer of Qantas, redirect Qantas flights back into the Gold Coast. We are currently served by nine different airlines and a number of those are international.

That is why I am particularly pleased to see the Coalition Government's investment of an additional \$5 million to create new, and enhance existing, tourism products across the State. We have made good on this promise through the regional product development program. Northern Rivers Tourism recently received \$535,000 to support 11 projects, all of which have the aim of enhancing the overall visitor experience in the region. The region as a whole, and more specifically The Tweed, is a popular destination for both domestic and international visitors. But the support does not stop there. People who spend a lot of time in Sydney may have seen the Destination NSW innovative campaign that has been running in eight Westfield shopping centres around the city. This campaign targets Sydneysiders to raise awareness of what regional New South Wales has to offer and encourage them to take a short break in regional New South Wales. I understand the campaign has been well supported by tourism accommodation providers in the Northern Rivers region, with 78 accommodation providers opting to participate in the campaign. I commend regional and rural tourism to the House, noting its effect on the State's economy.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.53 p.m.]: I thank all members who have spoken for their valuable contributions, including the member for Cessnock. If it had been me I would have chosen the member for Cessnock as my rock and roll commissioner had I been rolling out that fine policy. He has the moves and we saw them on display tonight. The member for Cessnock spoke about the glory days of the failed Labor Government but it was the Liberals and The Nationals that brought in Destination NSW, the biggest change to tourism and regional tourism that this State has ever seen. It will oversee a \$12 million injection for the regional tourism industry over the next 12 months. I also draw the attention of the member for Cessnock to the Regional Tourism Product Development Funding Program. This is a \$5 million program that has been widely embraced, as can be clearly seen in the initial results. The program leveraged over \$15 million in private sector investment in new products and tourism experiences in New South Wales.

I will give a few examples: I know that the member for Myall Lakes loves the examples of the great work of this fine Government. In inland New South Wales \$50,000 was provided to the Elizabeth Park regional botanic garden to install access boardwalks and interpretative signage for the Oasis Gully. On the mid North Coast \$50,000 has been provided to the Jurassic pond estuarine crocodile exhibit and on the Northern Rivers \$28,700 of funding was provided for the Byron Community Centre for conference infrastructure. In my electorate \$9,000 has been provided for the creation of the Taste Orange regional map. Taste Orange comes to Sydney at the end of this month for the first time. The map was developed to assist visitors identify the key tourist attractions in Orange. Of course, we also got \$12,500 to create a high-end racing simulator at the Gnoo Blass circuit.

We do not muck around with fluffy ideas such as the rock and roll ambassadors; we are actually getting on with the job and delivering for regional New South Wales. Each of these initiatives will support the regional communities in which they operate. In Orange the local industry is to deliver the food and wine and experiences. On 19 October we will have Wine Week, which will showcase the food and wine of Orange. At the end of this month Orange comes to Sydney at Bondi and also in Martin Place for the whole Orange experience. Regional tourism is vital for New South Wales and this Government is getting on with the job of promoting it.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FAIRFIELD ASSYRIAN COMMUNITY

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.57 p.m.]: One of the largest cultural groups in my electorate of Fairfield is the Assyrian community. Since the early 1970s the Assyrian community has made a significant cultural and spiritual contribution in Fairfield. This year I was bestowed the honour of being elected as the co-deputy chairman of the Assyria Parliamentary Friendship Group alongside David Clark, member of the Legislative Council. The chairman of the Assyria Parliamentary Friendship Group is Mr Andrew Rohan, the member for Smithfield. On 7 August 2012 the Assyrian Universal Alliance Australian Chapter, in cooperation with the Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, held a commemorative seminar in the theatre room of New South Wales Parliament House. The Assyrian Universal Alliance, with the assistance of Mr Andrew Rohan, MP, hosted the commemoration ceremony and the screening of the *Defying Deletion* documentary.

Present on the evening were Mr Hermiz Shahan, deputy secretary general of Assyrian Universal Alliance, Mr David David, president of the Assyrian Australian National Federation, and many committee members. The night was well attended by members of the New South Wales Assyrian community, as well as representatives from the Armenian and Greek communities. A large number of State and Federal members of Parliament were present. Attendees were presented with two very powerful talks by distinguished researchers on the Assyrian Genocide, Dr Racho Donef and Stavros T. Stavridis. Dr Racho Donef is a leading researcher on the ethnic minorities of the Republic of Turkey. He discussed the aspects of the Assyrian genocide from the early 1900s to mid 1930s. His talk was titled, "Assyrian Genocide: Denialism and One Century of Struggle for Recognition". The second presentation was by Stavros T. Stavridis, a historical researcher, on the Greek-Turkish war 1919 to 1923 and minorities in the Ottoman Empire and the Middle East. He presented a very informative talk about Assyrian issues from 1914 to 1935 covering Australian documents and press accounts.

The main presentation for the evening came from Mr Andre Anton with his multi award winning short film *Defying Deletion*, the fight over Iraq's Nineveh Plains. Mr Andre Anton, producer, director and writer, was accompanied by the documentary's executive producer Dr Elmer Abbo. Mr Anton and Dr Abbo have been in the country promoting the documentary to State and Federal parliaments. A special screening of the documentary was held at Hoyts at Wetherill Park last Sunday. Mr Anton is an American filmmaker who seeks to raise awareness of the plight of the Assyrians in modern Iraq. Overall, the documentary describes the persecution recently experienced by the Assyrians after the liberation of Iraq. What is clearly evident from the documentary is that the failure to acknowledge the Assyrian genocide over the past century has in effect perpetuated the crimes of humanity against the Assyrian people in northern Iraq today.

As always, it was great to see the Assyrian, Armenian and Greek communities come together in solidarity to honour the victims of the horrendous genocides of the early to mid-1900s. Each year 7 August is known worldwide in the Assyrian community as the Assyrians' Martyrs Day. The annual commemoration

honours the innocent souls of the people of Simile; some 6,000 innocent Assyrians were massacred in Simile at the hands of the Iraqi army in 1933. Martyrs in the Christian sense are those who die in the name of Christ or for the cause. To this day millions of people still die for their belief in Christianity, primarily in the Middle East and in Africa. Crimes against humanity continue in this world because past atrocities are not acknowledged. As brothers and sisters in humanity we must all seek justice and fairness for all.

STROUD TO LANSDOWNE POWERLINE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [7.01 p.m.]: Today I advise the House about a TransGrid powerline that will run through the Myall Lakes electorate from Stroud in the south to Lansdowne, which is north of Taree. Let me say at the outset that I am opposed to this powerline. The genesis of this project was in about 2009 under the previous Labor Government, and it was ticked off recently by the Australian Energy Regulator. The proposal is for a 330,000 kVA line to run from Stroud to Lansdowne. Recently we were advised that option one is the preferred option. Option one is to follow the existing easement to a point west of Taree, then turn off the existing easement and head north to Lansdowne. Since early this year I have been speaking to TransGrid, asking for more details to justify the need for the line and, indeed, such a huge 335,000 kVA line. Although I received assurances that that information would be forthcoming I have not received it. I spoke with the Minister for Resources and Energy about this matter. Luckily for the people of New South Wales, we have a good Minister. The Minister has his hands on the levers and he knows exactly what is happening.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! The member for Keira will remain silent during private members' statements.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: As a result the timetable to begin construction of the line in 2013 has been pushed out to the 2020s. The Minister agrees that this 335,000 kVA line is unnecessary. A review is being undertaken, the results of which will be announced in September. I believe that, with the decrease in peak power demand, there is no need for the line. If anything is necessary, it would be a 132 kVA line, which would mean that the existing line from Stroud to Taree could be utilised. It would be in the same easement with the same wooden poles and wires all the way from Stroud to Taree without deviating from the existing easement. It would mean there would be no concrete poles and steel stanchions: it would be the same line. Any right-minded and reasonable person would say that an increase in power using the current poles and wires would not be a great impost on people in the community. One concern is misinformation. Indeed, John Kaye, a member of The Greens in the upper House, has been running around the electorate saying that there is no need for TransGrid and we can have localised generation. Of course, we know what he means when he talks about "localised generation". An article in the *Echo News* stated:

... John Kaye has been leading the charge to stop the TransGrid project—

this is the Bonshaw to Lismore line—

"The Metgasco find shows that TransGrid has failed to conduct a rigorous analysis of the need for the Lismore-Bonshaw high voltage powerline. The potential for local gas generation—

we are talking about coal seam gas—

should be factored into any planning for the Far North Coast's energy strategy. TransGrid's planning dismissed any role for gas ...

Before the last State election John Kaye said that we do not need TransGrid or electricity as we have coal seam gas and we will have localised gas-fired power generation. Lo and behold, when Labor and The Greens lost power in New South Wales suddenly he is against coal seam gas. What does he have? On his side he has a local group called the Manning Alliance, which only recently was demonstrating outside Parliament House next to the socialist alliance and GetUp. Mr Kaye and Mr Shoebridge went to northern New South Wales and acted like champions.

Mr Ryan Park: Look out.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: Yes, because Labor now knows how dangerous The Greens are, what a disaster they have been for Australia and what a disaster they are for New South Wales. The problem is these people going around electorates such as Myall Lakes and saying that you do not need this and you do not need that because you could have coal seam gas. Many people would be concerned about the Manning Alliance and its association with The Greens party.

BULLI VILLAGE CLEARWAY

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [7.06 p.m.]: I raise an interesting issue today—

Mr Stephen Bromhead: That would be a change.

Mr RYAN PARK: Obviously the Liberal Party head office and the Premier's office have told Government members that every speech they make must contain the phrase "reformist government", as we have heard throughout the day. Ministerial offices have key words, and the key words for today are "reformist government". I reckon Government members have mentioned it about 18 times. I will check with my good friends in Hansard but there is not one backbencher who has not mentioned it. The rumour is that if a backbencher does not mention it they must explain that to the Premier. I am talking about reformist government because part of being a reformist government is knowing when not to do something. There is a situation just north of my electorate but it impacts largely on the people in my electorate of Keira.

Our good friends in the Roads and Maritime Services—formerly known as the Roads and Traffic Authority—want to put a clearway in the area known as Bulli village or the Princes Highway at Bulli. I have been travelling on that road for decades. When I was a commuter I came through there during peak times. Motorists must slow down and the traffic can get a little congested. However, it has nothing like the volume of traffic that is necessary to classify the area as a clearway. The concern for local small businesses, which they have raised with me, is that making the area a clearway would essentially put a "Closed for Business" sign on the village. I have written to the general manager of the Roads and Traffic Authority in my neck of the woods.

I have written to my good friend the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, and I told him that he does not always have to be involved in all the minutiae of the community. In terms of this area he can simply say, "That's a nice plan from our friends in the public service. It sounds like a good proposal. But practicality means that for the benefit of the small businesses and the village atmosphere that is Bulli, this is not going ahead." My friends in the conservative Government often say that they are about small government. They do not want to get involved in the intricate details. They want to allow businesses to go about their business and be entrepreneurs. They are not doing that with this proposal. I call on the Minister to put an end to this.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! During the speech of the member for Myall Lakes I asked the member for Keira to remain silent. I ask the member for Menai also to remain silent.

Mr RYAN PARK: On behalf of the businesses located on the Princes Highway at Bulli, I call on the Minister to indicate categorically, in writing, that this proposed clearway will not go ahead. Small businesses throughout our entire community are doing it tough. In difficult times where we have a multi-speed economy, every one of us knows countless stories of retailers and small businesses doing it tough. Saul Duffy, a local pharmacist, raised this issue with me on behalf of a Bulli village shopping centre group. He does not have a lot of experience with politics, but he has a great local business and he believes passionately in the area. The only assistance he asks of this Government is to do nothing, to keep it as is. When a briefing paper arrives on options for a clearway at Bulli, I ask the Minister for Roads and Ports and the Parliamentary Secretary to simply say that it is not necessary. If those on the other side are truly part of a reformist government, they know when to get involved and when not to get involved. This community is begging for the Government and bureaucracy to stay out of it. I ask the Government to listen to the community, to listen to businesses such as Saul's pharmacy and to scrap this proposal.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE FAMILY SERVICES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [7.11 p.m.]: I recently had the pleasure of cutting a cake to celebrate the opening of new facilities at Sutherland Shire Family Services. This project had long been in the pipeline and it was satisfying to see the finished product at last. I also had been pleased to attend with a cheque of over \$53,000 from the Community Building Partnership program to assist in the construction of the facilities. Sutherland Shire Family Services is a community-based, not-for-profit organisation that provides a broad range of innovative and professional services to vulnerable children, young people and families who live locally. During my time as a councillor with Sutherland Shire Council and now as the local member, I have been inspired by how much this organisation has grown over the years and the services it offers to the public.

The range of services include Sutherland Shire Family Support projects such as the Youth and Family Worker project, the Sutherland-St George Aboriginal Family Worker project, the Southern Sydney Women's

Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, the Djanaba Occasional Child Care Service, the Sutherland Shire Domestic Violence Pro Active Support Service, or DVPASS, the Emergency Relief Assistance Program and the innovative Building Resilience in Children project, or BRIC. Sutherland Shire Family Services began operation back in 1987 and for the first eight years worked out of four different premises. It built its current location in Jannali in 1994 and was one of the first purpose-built family support services in New South Wales.

In 1995 the service employed just nine workers, but today employs 29 staff. Before construction took place on the brand new facilities, the centre was working to capacity and in desperate need of more space to house staff and the growing number of services. The new facilities are state of the art. During a short tour I noticed that the centre offers a completely new feel for the organisation. The service now has more space, beautifully furnished counselling areas and waiting rooms and daylight-filled office space. I spoke with some of the staff at the opening and remarked that they now must find it nice to come to work each day. Surprisingly, most of them said it had always been a nice place to work, thanks to the people who work there and the feeling they get from assisting people each and every day. They said that the renovations had simply made it even better.

Kath Jones, the Manager of Sutherland Shire Family Services, thanked the builders and the project managers who worked tirelessly to see the construction works through to completion—as she did too. She also made sure that the temporary accommodation did not stop the services from providing their important services. I thank Jannali Primary School and Amelia House for hosting the service and enabling them to continue to undertake their work. One of the service's innovative projects is the Building Resistance in Children Project, better known as BRIC. This project aims to bridge the gap for children living with the trauma of domestic violence.

While a number of programs are available to support women affected by domestic violence, very little has been developed to address the needs of children in the same situation. This project brings great relief to parents who are at their wit's end dealing with the situation. Simple achievements such as hearing their children laugh again are celebrated as great wins. Another commendable service is the Sutherland Shire Domestic Violence Pro Active Support Service, or DVPASS. This service, which has been running for the past four years and is funded through the Office for Women, is a partnership program with the local police. I first heard about it at Sutherland Shire Council meetings with police and community. This service focuses on support, information and referral options for victims of domestic and family violence.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! Opposition members will remain silent.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: In 2011 alone there were 1,372 referrals—a horrific figure—to Sutherland Shire Family Services from both Sutherland and Miranda local area commands. That shows the growing need for support services dedicated to domestic violence incidents. From talking to people who volunteer and work at the organisation one realises that acts of violence are committed not only against women but also against men and adult children hurt their parents or younger brothers and sisters. The impact of these acts of violence flow through the whole family and the consequences are stark and confronting.

The aim of the service is to provide support immediately after police intervention due to domestic violence, usually the same night or the next morning, and to follow through until court appearances or other action is taken. By providing support at this critical time it is hoped that the cycle of repeated domestic violence can be broken. I thank all the volunteers and staff who provide these services, particularly Kath Jones, Diane Manns and Lola Hearn. I know that the new building will allow them to get on with their important work and enable them to provide even better services to their clients and families.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [7.16 p.m.]: One of the great privileges of my job as a local member—one of the perks, if you like—is being able to participate in Education Week. Last week I had the opportunity to see firsthand the great things achieved day in, day out by our talented students and dedicated teachers. We are privileged to have a wonderful group of passionate school principals, teachers and other school staff within the Hornsby electorate who ensure the highest level of educational opportunities are provided to our students. I acknowledge the following school principals: Maree Sumpton of Hornsby North Public School; Vicki Redrup of Hornsby Heights Public School; Terry Griffiths of Asquith Boys High School; Diane Bower of Berowra Public School; Rita Trovato of Asquith Public School; John Paterson of Mount Colah Public School; Jeanie Brown of Brooklyn Public School; Sally Till of Cowan Public School; Jennifer Davey of Hornsby South Public School; and Glenn O'Neill of Mount Ku-ring-gai Public School.

Education Week in Hornsby provided an opportunity for our local schools to exhibit their academic strengths and outstanding results, quality arts, sports, gifted and talented programs and extracurricular activities, with a focus on teaching strong values. During the week I was treated to a spectacular art show at Hornsby North Public School, excellent sportsmanship and sporting ability at Hornsby Heights and Asquith, remarkable music and performance at Berowra, Mount Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby North and Mount Colah schools, academic excellence at Hornsby South, and the creative writing talents of our students at Cowan and Brooklyn. The students and teachers of New South Wales public schools in Hornsby are creating the future and empowering a new generation of young people to make the most of their talents. Whether I was opening an art show or mini-Olympics or participating in a kindergarten or year 2 maths class, my visits enabled me to better understand the passion the school staff have towards education and the children with whom they work.

Each child has a gift, and the teachers and staff at each of the schools I visited work with the children to allow them to realise their potential and fulfil personal goals. Each school that I visited has its own unique atmosphere and learning environment. But each school and its respective staff also share a common ethos: the nurturing and development of children. From teaching literacy and numeracy skills to fostering crucial life skills, such as teamwork and sharing, the school staff play a critical role in developing the children's wellbeing. Australia is one of the world's most advanced and developed countries. This can be attributed in large part to the strong educational standards and values that we in this country have built.

Without committed and energetic school principals and teachers our country cannot continue to lead the way with respect to innovation, entrepreneurialism, research and development. I am proud to represent an electorate that characterises the educational excellence that all communities should aspire to achieve. I am immensely grateful for the professionalism and dedication shown by our school staff. I take this opportunity this evening to thank teachers, students, parents and citizens associations, parents and local community volunteers for their hard work, planning and supervision during Education Week events. Their dedication ensured that Education Week 2012 in Hornsby was a wonderful success. I was indeed privileged to be part of it.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.21 p.m. until
Wednesday 15 August 2012 at 10.00 a.m.**
